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The Application of the Metatheory of Critical Realism to Questions in Morality

by

Stephen Robert Ash

Thesis for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Abstract

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While it is argued that the acceptance of the metatheory of critical realism opens up the potential to address many of the problematic issues of morality (Bhaskar 1986; Collier 1994), the development of, what appear to be, four competing critical realist moral theories creates issues for this approach. These theories are Bhaskar's Dialectical Critical Realist Ethics (1993), Collier's theory of worth (1999), Sayer's Lay Morality (2004, 2011) and Elder-Vass's Realist Critique (2010). In addition to these theories of what morality is, all of these writers, and Price (2017), also provide separate answers to the question of how you can discover more about morality. While there are extensive discussions of the theories of Bhaskar and Elder-Vass there is, to date, no comparative study that explores all of these approaches to morality with respect to the underlying metatheory and to each other. In this thesis, I explore these theories through considering the questions of: the legitimacy and universal applicability of any moral argument; morality as an aspect of human nature and society; and how an enquiry into morality should progress. This approach enables Bhaskar, Elder–Vass, Collier, and Sayer to be understood as having applied the metatheory to different questions in morality and therefore provides an understanding of their similarities and points of agreement. From this research a comprehensive realist theoretical understanding of morality, which is a synthesis of the existing approaches, is produced; which I argue provides an overall theoretical framework which both facilitates and can be tested for its explanatory power through subsequent practical research.

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Research Thesis: Declaration of Authorship

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Title of thesis:	The Application of the Metatheory of Critical Realism to Questions in Morality

I declare that this thesis and the work presented in it are my own and has been generated by me as the result of my own original research.

I confirm that:

1. This work was done wholly or mainly while in candidature for a research degree at this University;
2. Where any part of this thesis has previously been submitted for a degree or any other qualification at this University or any other institution, this has been clearly stated;
3. Where I have consulted the published work of others, this is always clearly attributed;
4. Where I have quoted from the work of others, the source is always given. With the exception of such quotations, this thesis is entirely my own work;
5. I have acknowledged all main sources of help;
6. Where the thesis is based on work done by myself jointly with others, I have made clear exactly what was done by others and what I have contributed myself;

Signature:		Date:	

Acknowledgements

The research that is presented in this thesis would not have been possible without the support and encouragement of the following people and institutions.

My original supervisor Andrew Collier, whose impact on critical realism and commitment to social justice is sadly missed by all those who had the pleasure of knowing him.

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My final supervisory team of Dr Karin Zottzmann and Dr James Minney. I am conscious that the burden of supervision that they have borne has been greater than is normally expected. Karin and James not only took on the supervision of a student who was in limbo, but who, in providing the support, encouragement and advice that this supervision has entailed, have had an invaluable impact on the form and content of this this thesis and my own development.

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Introduction

> Modern academic philosophy turns out by and large to provide means for a more accurate and informed definition of disagreement rather than progress towards its resolution. Professors of Philosophy who concern themselves with questions of justice and practical rationality turn out to disagree with each other […] as irremediably upon how such questions are to be answered as anyone else.'
>
> (*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Macintyre, A.1988:3)

Morality as an aspect of social reality is a problematic subject to enquire into. In our work, life and reflections, we continually encounter situations where moral concepts are relevant to understanding and action. These are concepts such as right and wrong or good and evil and while it is not possible to think or act morally without using these concepts, they lack definition, explanation or clarity. As such, their use generates wider questions; which have been the subject of enquiry since at least the time of Socrates, with, as argued by Macintyre, no progress achieved to date. These wider questions can be understood to be divided into those regarding the legitimacy and range of moral concepts, those considering morality as an aspect of human nature or society and those that are concerned with how an enquiry into morality should progress. Any use of morality, such as providing an explanation of why it is a human right not to be 'held in slavery or servitude' (United Nations,1948:Article 4.) but why it is right to imprison someone for the rest of their lives if they are found to have enslaved others (HM Government, 2015:5.1.a), therefore depends on the answers to these wider questions in morality. It is these wider questions that are the subject of this thesis.

While there are many different approaches to these wider questions in morality (for examples, see Macintyre, 1967 or Singer, *et al.* 1993), Bhaskar (1986) and Collier (1992) argue that moral questions are best approached through the acceptance, and application, of the metatheory of critical realism. Metatheories are 'theories about the foundational assumptions and preconditions of science (Danemark, *et al,* 1997:118). They can, in general terms, be understood to have two aspects; an

ontological aspect, a theory regarding the nature of reality and an epistemological aspect, a theory of how and what knowledge can be gained of that reality. The critical realist metatheory regarding the nature of reality is a depth realist position and so differs from both idealism - by holding that the world is real – and positivism - by holding that there is a depth to reality (Bhaskar, 2008). The epistemological consequence of this ontology is that while explanatory knowledge of reality will be relative it is possible to produce 'in particular contexts, strong arguments for preferring one set of beliefs, one set of theories about the world to another' (Bhaskar, 2017:20); it is for these reasons that critical realism is considered to create the possibility for providing justifiable answers to these wider moral questions.

The potential of this approach has led to the use of the metatheory to produce more than one moral theory. These are the theories of Bhaskar (1993), Collier (1999), Sayer (2004, 2011) and Elder-Vass (2010). All of these moral theories should enable the wider questions in morality to be addressed in a way that assists in the production of rationally justifiable answers regarding specific issues such as the prohibition of slavery. But without clarity on how these different theories do or may fit together, and where they are in contradiction it is difficult to confidently apply one or the other of them to specific moral problems. The secondary literature does provide some assistance, through the extensive discussion of the theories of Bhaskar and Elder-Vass (see Collier,1998; Hostettler and Norrie, 2003; Norrie, 2010; Morgan, 2014; Price, 2017) but there is no comparative study which considers these four different theories of morality. The purpose of this thesis is to provide that study.

To undertake this study, I consider each specific theory with respect to the underlying metatheory and their application to a specific question in morality. These are the questions of:

1. Can we legitimately argue for a specific moral position, or set of values?
2. Can moral positions be understood to apply universally?
3. How do considerations of morality inform our choices and actions?
4. How can we understand morality as an aspect of society?
5. How can we develop a greater understanding of morality?

The order of the first four questions broadly follow the chronological development of the application of critical realism to questions in morality. The exception is question five which has been examined throughout this period of development. This means that, to deal with each specific question separately, I examine the ontological aspects of the moral theories of Bhaskar, Collier and Sayer prior to and separate from the exploration of how they all, and Price, apply critical realism to question five. By examining these questions in this order, I identify the similarities, points of agreement and aspects of morality that are comparatively undertheorized. As such, exploring these questions leads to conclusions being drawn on a final question of:

6. Can these critical realist moral theories provide an explanation of morality as an aspect of reality?

This is a purely theoretical study. The benefit of this is that 'theoretical studies can clear away obscurities and ambiguities impeding communication in social science and can contribute to the development of concepts useable in concrete empirical analysis' (Danemark *et al,* 1997:143).

Though theoretical questions are the focus of this research, to assist in contextualising some of the concepts being discussed, examples are drawn from considering the issue of slavery throughout. Slavery is the forcing of an individual to work against their will or treating them as an item of property. While any issue that morality applies to could be used, I have chosen to use slavery for three reasons. The first is that it demonstrates that approaches to issues in morality are not consistent over time. For while slavery is currently generally accepted as immoral- as seen by the prohibition expressed in Article Four of the Convention of Human Rights –this has not always been the case; as seen by its legal status, up to the late nineteenth century, and the arguments justifying slavery, such as Aristotle's (1962) and Locke's (1821).

The second is that while it has been considered, until relatively recently, as a historic issue, the recognition of modern slavery means that it is a moral issue of current practical concern. The third reason is that critical realism considers itself to be an emancipatory project, as such if should be able to offer a coherent stance on an issue such as slavery. The use of this example does not make this a thesis

about the moral issue of slavery; it is a thesis on critical realist approaches to moral questions, which uses the example of slavery to illuminate some of the issues.

One question this thesis does not examine is the difference between morality and ethics. There are many attempts to define and distinguish these terms from each other – for example Williams (1999) defines morality as a subset of ethical considerations while others, such as Sayer (2004), deliberately use these terms interchangeably. My own approach is to maintain consistency by using the term morality throughout this thesis. This has meant that on occasion I have changed the use of the term 'ethics' to 'morality' when discussing sources. This has only been done when it is clear from the overall text that the author is using the terms synonymously. As such, the use of the term ethics is restricted to either 'direct quotations' or when the use of the term morality would change the emphasis of the source.

The argument of this thesis is that it is possible to use the underlying metatheory of critical realism and social scientific methods to explore the concerns of morality by using a theoretical framework that is a synthesis of the existing approaches. This argument is developed through seven chapters, that examine the six questions above.

Chapter One considers the application of critical realism to the fundamental question of the legitimacy of any argument that supports moral beliefs, positions or theories. The importance of this question is that the dominant perspective is to use Hume's distinction between facts and values (1739) to dismiss any argument which contains the value terms that are central to moral theorising as invalid. Critical realists argue against this perspective, as they consider that the concept of *explanatory critique* - which is found in Bhaskar's Basic Critical Realism (1975,1979,1986) - demonstrates that the logical divide between facts and values cannot be maintained; and this creates the possibility of developing legitimate arguments for moral positions. To describe this position, the ontological aspect of the metatheory is explored in more detail than is normally undertaken within an enquiry into moral questions. The importance of this approach is that a description of the metatheory is not just necessary for an understanding of the critical realist approach to the specific question considered in this chapter but is essential for any

critical assessment of the moral theories, that are facilitated by the positive answer to this specific question, and which are considered in the rest of the thesis.

The next three chapters all follow a similar format to each other: a specific ontological question in morality is introduced and contextualized by reference to general approaches to the question; the theory, or theories, that have been produced using critical realism to provide an answer to that question are described; and the legitimacy of those theories are considered by reference to the overall metatheory.

In Chapter Two the question is, if moral judgements are, or can potentially be, universally applicable or if they can only be applicable to a specific event or socio-historical situation. The theories of Bhaskar's dialectical critical realist ethics (1993) and Elder-Vass's theory of realist critique (2010) provide competing answers to this question; with both asserting that a commitment to scientific realism underpins their own theory. From my exploration of alternative approaches to this question (Honderich,1976) and how the metatheory has been identified to apply to it (Hostettler and Norrie, 2003; Collier,1998, 2003; Norrie 2010; Price 2017) I draw the conclusion that while there are some unsupportable aspects of his theory, Bhaskar's overall approach towards the universality of morality is more coherent within the metatheory of critical realism than Elder-Vass's.

While Bhaskar was developing critical realism and the concept of explanatory critique into dialectical critical realist ethics, Collier was building on the same theoretical foundation to produce his own moral theory in *Being and Worth* (1998). In Chapter Three, I examine this theory by considering the question of how human beings can be understood to be implicitly or explicitly, informed by considerations of right and wrong in making choices and taking actions. Collier's theory has three separate aspects: intrinsic value; the variation of intrinsic value; and the recognition of intrinsic value and its variation by human agents. Through a consideration of these aspects within the overall ontology of transcendental realism - with specific emphasis on the application of the concept of emergence (Archer,1995) - the conclusion that Collier's theory provides a strong explanatory account of moral agency, but that its acceptance is problematic due to difficulties with aligning his conception of intrinsic value with the ontology of transcendental realism, is drawn.

Introduction

In Chapter Four the question of how can we understand morality as an aspect of society is considered through an exploration of Sayer's theory of lay morality (2004,2011). Sayer's argument is that moral values express a shared commitment to human flourishing. To position Sayer's theory, the categorization of moral theories is considered by reference to Collier's description of the difference between lay and scientific knowledge (2003); and the theoretical standpoints that morality is concerned with ends, rules or virtues. To critically assess Sayer's theory the metatheory is used to examine how a moral theory can be justified. The conclusion is that a moral theory is justified by its explanatory power. On this basis the conclusion of this chapter is that, Sayer provides a justifiable theory of morality but there are difficulties that prevent it being accepted as justified.

This conclusion completes the discussion of how the ontological aspects of the metatheory can be applied to morality and what critical realists have said about what morality is. What is not clear from these individual accounts is if these theories can be taken together to provide a comprehensive explanatory account of morality or if aspects of these theories offer competing accounts of the same phenomena. To be able to answer that question it is necessary to first explore the question of how critical realists have argued that it is possible to produce an explanatory account of morality. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Five covers the different accounts of how the epistemological aspect of the metatheory can be applied to moral enquiry, through the use of ethical naturalism. To explore this, the approach to producing explanations of aspects of social reality - critical naturalism, which was introduced in Chapter One - is discussed in more detail, by describing Danemark, ***et al's*** approach (1997). This understanding is then used to explore ethical naturalism, by reference to how Bhaskar (1993), Collier (1994,2003) Sayer (2000,2011) and Price (2017) all approach two specific components of the production of an explanatory account of morality. These are the questions of (i.) from where should such an enquiry commence; and (ii.) what method of reasoning should be used. From this exploration, a stance with respect to the overall question which is common to, and so compatible with, all these existing positions is identified.

The understanding of Chapter Five is then used, in the last two chapters, to assess if the critical realist moral theories of what morality 'is' can collectively

provide an explanation of morality as an aspect of reality. In Chapter Six, I start by considering the moral theories that have been discussed from the perspective of if they have been produced using ethical naturalist arguments. By taking this approach, it is possible to identify how these theories can be understood as separate but compatible components of a synthesized realist moral theory; that provides an explanatory account with respect to the majority of the wider questions in morality but is underdeveloped in one key aspect. In that it does not provide an explanatory account of how value can be understood as existing separate to its recognition.

Bhaskar's philosophy of meta-reality (2002) is then introduced to consider if this provides an account of intrinsic value that addresses this missing component. The conclusion is drawn that meta-reality develops Bhaskar's abstract understanding of value. But there is still a need to explore if an explanatory account of intrinsic value, that provides rationally justifiable answers to questions of how morality should be applied in specific situations, can be produced through the use of ethical naturalism.

In Chapter Seven the question of intrinsic value is explored further through the use of ethical naturalism. This exploration indicates that intrinsic value is potentially explainable using this approach. In that what has intrinsic value is the specific properties that emerge from, but are not reducible to, relatively enduring structures and have causal power with regard to the flourishing of structures. On this basis, it is concluded that these critical realist moral theories provide a comprehensive theoretical framework, that is capable of being tested for its explanatory power, and subsequently rejected or developed further, through the concretization and contextualization of practical research.

Chapter 1 The Legitimacy of a Moral Argument

‘It is clear that ethics cannot be put into words’

(T*ractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein, L.1922: Prop.6.421)

‘What we cannot speak about we must pass over in silence’

(T*ractatus Logico-Philosophicus* Wittgenstein, L. 1922: Prop.7)

When we decide upon a specific course of action or position - or try to persuade others of the importance of a specific course of action or position - we will often use the process of a logical argument. What Wittgenstein expresses in the quotation above is the view that when we are considering moral issues a logical argument cannot be used. The reason for this is the distinction between facts and values. Facts can be defined as statements of what is, they are statements that are verifiable. Values are statements of what we ‘ought’ to do. These two types of statements are generally held to be logically separate (e.g. Hume,1739; Ayer,1953; Magee,1987), in that you cannot reason from one to the other.

Bhaskar holds an opposing view. It is his contention that this logical separation cannot be maintained and so it is possible to use and develop moral arguments and therefore norms and values are not beyond reason. In this chapter, I consider the difficulties that the fact/value distinction has created for the use of moral arguments and describe the theoretical development of the metatheory of basic critical realism (Bhaskar 1975,1979,1986). This description shows why the metatheory, and specifically the concept of explanatory critique, is held to overcome these difficulties and also introduces the aspects of the metatheory that are used in subsequent chapters to critically assess the moral theories that build on this breech of the fact/value divide.

1.1 The Logical Divide between Facts and Values

The assertion that the fact/value distinction creates difficulties for the legitimacy of moral arguments can be illustrated by considering any example of an argument that contains a moral position. One such example is Hyland's argument for the importance of research and evidence to support the fight against modern slavery (Bales *et al*, 2018). While the main focus of his argument is the importance of research and evidence, he starts by providing a background premise on why action needs to be taken to eradicate modern slavery; stating that 'Modern slavery is a brutal abuse, denying people their dignity, safety and freedom' (2018:5). The work that this statement is intended to do is to show that modern slavery is wrong and so action, specifically research, ought to be taken to prevent it. However, this conclusion is considered to be illegitimate by those who assert the existence of the logical separation of facts and values. To consider why this is the case the key aspects of this statement have to be considered separately.

Hyland's statement explicitly contains facts and values and assumes a common acceptance of those values. When Hyland states that 'modern slavery is a brutal abuse' the word 'abuse' is being used as a noun that can be defined as either 'the improper use of something' or 'cruel and violent treatment of a person'. The adjective brutal indicates that Hyland is using it in its latter form. As such, what Hyland can be understood to be saying is that modern slavery is the cruel and violent treatment of a person. This component of his statement is a value judgement. Hyland also states that modern slavery denies people their dignity safety and freedom. This collection of three nouns all denote separate aspects of a definition of slavery; that if someone is enslaved, they are not free, and their safety and sense of self - which is vital to the concept of dignity - are of a lesser consideration then their labour potential. Therefore, what Hyland could be understood to be offering here is a definition of modern slavery, which is made up of a series of factual statements, joined with a value statement. However, it can only be seen to do the work that Hyland is expecting it to do - that of motivating research - if those who are reading the report already - for other reasons - value freedom, safety and dignity and are against the violent treatment of people. What Hyland statement cannot do is persuade somebody who does not share his valuing of freedom, or sees nothing wrong with violence against other people, to act as he would wish.

While this is a problem for persuading those who are not inclined to accept Hyland's values to act as he would wish, it is also a problem for any argument for why freedom should be valued, or violence is wrong, or any other argument for a moral position; as those who argue for the logical divide assert that all values statements are separate to and therefore can never be justified by reference to any facts. This distinction was first made by Hume in 1739, who argues that:

> In every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, *is*, and *is not*, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an *ought*, or an *ought not*. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this *ought*, or *ought not*, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that it should be observed and explained; and at the same time that a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from others, which are entirely different from it. But as authors do not commonly use this precaution, I shall presume to recommend it to the readers; and am persuaded, that this small attention would subvert all the vulgar systems of morality, and let us see, that the distinction of vice and virtue is not founded merely on the relations of objects, nor is perceived by reason. (2011:335)

This argument is known as Hume's Law, - and It is important to recognise how Hume's argument is given by its supporters this status of a law, in the same way the gravity and thermodynamics has laws – as this position, and its law-like status, has over a period of almost 400 years had a fundamental impact on the question of the legitimacy of moral arguments.

Hume's Law is interpreted in two different ways. The weaker interpretation (e.g. MacIntyre, 1981) is one that holds that it is possible for one value conclusion to be supported over another by recognition of the relevant value premises. For example, it may be possible to argue that the goal of removing forced labour from fishing fleets requires the regulation of supply chains, as this is a more effective way to reduce modern slavery than the education of consumers; as long as it is recognized that such a conclusion is not just dependent on if it is factually true but

it is also dependent on accepting the premise that the violent treatment of people is wrong. This interpretation allows for the evaluation of the outcome of specific activities with reference to the wider values that they are supposed to promote but would insist that no wider conclusions can be drawn on the legitimacy of those underlying values.

The stronger interpretation, is one that contextualises Hume's law within Hume's overall approach to knowledge and causation. This is an approach which considers that all possible objects of knowledge are either matters of fact – which can only be derived from sensory experience - or the relation of ideas. On this interpretation no value judgements can ever have any empirical justification, so no value premises can ever be used in any argument. This interpretation leads to the position that no arguments are possible within moral philosophy (e.g. Ayer,1953) and, as discussed by Sayer (2011), the view that social science, to be scientific, must be value free.

Both positions have the same consequences for the wider considerations of morality. For if no arguments are possible in morality without value premises, or our initial value premises cannot be justified, all morality is equally valid or invalid. This inevitably leads to moral skepticism (e.g. Mackie,1977) - a position where no moral claim can be held to be true - or moral relativism (e.g. Nietzsche, 2013) - a position where value conclusions can be justified as being aligned with the underlying values of particular socio-historical specific culture but that those values are as equally valid as the underlying values of any other socio-historical specific culture.

The practical implications of this can be considered by returning to the example of slavery. A moral sceptic would question the legitimacy of any statement that 'slavery is wrong', whereas a moral relativist would argue that slavery is not wrong, it is just disapproved of in our society. The sceptics position allows for no discussion of slavery whereas for a moral relativist some discussion is possible. For if a society values freedom from violence for its members then it is possible within that society to argue that slavery is wrong; however, if freedom from violence is not valued as highly as, for example, economic output - and it can be factually demonstrated that slaves have a higher level of economic activity - then the moral relativist would determine that an argument regarding the wrongs of slavery may not be compelling in that society.

While this appears to be a fundamental problem for the legitimacy of moral arguments, the position that there is an unbridgeable divide between facts and values is not universally supported. There are several arguments advanced against Hume's Law (e.g. Foot, 2001; Putman, 2002), which all seek to refute the fact/value distinction. One approach to this problem is to contextualise this dualism within the other dualisms of classical empiricism that have arisen from Hume. This can be understood as an approach to questioning the absolute logical separation of facts and values by first exploring and questioning the underlying premises of the nature of reality and how we gain explanatory knowledge of that reality. This is the approach that is taken by Bhaskar, and is explored in the next section.

1.2 The Approach of Critical Realism

Bhaskar's motivation in developing critical realism is an interest in 'the potential of reason and science for human emancipation' (1994:x) As such, the fact/value distinction is of fundamental concern. Bhaskar argues against the position that there is an unbridgeable divide between facts and values, and so facilitates the legitimacy of moral arguments. He does this through his concept of *explanatory critique*. This is the third component of the metatheory of basic critical realism, and so builds on the first two aspects. These are *transcendental realism* (1975) - which is his original argument regarding the nature of reality and how science can gain knowledge of that reality and *critical naturalism* (1979) which is concerned with the nature of social reality and how knowledge of society can be developed. In this section I explore Bhaskar's argument against the logical separation of facts and values by positioning it within a discussion of his approach to the philosophy of science and causation. This section has three parts, with each covering one aspect of basic critical realism.

1.2.1 Transcendental Realism

In *A Realist Theory of Science,* Bhaskar argues for the ontological position of *Transcendental Realism*. His aim is to provide 'a systematic realist account of science' which can act as an 'alternative to the positivism that has usurped the title

of science' (2008:8)[1]. By positivism, Bhaskar is referring to the position that certainty can only be gained through either direct sense experience of the interpretation of that information through the use of reason and logic; with the purpose of science being the discovery of general laws which govern the operation of the physical world. Bhaskar's considers that positivism is an assumption, which far from providing an appropriate account of science is just an ideology. His argument for an alternative approach is developed through an analysis of how scientific experiments can provide knowledge about the world; and concludes with the transcendental realist position on the nature of reality and the question of causation - which is the issue of how we understand the relationship between two events or actions such that the first (*x*) brings about the second (*y*). To explain transcendental realism, I first describe the problem of causation, through a summary of the historical approaches to this issue – those of Aristotle, Logical Necessity and Hume. I then discuss Bhaskar's argument for what scientific experiments reveal about causation and the nature of reality. This leads to a description of Bhaskar's generative notion of causality. By approaching Bhaskar from an understanding of these other works on causation it is possible to understand the comprehensiveness of Bhaskar's account and the consequences of this for the fact/value distinction.

Aristotle considers that when we are discussing what caused *y* we are in normal circumstances referring to more than one *x*. Aristotle subdivided causes accordingly into groups. These groups are *material causes, formal causes, efficient causes* and *final causes* (1998). To clarify this classification, consider the making of a pot. If we look at a pot and ask what caused the pot to exist, then the question of the cause would in ordinary understanding refer to the *efficient cause*, which would be the action of the potter in making the pot on the wheel. Aristotle's classification allows for causation to also encompass the *material cause*, the clay of which the pot is made; the *formal cause*, the plan or diagram of the pot that was used to guide the actions of the potter; and the *final cause*, the use of the pot as a receptacle for water or the production of pots as a means of exchange for other

[1] *A Realist Theory of Science* was originally published in 1975 by Leeds Books with a second edition, which included a postscript and an index published in 1977 by Harvester Press. This edition was reissued in 2008 by Verso. All references to the page numbers of quotations from this work refer to the 2008 edition.

goods. On this approach causes are *powers* that are put to work. This is a notion of causality that allows for a recognition that there is usually more than one cause for any event but it also recognises that human agents are themselves causes, not just by their actions but also because their reasons *qua* reasons have effects. What Aristotle's account lacks is an understanding of why causation can in some circumstances be captured by law-like statements, that describe regularities, and in other circumstances particular events do not occur with the same level of regularity. This is the issue of causal necessity.

The issue of causal necessity led to arguments that causal necessity must be understood as logical necessity. Rationalist philosophers, such as Descartes (1996) and Spinoza (1963) argue that the question of causation should only consider the single issue of the efficient cause. This approach is motivated by an attempt to understand how necessity works in causal relationships; as in the example of the pot, all of Aristotle's other causes could exist but without the actions of the potter the pot is not made. This leads to a mechanistic and deterministic approach to causation which understands causal laws as describing a relationship between the cause and the effect such that 'from a given determinant cause an effect necessarily follows; and on the other hand, if no determinant cause be given it is impossible that an effect can follow (Spinoza 1963:2). The difficulty of this approach is that while it allows for an understanding of why *x* necessarily follows *y*, it cannot account for why in some circumstances *y* occurs but this does not lead to the effect *x*.

Hume's approach to causation was to reject both the belief that what connects causal effects is logical necessity and the claim the causes have some power that brings about effects. This is an understanding of causation that is based on his empiricist understanding of reality - that the objects of knowledge are only matters of fact or relationships of ideas. He argues that causation is when a given impression in the mind of a subject, is always followed by another. 'When two impressions are consistently conjoined, the mind passes immediately from one to the other', For Hume this relationship is within our impressions and not in matters of fact. He argues that the idea that the causes are tethered in some way to their effects is simply a misconception based on 'custom or habit' (Groff, 2013:13). This radically skeptical approach to causation fails to provide an account of causation that allows us to make sense of scientific and everyday practice, and ultimately

leads to both the positivist search for constant conjunctions (Kolakowski,1972) and the alternative of overcoming Hume's skepticism by reintroducing a conception of causal power (Harre and Madden, 1975). Bhaskar, takes the latter approach.

Bhaskar's argument for the nature of causation, and reality, is developed through an analysis of the logic of scientific discovery. He argues that the positivism that is the dominant metatheory of science is dependent on a theory of causal laws that is drawn from Hume and which considers 'that laws are or depend upon constant conjunctions of atomistic events or states of affairs, interpreted as the objects of actual or possible experiences' (1979:124). Bhaskar argues that this is because positivism assumes that the causation that is observed in a scientific experiment is the typical case of causality but that by doing so 'it cannot show why, or the conditions under which, experiment is significant to science' (2008:13). Bhaskar argues that, if instead of seeing this causation as the typical case, an understanding of causation and reality is developed from an understanding of the logic of scientific discovery then this leads not to positivism but to transcendental realism.

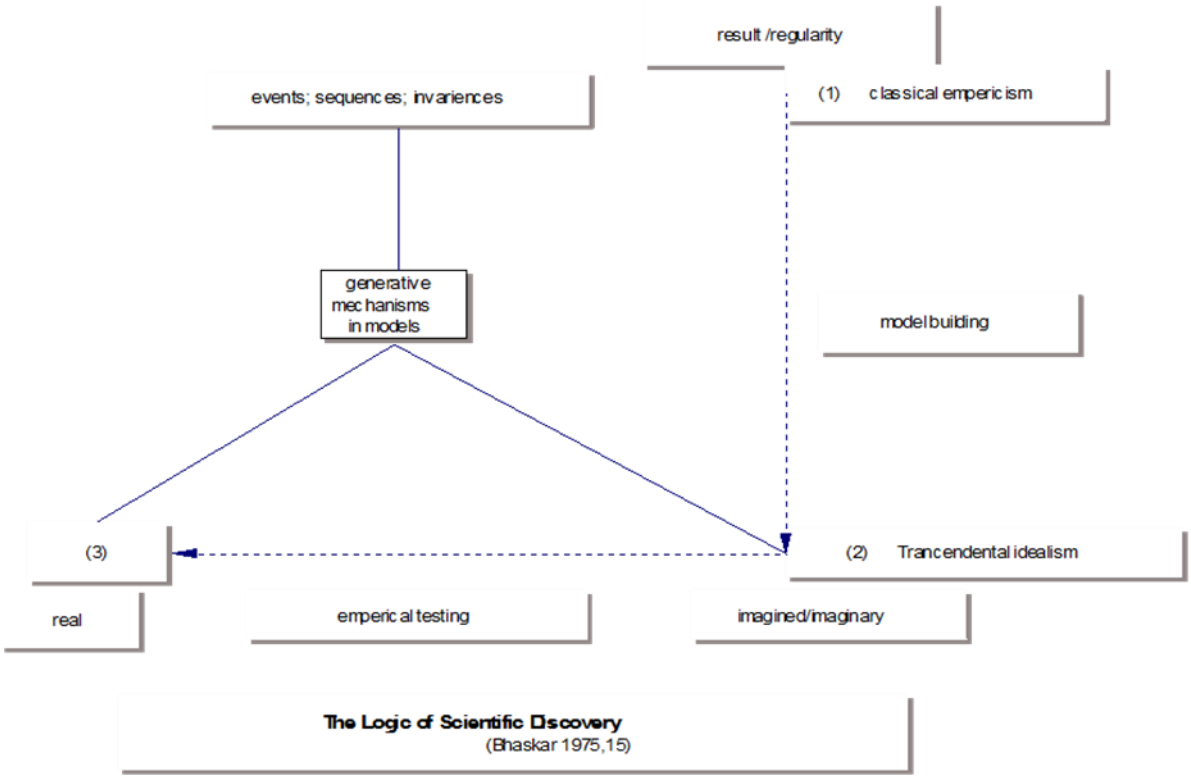

Figure 1 The Logic of Scientific Discovery (2008:15)

In analyzing the logic of scientific discovery, Bhaskar seeks to understand how an experiment can provide knowledge about the world which is not obtainable in any

other way. He argues that scientific discovery is a recognisable three stage process, as shown in Figure 1. Bhaskar argues that the first step that any scientist takes is to observe and describe a result or regularity. Following that observation, a scientist will undertake creative model building to try and explain what that specific aspect of reality may be like for the regularity that they have observed to have occurred. To demonstrate the reality of the explanatory model they have postulated, this hypothesis is then empirically tested.

For example, a scientist may observe that birds fly and people don't. The scientist may then produce a theoretical model that provides a possible explanation for the regularity - in this case this would be the theory of aerodynamics. To empirically test that explanation they may create a wing shape and observe its actions within a wind tunnel. For Bhaskar, this third stage of empirical testing only makes sense if what the scientist is doing is isolating for observation the actions of only one aspect of reality - a specific mechanism. Such as the mechanism of lift that is created by the pressure differential on each side of the wing. And that the need for an experiment to identify this is because outside of the artificial closure of the experiment this mechanism is working in conjunction with other mechanisms - such as friction and gravity - to generate the events that we observe. This leads him to conclude that 'the real basis of causal laws cannot be sequences of events' (2008:33) but mechanisms that generate events. With 'the task of science' being 'to discover what the real mechanisms are' (146). This understanding of science has consequences for ontology.

Bhaskar concludes that because knowledge can be gained, through observing an artificially closed system within an experiment, and applied, to the world outside the experiment, the world must be real and there must be a depth to reality. His argument for the world being real is that in undertaking scientific discovery there is always a scientist observing the experiment and this only makes sense if 'events are categorically independent of experiences' (32). While his argument that there is a depth to reality is because experiments allow the scientist to isolate and explain a single mechanism amongst the underlying mechanisms that generate the events that can be experienced. He describes this depth as the three domains of reality as shown in Figure 2.

	Domain of Real	Domain of Actual	Domain of Empirical
Mechanism	✓		
Events	✓	✓	
Experiences	✓	✓	✓

Figure 2. The Three Domains of Reality (2008:13)

While this ontological position provides a comprehensive understanding of experimental science, Bhaskar considers that an understanding of how scientific knowledge is produced, that is shown in Figure 1, also indicates the weaknesses of empiricism and idealism. His argument is that the 'classical empiricist tradition stops at the first step' and so considers 'the ultimate objects of reality are atomistic events' (24). It is as a consequence of this that empiricism has a 'misguided view of causation as that of constant conjunctions'. While the neo-Kantian tradition of idealism sees the need for the second' step but by stopping at this point considers that the imagined mechanisms can only ever be imaginary; so that 'the natural world becomes a construction of the human mind, or in its modern versions, the scientific community' (25). Bhaskar considers that both these positions have the same positivist conception of causality. And that it is only if 'the third step is taken can there be an adequate rationale for the use of laws to explain phenomena in open systems (where no constant conjunctions prevail) or for the experimental establishment of that knowledge in the first place' (145). His conclusion is that this step only makes sense on the conception of reality that he advances. To summarise, the analysis of the logic of scientific discovery provides an answer to the question of 'what must the world be like for science to be possible?' (23). Bhaskar's conclusion is an account of reality which makes 'the idea of a law governed world independent of man' (26) understandable and in doing so it produces a specific approach to the question of causation.

This approach is Bhaskar's generative notion of causality. This can be understood by starting from a specific event that is experienced outside an experiment, but which involves the actions of mechanisms that have been identified from experiments. Outside of the closed and highly determined system of an experiment – where a single mechanism can be isolated and so causation can be expressed in the form of if *x* then *y* - any identified mechanism is working in an

open system alongside other mechanisms; which together as a causal configuration generate events. *Mechanism* is a reference to causal power; which is what a thing can do if the appropriate circumstances materialize. In nature the numerous mechanisms may not generate the effects that they do when isolated for two reasons. The first is that the causal power may not be exercised, as it can exist unexercised. The second is that a power may be exercised and still fail to have effects; as it may be unactualized, due to the actions of other mechanisms. So mechanisms have causal power but work as *tendencies* and causal statements in the open systems of nature can be understood as legitimately taking the form *y tends* to follow *x*.

This account can be clarified by considering the examples of a lever and an eye. A lever consists of a bar laying over a pivot point which, due to the mechanism of mechanical advantage, has the power to lift weights greater than what could be lifted by the exercised force without the lever. While the lever has causal power, it can only be exercised when a force is applied to one end. And even if when it is exercised its power to lift may be unrealised as the load may be too great to be overcome by the mechanical advantage. The same can be seen in the example of an eye. The power to see is not exercised at all times - such as when we are asleep - and even when it is exercised, we only have a tendency to see as there may be other things that are blocking the line of sight or we may be distracted and not notice something that is directly in front of us.

What this consideration of an event does not provide is an understanding of how mechanisms occur. Bhaskar argues that mechanisms emerge from relatively enduring contingent structures. He defines emergence as ‘the relationship between two terms such that one […] arises out of the other, but is capable of reacting back on the first and is in any event causally and taxonomically irreducible to it (1994:73). This means that the relationship between the internal parts of a structure produces new properties over and above, and sometimes different to, the properties possessed by the component parts, these new emergent properties are generative mechanisms. Bhaskar argues that it is only in relatively enduring complex systems that causal powers emerge out of relationships as a consequence of the structure of those relationships. So, although the way something is structured is contingent, once it is structured in a certain way certain mechanisms necessarily emerge from it. For example, the power of water to

extinguish fire is not found in the properties of the component parts of water, which are hydrogen - a flammable gas, and oxygen - which is a prerequisite for a fire. The power to extinguish fire is a property that emerges out of the structural relationship of a water molecule. The concept of emergence allows Bhaskar to distinguish between a necessary and an accidental sequence, Where:

> A sequence Ea. Eb is necessary if and only if there is a generative mechanism or structure which when simulated by the event described by 'Ea' produces Eb. If we can have empirical knowledge of such generative mechanisms or structures then we can have knowledge of natural necessity a posteriori. (2008;19)

This is a non-reductionist non-deterministic understanding of logical necessity.

This concept of emergence contains two different types of emergence; synchronic and diachronic emergence. Diachronic is that mechanisms emerge from structures over time; whereas synchronic is that the emergence occurs simultaneously. An example of diachronic emergence is that 'during the course of history mankind evolved from apes' (1986:154). Synchronic emergence can be identified in a flock of migratory birds where the airflow patterns generated by the shape of the flock make flight easier for all the birds in the flock. This is because the reduction of effort that bird experiences by being part of the formation is an emergent property that occurs simultaneously with the flock of birds forming a particular shape.

From this it can be seen that Bhaskar considers that the concept of *structure* describes an aspect of reality; where 'the structure of a thing is constituted by its causal powers' (1993:404). On this understanding structures are not just larger atomistic entities for it is possible to: be part of more than one structure; for structures to contain substructures; and for a collection of atomistic entities to not create any structure. It is the specific relationship between the parts of a specific structure that leads to the emergence of a specific mechanism. For example, the property of sight will only emerge from the structure of an eye and not from a lever, no matter how the internal parts are arranged. This means that to fully identify any specific structures it is necessary to identify the specific mechanisms that emerge from them.

This understanding, that specific mechanisms emerge from specific structures, leads to Bhaskar arguing that the domain of reality where mechanisms exist is

stratified. His argument is that to understand the numerous mechanisms different sciences study different groups of mechanisms; such as the science of biology identifying biological mechanisms and the science of sociology exploring social mechanisms. This means that the mechanisms that exist in the domain of the real can be divided into groups according to which science studies them. Bhaskar argues that such ordering is not into separate parallel groups but in fact consists of an ordering into separate strata of mechanisms. In that the mechanisms that are studied by one science in its search for explanations are mechanisms that have emerged from a separate stratum, This is not a random stratification but instead is based on the consideration that the events that need causal explanation by reference to the higher stratum of mechanisms need to account for more mechanisms than the events that are have causal explanations produced by reference to the lower levels of strata; as the mechanisms that have causal power at the higher level are all the mechanisms studied by that science and the mechanisms from the lower strata. For example, the science of the study of human beings needs to account for more mechanisms than the science of the study of atoms as it not only has to include psychological mechanisms and social mechanisms it has to also include biological mechanisms and physical mechanisms; whereas the physical sciences only have to consider physical mechanisms. This puts the human sciences as studying a higher stratum of nature than that studied by physics. The theory of strata is schematically represented by Bhaskar in Figure 3.

Stratum I	2Na + 2HC1 = 2NaC1 + H.	
	explained by	
Stratum II	theory of atomic number	Mechanism 1
	and valency	
	explained by	
Stratum III	theory of electrons and	Mechanism 2
	atomic structure	
	explained by	
Stratum IV	[competing theories of sub-	[Mechanism 3]
	atomic structure]	

Figure 3. The Stratification of Reality (2008:169)

This stratification complements the concept of emergence in arguing against a reductionist approach to science. Because mechanisms emerge from structures, they cannot be located within the component parts of the structures but are located in the relationship between those component parts. That means that although mechanisms emerge from strata containing other mechanisms, they are not reducible to other mechanisms and therefore, explanations from deeper levels of strata cannot replace the explanations of the mechanisms from the higher level of strata. Instead in examining any specific event some mechanisms will be identified as acting directly and some will be identified as acting through other mechanisms.

This means a distinction can be made between the causal explanation of an event by a mechanism and the causal explanation of a mechanism by another more basic mechanism. These two different types of explanation are understood to be horizontal and vertical explanations (Collier,1994:48). For example, if a lack of water leads to a plant dying this is an event that can be explained horizontally by reference to mechanisms, whereas the explanation of economic relations by reference to underlying ideologies is the vertical explanation of mechanisms by reference to mechanisms (Collier,1989).

The concept of a vertical explanations can be seen as providing understanding of how science deepens its knowledge through scientific practice. Such as moving from explaining chemistry by reference to atoms and then explaining atoms by reference to subatomic particles - but not expecting an explanation of the actions of subatomic particles to produce an explanation of aspects of chemistry. This understanding of vertical and horizontal explanations would not be possible without some sort of understanding of stratification or lamination in the level of reality where mechanisms exist. However, this stratification does not suggest any ontological presupposition. The concept of synchronic emergence allows for a mechanism of a higher stratum to emerge simultaneously with the emergence of a mechanism in the lower strata. This means the stratification of reality doesn't lead to a position where society is seen to have occurred prior to individuals or individuals have occurred prior to society, thereby avoiding chicken and egg type questions.

A further consequence of this understanding of causation for scientific practice is Bhaskar's argument that the production of explanations is the key objective of science. His conception of tendencies allows natural necessity to be understood as meaning that tendencies once triggered necessarily operate, but that they may be unrealised due to other tendencies. This leads to scientific laws being understood as tendency statements; in that they are explanations that refer to the actions of mechanisms that cannot be directly observed but can be inferred from observations in experiments. This raises the question of how the issue of prediction can be understood? Critical realists argue against the understanding of science as producing predictions, Fleetwood and Hesketh, argue that when a prediction is made, by applying a law-like statement that was discovered by the experimental method, what is being made is a *tendential prediction*; in that it is recognised that a certain tendency exists and if it is exercised and actualised it will have certain effects (2006:249). This is just one type of explanation; an explanation of future events *ceteris paribus* (CP) - which is the rider that such a conclusion stands as long as 'all other things remaining equal'.

To summarise, Bhaskar's generative notion of causality is one of events, being generated by causal configurations of mechanisms, which have necessarily emerged from relatively enduring contingent structures. These mechanisms have causal power - that can be exercised or unexercised and, if exercised, may- because of the actions of other mechanisms - be realised or unrealised and so work as tendencies. This is an understanding of causation that is positioned within the Aristotelian tradition of there being more than one cause for any event while accounting for both natural necessity and causal power in a way that leads to a non-reductionist understanding of science.

The relevance of this understanding of causation to the question of the facts/value distinction is that a premise of the argument for Hume's law is Hume's understanding of what a fact is. Hume argues that facts are just descriptive statements about what can be directly observed; whereas, for Bhaskar, the category of facts also includes aspects of the world, mechanisms, that we cannot directly observe but who's existence we can infer from our observations. This is not just a wider conception of what a fact is but is one that also considers that you can make factual statements about the existence of social values. This is because events that occur due to the actions of human agents must include – due to their

causal power - the values that are held by those agents as part of the causal configuration that has generated that event. The consequence of this is that the factual existence of values must be asserted. This is a significantly wider understanding of what a fact is than that which led to the initial development of the fact/value distinction.

For example, if the event is one individual being enslaved by another, then in analyzing the causal configuration that produced this event any explanation will need to account for all the relevant causal factors. This may include the biological structure, from which mechanisms such as an individual's labour power emerge; the economic structure, from which emerges mechanisms such as the ability to convert labour power to wealth; and the social and legal structure from which mechanisms emerge that may enable one person to enslave another. All of these structures if relatively enduring generate specific mechanisms, and others, which together create the causal configurations that result in this individual event. But in addition to these factors, on Bhaskar's approach to causation the relevant causal factors will include the moral values that are present or absent in the participants and the causal power of those values with respect to the specific event. The question this raises is how would such an analysis be undertaken?

The complexity of the causal analysis of such an event, and the factual existence of specific values, leads to Bhaskar drawing conclusions regarding the method of enquiry for the human sciences. Bhaskar considers that it is not possible to produce explanations of social reality through the experimental method. This is because of the number of mechanisms in play and the difficulty of isolating the relevant mechanisms means it is not possible to use a key aspect of that method; the design and implementation of repeatable experiments. Further to this he considers, for the same reason, that the explanations it is possible to produce within the human sciences can never be understood to be covering laws. This leads to Bhaskar proposing a *critical naturalist* approach to producing explanations of social reality.

1.2.2 Critical Naturalism

In *The Possibility of Naturalism* (1979), Bhaskar further develops his understanding of the nature of reality; by considering the question of how explanatory knowledge of social reality is possible. C*ritical naturalism* is Bhaskar's

answer to that question. Where naturalism is ‘the susceptibility of social and natural phenomena to explanation in essentially the same way, i.e. 'scientifically'. In defining ‘naturalism Bhaskar distinguishing his usage from two others. These are a materialist conception which understands ‘social, and more generally human’ life as dependent upon nature and an ethical naturalist position that argues that ‘there is no unbridgeable logical gap between’ facts and values’ (1986:118).

In this section I will describe: Bhaskar’s argument that transcendental realism is indispensable for the development of a critical naturalism; what he believes a model of social reality should explain; the models he develops; and the limits that the nature of social reality creates for any explanation. The relevance of critical naturalism to the question of the legitimacy of moral arguments is twofold. The first is that it provides a methodology for the explanation of social values. This allows for value judgements to be the subject of enquiry and thereby rejects the stronger interpretation of Hume’s Law. The second is that it provides the foundation for the complete rejection of an unbridgeable logical divide, through the subsequent concept of *explanatory critique*.

Bhaskar’s argument for the method of naturalism - that social phenomena can be explained scientifically - is built on the understanding of science that is provided by transcendental realism. He argues that these ontological assumptions are ‘not formally necessary for the refutation of anti-naturalism but they are indispensable for the development of a plausible realist alternative’ (1986:122). This is because the depth realist understanding of reality, and the consequential argument that science produces explanations not predictions, legitimizes the social world as an object which can be enquired into through the use of the logic of scientific discovery, while rejecting reductionism (unity of content) and scientism (unity of method). Such an approach, Bhaskar argues, leads to ‘a qualified and critical naturalism’. This position is opposed to ‘a more or less unqualified naturalism, usually positivistic in complexion’ or an ‘an anti-naturalism,’ based on ‘a notion of social reality as pre-interpreted, conceptual or linguistic in character’ (1986:120). Both of these alternative positions are seen by Bhaskar to be dependent upon the ‘empiricist ontology’ (1979:132) with its separation of all possible objects of knowledge into those that are derived from sensory experience or the relation of ideas.

To develop this critical naturalism Bhaskar asks the question ‘what must the social world be like for social knowledge to be possible?’ This is the same approach as he uses to determine the nature of reality; though while the question of ‘how scientific experiments can provide knowledge about the world,’ produces the overall ontological position of transcendental realism; the intent of this specific question is to identify what a model of social reality must be able to explain and then produce a model that accounts for those features. Bhaskar considers that the relevant considerations that a model of society must address are: the facts of our own existence; the nature of reality; and the facts that the other theories of society explain/fail to explain. Bhaskar argues that the facts of our own existence are that we exist as objects within society but we also have relationships within society and other relationships that differ from these, as they are parts of different structures. The nature of reality is the transcendental realist position - where the world as an open system with mechanisms generating events. And what the other theories seek to explain - as seen in the theories of structuralism, humanism and the dialectical approach to social activity - is social structures, individuals and ‘the relationship between society and people’ (1979:32).

Bhaskar argues that the three existing theories, that he identifies, each fail because they cannot account for a specific aspect of the relationship between structure and agency. Structuralism states that social structures determine the individual; as such he considers that it fails to account for how the actions of individuals’ can change society. Humanism states the opposite position, that individuals determine how society is; as such he considers that it fails to account for why people do different things in different social structures. While finally the dialectical approach considers that society emerges from a dialectical process between societies and individuals; but in this model structures and individuals have causal power in the same way, which, Bhaskar argues, cannot be the case. Bhaskar’s conclusion is that all these models fail to account for all the facts of existence and the world as described by transcendental realism. This leads to the requirement for a different approach.

Bhaskar argues for a *transformational model of social activity* (TMSA). He considers that this addresses the difficulties with these other theories because the:

> TMSA allows the isolation of a triple set of twinned mistakes: the ontological errors of voluntarism and reification; the constitutive errors of

> individualism and collectivism; and the epistemic errors of methodological individualism and social determinism (1986:125).

It does this because the TMSA is a model of society where society and agents are ‘essentially distinct’; in that ‘while society exists only in virtue of human agency, and human agency (or being) always presupposes (and expresses) some or other definite social form, they cannot be reduced to or reconstructed from one another.’ (1986:123-124) But while they are ‘essentially distinct’ they are ‘existentially interdependent’. In that 'society is the condition for our agency’ and ‘human agency is equally a condition of society’ (123). As such, the causal relationship between the two is that society is both the cause of and the product of human action. Society is understood on this model as an aspect of reality that ‘agents reproduce in their substantive motivated productions’ and also ‘the unmotivated conditions governing (and employed in) those productions.’ In this way society is understood to be ‘both the unconscious medium and the unintended (and generally non-teleological) product of’ social activity (123). The TMSA can best be understood if considered visually, as shown in Figure 4.

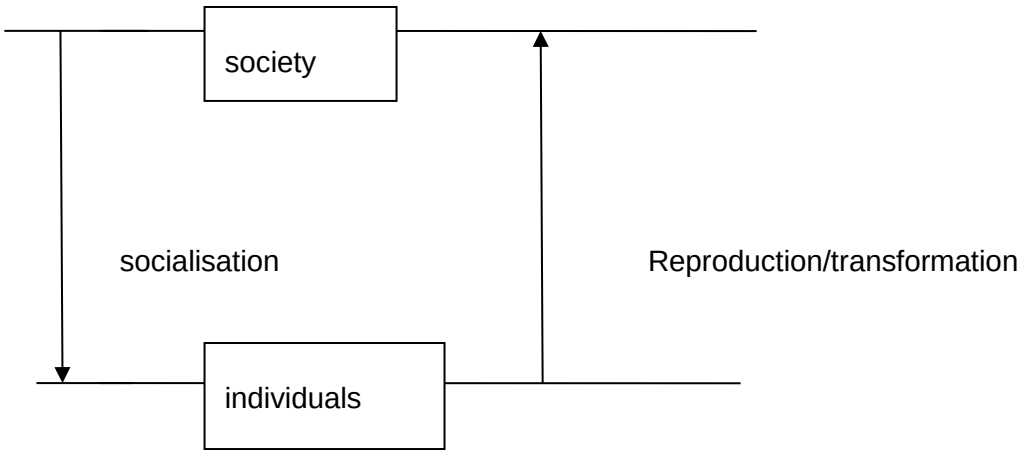

Figure 4. The Transformational Model of Social Activity (1979:36)

This is a model of social reality which shows how it may be possible to gain knowledge of that reality. It clarifies that that to gain such knowledge the study of society cannot be reduced to the study of individuals or vice versa. Instead it shows that while the social mechanisms that generate a specific event cannot be actually isolated from each other, they can be analytically divided into the

mechanisms that are the subject of social sciences and mechanisms that are the subject of psychological sciences.

What is missing from this analysis is the wider reality that society exists within; Bhaskar addresses this through the development of *the four-planar social cube in its natural setting* (1986).This subsequent model takes the issue of social reality, which is modeled by the TMSA and ensures that this can be comprehended and explored in a way that understands society as existing as part of and not separate to the rest of reality. As with the TMSA this is a model that is best described pictorially, as shown in Figure 5.

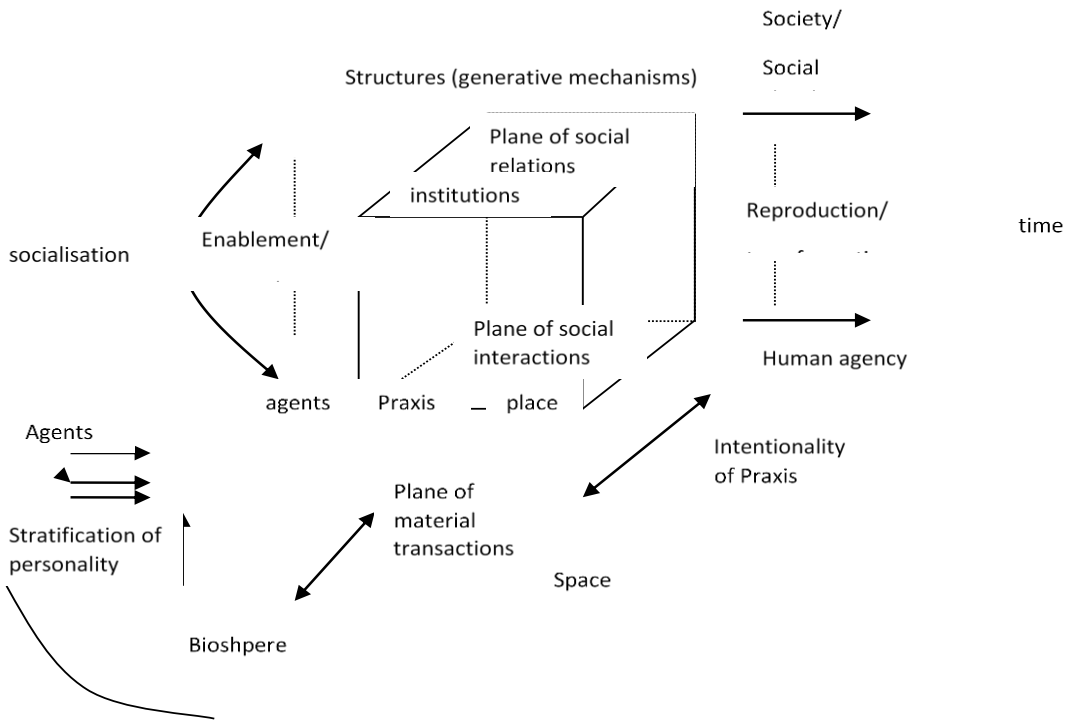

Figure 5.The Social Cube in its Natural Setting (1986:130)

While this model still shows that the actions of agents are constrained or enabled by society; which the agent, by their action, either reproduces or transforms; it also shows that this action is spatially and temporally located, and takes place, in the larger structure of the biosphere. The importance of this model is that it allows for a recognition and categorisation of all the different mechanisms that affect society, but in a way that recognises their mutual interaction. This is a conception of social interaction which is not one of concentric circles of mechanisms, where plane *a* constrains/enables *b* which does the same to *c* and so on, but one which

recognises that *a* both constrains and enables *c* which does the same to *a*. So that, just as society enables and constrains human activity which can reproduce or transform society, the material content of the world – 'which includes 'all non-human things' (1986:128) - both constrain and enable, but are reproducible and transformable by human activity.

To clarify these models, consider how the example of one individual being enslaved by another can be considered using this framework. The use of the TMSA, allows for an understanding that an individual who is a slave is defined as such by a social structure which has slavery as an institution but that the institution of slavery cannot exist separately to the existence of human agents who are masters or slaves and that it is only through the actions of these individuals reproducing that aspect of the social structure that slavery continues to exist - and it will continue to exist as an aspect of society unless individual agents take actions that transform that aspect of society. The social cube in its natural setting allows for the same understanding but it also allows for the recognition that the institution of slavery is one response to the material conditions in which human agency and society exists; and as such, genuine transformative activity that leads to human emancipation may need to not just consider the generative mechanisms of society but the mechanisms in the natural world which led to the introduction of, or increase in the use of, slavery and whose transformation may lead to a decline in exploitation.

As well as an understanding of how social knowledge is possible, what these models also allow for is a recognition of the limits, which are specific to social science, to the knowledge that can be gained through the use of naturalism. Bhaskar describes these as ontological limits – limits due to the nature of social reality; relational limits –limits due to the fact that the object of human sciences are humans, who can reason and respond to theories, resulting in a causal interdependency between human sciences and their subject matters; and epistemological limits – which are the limits to knowledge is due to the openness of social systems leading to the impossibility of obtaining decisive test situations. These limits cannot be overcome and have the consequence of making social sciences prone to error.

This understanding of social reality and the limits to social knowledge leads to the detail of the epistemological approach of critical naturalism. This is an approach to social knowledge that working from the foundation of ontological realism shows how it is possible to gain relative knowledge of this reality. However, this *epistemological relativism* is not an acceptance of *judgmental relativism*. Bhaskar argues that 'even though our knowledge is relative, we can produce in particular contexts, strong arguments for preferring one set of beliefs one set of theories about the world to another' (2017:20). With respect to social reality this *judgmental rationality* is possible through the use of critical naturalism. The specifics of this approach are not relevant to the question of the legitimacy of moral arguments and so are discussed in Chapter Five; where the question of how we can discover more about morality is considered. The key issue here is that Bhaskar's argument shows that it is possible to produce scientific explanations of aspects of society.

As they are an aspect of social reality, any explanatory account of a specific event must consider the role of values. This was the conclusion, that was drawn from the ontology of transcendental realism – that the relevant causal factors (facts) will include the moral values that are present or absent in the participants and the causal power of those values with respect to the specific event. The question is how the models discussed can assist in the production of these explanations. The models that are found in critical naturalism allow values to be analytically separated into the values that exist in society and values that are held by individuals. While these both have causal power, the former have this power with respect to agents through a process of socialisation. While the latter have causal power, not just with respect to the reproduction or transformation of those social values, but with respect to all other aspects of reality; when it can be seen that the action that is undertaken is in some aspect motivated by those values. As such, it is possible to use these models to refer to values as part of a causal analysis.

In arguing that social science can include values within its area of study, Bhaskar makes some qualifications. The first is that he recognises that while 'values are among the object studied that does not by itself require the description to be crouched in valuing language'; the analogy is that 'a student of canine behaviour does not have to bark.' Therefore, while 'some social scientific language will be indeed be value laden' it is so 'not in advance of or in addition to but just by virtue

of being descriptive and explanatory' (Collier 1994:178). His second qualification is that while Bhaskar recognizes that scientific research is often motivated by the values that are held by the scientist conducting the research he argues that 'it is not the motivating values that determine its factual findings' (180). For example, the conclusions of an argument from the valuing of freedom to the rejection of slavery may be motivated by the researcher sharing that value but the conclusions should be accepted by all those who recognize the importance of this value, due to the identified facts.

The consequence of critical naturalism is that the stronger interpretation of Hume's law - that no value premises can be used in any argument - can be rejected. In summary, the transcendental realist conception of causation and facts is incompatible with the argument that values should be banished from social science. The critical naturalist approach allows for the production of explanations that include the causal power of values and therefore, on this approach, it is reasonable for social science to have values as part of the research object and for the outcome of specific activities to be evaluated through reference to the wider values that they are supposed to promote.

The rejection of the stronger interpretation of Hume's law still leaves the weaker interpretation - that moral arguments are deemed to be illegitimate for reasons of logic - unchallenged. This is because while critical naturalism, as discussed to this point, allows for value to value arguments it doesn't address the legitimacy of any enquiry into the factual basis for the values that we hold, such as why freedom is valued. To address this weaker interpretation, and so enable critical naturalism to be developed into ethical naturalism, Bhaskar has to show why Hume's Law can be completely rejected. To do this he develops the concept of *explanatory critique*.

1.2.3 Explanatory Critique

Bhaskar's argument for *explanatory critiques* is introduced in *The Possibility of Naturalism* and developed in *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (1986). This argument builds upon an understanding of the nature of social reality and the possibility of producing explanations of that reality to show how an argument with purely factual premises can legitimately draw an ought conclusion, thereby refuting Hume's law. In this section I consider the argument for explanatory critique, why it is held to refute Hume's law; the consequence this refutation has for moral

arguments and potential difficulties with Bhaskar's concept. From this discussion it can be seen that the metatheory of critical realism opens up the possibility of values and morality as being an area of study and the development of arguments, on the basis of those enquiries, for why one moral position should be favoured over another.

Bhaskar has already shown, with critical naturalism, that it is possible to produce explanations of social reality. One aspect of this reality is the beliefs that are prevalent within a society. This means that in examining those beliefs it is possible to question how they align with the aspect of reality that they are about and, on this basis, draw a conclusion on the truth or falsity of a belief. For example, the fact that the earth is round can be deemed to be true or false by reference to a set of facts about reality, the belief that the earth is round can be deemed to be true or false by reference to the same set of facts about reality. If a belief is identified as false, because it doesn't align with reality, and it is found to be prevalent in society, then a conclusion of scientific research can be that a false belief exists within society.

Bhaskar holds that a social scientist would not cease their enquiry at the point of stating that a belief is false but would want to explain why that false belief is held. For if there is a contradiction within a society between the generally accepted and prevalent ideas about the causes of a feature of that society and the real causes of that feature then it is necessary to also explain why this identified false belief is held. For example, if it was found that the belief that the world is flat was prevalent in society, the cause of that false belief might be found to be the domination of scientific and popular debate by The Flat Earth Society. This would lead to a conclusion that *a* is a false belief and the belief *a* is held because of *y.*
This explanation of why a false belief is held is therefore, not just an explanation of why that belief is held but is also a criticism of the aspect of society that causes that false belief to be held; an explanatory critique. This is because a purely objective analysis of the evidence does not just produce the factual statements '*x* is wrong to believe *a*' and '*y* causes *x* to believe *a* (a being false) but also, as a consequence of this, the statement '*y* should be changed'. For:

> if one is in possession of a theory of why false consciousness is necessary, then one can pass immediately, without the addition of any extraneous value judgements to a negative evaluation of the object […] that makes that consciousness necessary (1979:63).

This is the production of the conclusion that an existing aspect of society *ought* to be changed and it is in this way that, for Bhaskar, a social scientist will differ from a natural scientist; in criticising the object studied; through the production of explanatory critiques.

This means explanatory critiques argue from purely factual basis to the production of a value judgement. In considering how this has been achieved, Bhaskar argues that there is only one part of an entire explanatory critique that may be understood to be a value premise and that is the premise 'that it is better to believe what is true than what is false'. But this is not a premise that is unique to explanatory critiques, Bhaskar considers it is a premise that is fundamental to all arguments and the laws of logic themselves. He argues:

> That truth is a good (*ceteris paribus*) is not only a condition of moral discourse it is a condition of any discourse at all. Commitment to truth and consistency apply as much to factual as to value discourse; and so cannot be seized upon as a concealed (value) premise to rescue the autonomy of values from factual discourse, without destroying the distinction between the two, the distinction that it is the point of the objection to uphold. (1979:63)

Therefore, what the argument for explanatory critique demonstrates is that it is possible to produce an ought conclusion with nothing more than a set of facts and the valuing of truth that is central to all logic

This demonstration that at least one fact to value argument is possible means that the absolute logical divide of Hume's law cannot be maintained. Therefore, the concept of explanatory critique along with Bhaskar's approach to social reality, and how we gain knowledge of that reality through the use of social science, has the consequence of rejecting Hume's Law in its entirety. The strength of this position can be shown by considering the example of Hyland's argument at the start of this chapter. Hyland was seen to be arguing for the importance of research and evidence to support the fight against modern slavery. Implicit in this argument is the valuing of truth and the premise that it is better to believe what is true than

what is false. As such, Bhaskar's argument - that truth is an implicit value - can be seen in the logical soundness of Hyland's conclusion that we 'ought' to research the issue of modern slavery. However, the question that the rejection of Hume's Law raises is does this removal of the unbridgeable divide between facts and values mean that it is possible to undertake an enquiry into the factual basis of moral values. For example, does it mean that it is possible to produce an explanatory account that shows why slavery itself is wrong and 'ought' to be prohibited?

The simple answer is that the rejection of Hume's Law means that moral arguments are as legitimate as any other type of argument. This is because the direct consequence of Bhaskar's argument for a belief-based explanatory critique is that the question that must be put to any specific fact to value arguments is no longer one of the validity of the form of the argument but the question of the truth of the conclusion of the argument. As such, the concept of explanatory critique creates the possibility of ethical naturalism.

While this is a legitimate conclusion it opens up a range of subsequent questions, the most obvious being the relationship between the demonstration that false beliefs can be legitimately criticized and enquiries into moral values. The difficulty with this can be illustrated through the example of slavery. An investigation into the causes of slavery, may identify (i.) the cause of slavery (and conclude in this instance that it was in general terms a byproduct of power relationships within the economic system): and (ii.) that this identified cause was different to the generally held belief in society about the cause of slavery (for example Aristotle's argument that some people are natural slaves). If this is the case then the investigation has identified two separate things. The first is the cause of slavery, the second is the false belief about the cause of slavery. In investigating the false belief, it may then find that (iii.) the same power relationship that generally causes slavery is also the cause of the prevalent false belief. This means that the social scientist has not just produced an explanation of slavery but a criticism of the current power relationships within society. The point here is not the postulation of a genuine analysis of the causes of slavery and stating that Aristotle's belief in natural slaves is still widely held but to provide an example of the concept of explanatory critique and how it may work in practice. The key aspect of this example is that what it demonstrates is at no point has an argument been produced that slavery is wrong.

As such, belief based explanatory critiques demonstrate the possibility of valid moral arguments but are not moral arguments. Collier argues that to create moral arguments the concept of explanatory critique can be extended from cognitive error to unsatisfied needs (1994:182); needs based explanatory critiques. His argument for this distinction is that an explanation of a structural feature of society may potentially indicate either: (i.) there is a false belief about the causes of that feature and that there are structural reasons for that false belief persisting; or (ii.) a need that is unfulfilled, an obstacle preventing its satisfaction and a means of removing that obstacle. In this way he argues that social science should not just identify false beliefs, but also unfulfilled needs and so open 'up the possibility of extending realism into the realms of values and morality' (1998:389). For example, by considering the needs that are unfulfilled by the enslavement of individuals – which would be a collection of 'is' statements and on the basis of those premises draw the conclusion that slavery 'ought' to be prohibited.

While this indicates that explanatory critique creates significant consequences for moral arguments, that is not to say there are no recognised difficulties with this concept. Bhaskar's discussion of facts to values in *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* is embedded in an overall discussion of the relationship between theory and practice. He argues that 'good social science should be understood as generating practical emancipatory projects' (Collier 1994:183). In that social science is 'non neutral' in two ways 'it always consists of a *practical intervention* in social life' and it sometimes *logically entails* values and practical judgements' (1986:169). In making this argument for the 'emancipatory impulse' of the human sciences Bhaskar adds the *ceteris paribus* clause. This is because he recognizes that the conclusions of social science apply in the open system of the human world and are based on evidential and not inductive arguments and so are conclusions regarding an open system that is subject to change. It is in this relationship between theory and practice that Sayer identifies difficulties with the concept of explanatory critique.

Sayer criticizes the practical application of explanatory critiques. He argues that the statement that 'institutions that cause false beliefs should be transformed into ones that generate true ones' cannot be supported in practice. This is because 'the *ceteris paribus* clause conceals conditions constantly present in social scientific enquiries'. These must be approached by saying that because all social

scientific explanations consider several structures and mechanisms simultaneously ‘that it is not self-evident how to take the step to a negative judgement’. As ‘to remove one problem may not automatically bring about an improvement’ (Sayer 2000 in Danermark *et al* 1997:196-7). This is a legitimate criticism of the practical application of explanatory critiques and it aligns with the limits of naturalism which are already recognised by Bhaskar. However, what it doesn’t do is refute the position that the divide between facts and values has been breached and so moral arguments are legitimate.

Sayer’s second criticism is aimed at the use of existing values by social science, such as the underlying values that lead to something being identified as a need in the first place. Sayer argues that in defining a problem the normative component of that definition is seldom sufficiently examined; and as such ‘we bring considerations of good and bad to the reasoning process that are not self-evident’, but are instead dependent on moral considerations (2000:157-169). This un-acknowledged normative component can be seen in the use of the concept of need. For example, in examining slavery it may be possible through a need based explanatory critique to demonstrate that an individuals need for self-determination is restricted by slavery. But this demonstration will not lead to an emancipatory project to eradicate slavery without an underlying morality. Hyland implies that this underlying morality is the valuing of freedom, safety and dignity and the abhorrence of the violent treatment of people; this is his unacknowledged normative component, which, while its use in an argument is legitimate, is neither challenged or justified within the argument. From this it can be seen that needs based explanatory critique assumes that there is a commitment to meeting the needs of other people and that this commitment will create practical action; if it is shown that their needs are not being met. But it is not an enquiry into the factual basis of moral values. Therefore, while needs based explanatory critiques can be understood as legitimate arguments, the underlying moral values are not assessed on this approach and so the concerns of morality are not fully addressed by a positive answer to the question of the legitimacy of moral arguments. It is for this reason that Sayer argues that, it is important for social scientific descriptions and explanations to be connected to the discourses of moral philosophy.

To summarise, the logical separation of facts from values rests on Hume’s understanding of what a fact is and how it differs from a value. A refutation of

Hume's ontological position - through the use of a theory of reality that provides a more comprehensive understanding of causation than can be developed from Hume - leads to an understanding of reality where it is legitimate to argue from facts to values. This refutes both interpretations of Hume's Law. Therefore, if the metatheory of basic critical realism is accepted then moral arguments must be considered as legitimate.

This positive answer is not itself a moral theory or a demonstration of how an enquiry into morality may possibly progress. It only shows that there are no laws of logic that prevent an enquiry into the aspects of reality that generate existing moral values and, on this basis, that there is the potential to draw conclusions on the legitimacy of moral theories and values. To examine how such an enquiry may progress it is necessary to consider the answers that are provided by critical realists to other questions in morality.

The next question to be considered is that of moral realism and the universality of morality. This is for two reasons. The first is that as the acceptance of Hume's Law leads to the positions of moral relativism and moral skepticism, a consequence of its refutation is that it opens up the theoretical possibility of moral realism. The second is that the chronological development of Bhaskar's own thoughts on morality was that he moved from the considerations of the nature of social reality and the possibility of ethical naturalism, that have been discussed in this chapter, to these questions of moral realism and universality. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter 2 The Universality of Morality

> It is indeed the case that we have no other criterion of truth or right-reason than the example and form of the opinions and customs of our own country (*On the Cannibals,* Michel De Montaigne:1580)

The question of universality in morality is concerned with if the conclusions of any argument that is made in morality can only be applicable to a specific event or socio-historical situation, or if they can be understandable as universally applicable. The postulation of an unbridgeable divide between facts and values, which supports the assertion that moral arguments are illegitimate, leads to moral relativism and moral scepticism, and so rejects universality. As such, Bhaskar's refutation of this divide, which was discussed in the last chapter, creates the potential to reassess the question of the universality of morality. This is only a potential to reassess, and not an automatic rejection of relativism and scepticism. This is because the asserting of a fact/value distinction only provides one argument for supporting approaches, such as the relativism of Montaigne, which predate the fact/value distinction and which are argued for on separate grounds.

There are potentially two ways that the question of universality can be answered positively. The stronger interpretation is to consider that morality may be shown to be universal in that value conclusions are made by reference to an aspect of reality, that transcends our individual circumstances; this is a moral realist position. One example of such an approach is Kantian morality, which is dependent on the universality of rationality (1964). The weaker interpretation is to consider that it is possible for a moral system to be universally applicable, if it is possible that it may be agreed on as being so. An example of such an approach is The United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The difference between the two approaches is the former is a search for an existing universal aspect of reality while the latter seeks to identify moral positions that could potentially be universally supported. The difference between these positions can be illuminated by considering the different approaches they may take to the question of if modern day slavery is wrong. A strong universalist may argue that slavery is wrong due to

something that is fundamental to being human, while a weak universalist may argue that slavery is wrong because we can all agree it is wrong.

Positive answers to the question of the universality of morality can be found in the moral theories that are developed using the metatheory of transcendental realism. However, of these, there is a significant difference between the moral theories of Bhaskar, and Elder-Vass. Bhaskar argues that scientific realism entails moral realism, the stronger interpretation of universality, and Elder-Vass argues that it does not. In this chapter I explore the issue of universality through describing, in the first section, the moral theories of Bhaskar and Elder Vass and, in the second part, considering these two approaches and the existing discussions of these theories by situating them within a discussion of transcendental realism. This discussion introduces a component of the metatheory which has not yet been discussed, the transitive and intransitive dimension of science. My argument is that by, considering both theories within the context of the transitive and intransitive dimension and the generative notion of causality then it can be seen that, while there are gaps in his overall moral theory, Bhaskar's approach is more coherent within the metatheory of critical realism than Elder-Vass's; and therefore, it can be argued that the use of the metatheory leads to a strong universalist understanding of morality.

2.1 Competing Approaches to the Question: Bhaskar and Elder-Vass

2.1.1 Dialectical Critical Realist Ethics

Bhaskar's argument for the universality of morality is a component of his dialectical critical realist ethics; this is a moral realist and ethical naturalist position, that seeks to ground moral theory in an understanding of reality. This understanding of reality is found in dialectical critical realism (DCR). Which is the development of the basic metatheory of critical realism (BCR) through Bhaskar's dialectical turn (1993,1994). In developing DCR, Bhaskar's aim is to provide a philosophical basis for Marxist social theory and 'establish the groundwork for a new ethical theory' which could build on some of the concepts developed through BCR to 'resolve the problematic theory-practice dichotomy associated with radical forms of social

science' (1998:561). The moral theory that is the product of this is considered, by Norrie, to be 'perhaps the hardest element to grasp in Bhaskar's system' (2010:156). However, what is central to this theory is the position of moral realism. As such, by summarising some of the key components of DCR and then describing his moral theory, with reference to the question of the universality of morality a level of illumination is provided with respect to the key aspects of his theory.

In DCR Bhaskar seeks to produce a general theory of dialectic. Where dialectic is the understanding of thought and investigation as progressing through contradiction and the resolution of contradiction. For Bhaskar, Hegel's position – where investigation proceeds by moving from thesis and anti-thesis to synthesis - is only a special case of this general theory of dialectic. Bhaskar's own dialectic consists of four moments; non-identity, negativity, totality and transformative agency. This is a concept that has absence as its central concern.

For Bhaskar, the underlying reality or *alethic truth* of dialectic is 'The absenting of constraints on absenting absences or ills'; so dialectic is the identification and elimination of absences. What Bhaskar can be understood to be saying is that the truth of the dialectic is the primacy of absence and that the dialectical process itself starts from absence and progresses to transformative agency. To describe Bhaskar's Dialectic, it is necessary to first define *'*alethic truth' and consider his use of absence and the explanatory power it provides.

Bhaskar does not use the phrase 'truth'; but the phrase *'*alethic truth', Bhaskar defines this as:

> A species of ontological truth constituting and following on the truth of, or real reason(s) for, or dialectical ground of, things, as distinct from propositions, possible in virtue of the ontological stratification of the world and attainable in virtue of the dynamic character of science (1993:394).

This is a different definition of truth than, for example, truth as correspondence or coherence. Bhaskar is defining truth as alethic truth to ensure that truth is seen as revealing something that was otherwise hidden. So that a true statement about something can be understood to be one with explanatory power revealing the depth of reality; whereas, by contrast a false position would be one that hides something from view. The search for truth is therefore the search for previously

hidden connections or the ontological depth to reality, the underlying structure and generative mechanisms. To clarify this concept, Bhaskar uses the example that ‘the truth of the fact that water boils at 100°C lays in its molecular constitution’ (2017:66). From this it can be seen that the conception of alethic truth is an ontological concept.

In giving primacy to absence Bhaskar considers that he is arguing against the entire western philosophical tradition from Plato onwards; for its commitment to, what he calls, ‘Ontological Monovalance’ - the view that that there is only being, not nonbeing. Bhaskar argues against both this and ontological polyvalence with the primacy of being by taking a position of ontological polyvalance with the primacy of non-being. This can be described as the existence, and primacy, of negative facts; that absences are real, ontologically prior and have effects. In taking this position Bhaskar can be understood to be reviving the notion of real absenting from medieval philosophy. Collier considers that:

> Two doctrines from medieval philosophy are retrieved by Bhaskar ‘(1) that logical negation and real negation are distinct: one can assert the reality of an absence; absence is not a mere projection of the negative form of judgment; and (2) "ills ... can always be seen as absences (1993:238 in 1998:690)

The absences identified as real by Bhaskar are seen by him to have an ontological not an epistemological primacy. By this he means that while non-being has primacy we gain our knowledge of non-being through our knowledge of being.

This is a concept that should be assessed by reference to its explanatory power. Bhaskar argues that the western philosophical tradition has made the mistakes that it has because it has denied the existence of underlying structures and thereby committed the epistemological fallacy - the reduction of what is to what is known/knowable. Bhaskar’s approach of ontological polyvalance with the primacy of the negative means that when seeking to examine social structures and produce explanations then primacy is given to ills. That means that if you want to make things better it is important to first recognize what is wrong. This is the political context of the primacy of non-being. For example, If the issue is malnutrition then the statement that non-being has ontological primacy means that when considering the underlying structure or generative mechanisms of hunger

the primary concern is not the presence of starving people who need food but the absence of food.

In considering the dialectical process itself Bhaskar argues that there are four moments in the movement from absence to transformative agency (which he subsequently refers to as MELD). These are:

1M (first moment) concerned with non-identity, stratification, multiplicity, depth;

2E (second edge) concerned with absence and negativity;

3L (third level) concerned with totality, reflexivity, internal relations;

4D (fourth dimension) concerned with transformative agency and human emancipation.

At 1M sits the concepts from basic critical realism such as the distinction between ontology and epistemology (2017:57-59). At 2E the dialectical turn can be seen to take effect; it is at this level where absence is considered. It is concerned with 'things like the absence of rain or some concrete instance of something not happening which has causal effect and that we need to take account of in our understanding of reality'(2017:74). This moment of 2E is the 'primary emphasis' of Bhaskar's writings on Dialectic (2000a:3,n1). At the third level (3L) absence is considered as part of the totality and the internal relations. What Bhaskar can be understood as saying here is that the absence identified at 2E should not be considered in an atomistic way but by an understanding of the totality that it is a part of. One aspect of this totality is the concrete universal – the understanding that all concrete singular individual human beings have at their core something that is universal. Finally, the fourth dimension (4D) is where actual transformative agency takes place. This emancipatory transformation 'depends on the transformation of structures not the amelioration of states of affairs' (1986:171). And so, using his concept of four-planar social being - where everything that occurs in society 'occurs simultaneously at four different levels' - genuine transformative agency has to operate at the 'level of material transactions in nature', the level of social interactions between people, the level of social structure, and the level [of the] stratification of the embodied personality' (2017:86) at the same time.

A theoretical example of these four moments of the dialectic, the absenting of constraints on absenting absences or ills, would be genuine transformative action that eradicates slavery. Working within the overall ontology of transcendental realism (1M), the absence or ill (2L) is understandable as, at least, the absence of dignity, safety, and freedom. By considering this absence in the totality (3L), what can be identified is the individual human beings who have at their core something that is universal, regardless of if they are masters or slaves; which indicates that what is problematic about slavery is the absence of aspects of human agency for those who are enslaved. But such an understanding does not exhaust the analysis. Which must consider more than just the absence that requires absenting but also the constraints, that are part of the totality of the internal relations. These constraints may be historically and socially specific so that a constraint that existed during the era of the transatlantic slave trade, the legal status of slaves as property, can be identified as not being a constraint when considering modern day slavery. To absence all constraints would be to eradicate slavery (4D). On Bhaskar's understanding genuine transformative agency to absence the constraint that is expressed by the concept of slavery cannot be just the absenting of a constraint at the level of social structure - such as a change to legislation - or at the level of the embodied personality - such as the emancipation of individuals - but must proceed from the identification of all relevant factors at all levels of four-planar social being; and the completion of all transformative actions that absence all constraints on the absenting of the relevant absences.

From this it can be seen that DCR offers a conceptually rich approach to understanding social problems and their resolution. But what it is important to stress is that DCR should not be considered as an alternative to BCR but rather as an extension of that approach, which provides a greater potential level of explanatory power. The link between the two is signposted by Hostettler and Norrie, who describe *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* as a proto-dialectical work (2003). By approaching *Dialectic* with this understanding of the concept of *explanatory critique,* it is possible to navigate between basic and dialectical critical realism and see the links between the two.[2] Collier argued for the

[2] I am grateful here to the unpublished research on 'The Ethical surplus of Dialectic over the Theory of Explanatory Critique' as presented by Onur Ozmen, at the IACR 2018 conference in

extension of explanatory critique from cognitive error to unsatisfied needs. In that it could identify a need that is unfulfilled, an obstacle preventing its satisfaction and a means of removing that obstacle. Bhaskar defines need - along with lack, want and desire - as absence (1993:299). This means to satisfy that need is to 'absence an absence', the obstacle preventing its satisfaction is the 'constraint on absenting the absence' and the means of removing that obstacle is the identifying of how you can 'absence the constraint on absenting that absence'. What the concept of dialectic adds to the concept of needs based explanatory critique is an understanding that: the starting position (1M) of genuinely transformative action has to be an understanding of reality that recognises non-identity, such as that between structure and mechanism, the ontology of transcendental realism; the key issue that requires the transformation is the absenting of the absence - the satisfaction of the need; and in identifying the constraints on absenting that need the totality of all four planes of social being must be considered (3L); and most importantly that there is a requirement to move from theory to practice (4D) and actually undertake the actions that have been identified - which aligns with Bhaskar's understanding (1986) of explanatory critique as embedded in theory to practice arguments. As such, DCR is an approach that develops and deepens both the ontology of transcendental realism -through the concepts of absence and concrete universal - and the epistemological approach of critical naturalism and explanatory critique – through the concept of dialectic. This allows Bhaskar, in his dialectical critical realist ethics, to further explore the issue of ethical naturalism and to use this understanding of reality, as including universal aspects, to argue for moral realism.

In considering morality, within this dialectical framework, Bhaskar combines a recognition that individual human beings have desires, which can be understood through reference to absences, and a concept of universality to argue that 'the goal of universal human autonomy is implicit in every moral judgement', contained in 'every assertoric utterance', and 'implicit in every intentional deed' (1993:264). In coming to this formulation Bhaskar's starting point is an agent with a desire. He considers that attempts to fulfil our own desires are attempts to absent an absence; This is the primacy of non-being in Bhaskar's system. Using the principle

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Lillehammer, which provides a greater level of analysis of these two concepts and their relationship.

of universality as both '(1.) a test of consistency and (2.) a criterion of truth' (1993:211) Bhaskar argues that by attempting to absent those constraints, an individual is 'logically committed to the abolition of all dialectically similar constraints.' This 'necessitates a solidarity with others' (2017:92) 'and thence to a commitment to absent all ills as such, precisely in virtue of them being remedial ills or constraints.' And therefore, 'implies a commitment to absenting the absence of the society which will remedy them' (1994:147), Bhaskar understands this, as the commitment to the creation of the eudemonistic society; which is already implicit in the society that we live in, but is being constrained by ills that need to be removed. It is this 'remoralisation of an already moralised world that is the objective of ethical action and judgement' (1994:148). What Bhaskar can be understood to be saying here is that morality is an objective aspect of four-planer social being, which is irreducible to actual existing morality.

The idea of the universalization of an individual's desire for freedom is a key component of his argument; as such, Bhaskar explores what he means by freedom in some depth. It is in the context of this exploration that his statement that 'the free flourishing of each' is 'a condition of the free flourishing of all' (2017:90) should be understood. The concept of freedom, has a traditional distinction between 'freedom from' or 'freedom to' which is understood to be problematic (Collier,1990:52-57). Bhasker widens this understanding of freedom to provide a notion of freedom that at its root can be understood as an 'individual operating with autonomy or self-determination' (1994:144). Bhaskar sees this freedom as progressing by degrees from 'agentive freedom' through to 'universal human flourishing, the eudemonistic society' (1993:279-299).

This richer conception of freedom is supported by the introduction of a distinction between $Power_1$ and $Power_2$. Where $Power_1$ is defined as 'the transformative capacity intrinsic to the concept of action as such' whereas $Power_2$ is 'the power to get one's way against the either the overt wishes/and or the real intreats of others in virtue of structures of exploitation, domination, subjugation and control' (1993:402).

These concepts, along with his overall argument allow for Bhaskar to understand the process of 'dialectic' to be 'the pulse of freedom'. In that every 'speech act implies a commitment to these values' (1994:159). So if you cannot accept others

should have the same rights/benefits as yourself then you are guilty of theory/practice inconsistency and performative contradiction.

These concepts can be clarified by considering how they may apply to the example of slavery. On Bhaskar's formulation I may understand, and express the view, that as a human being I need $Power_1$ to be able to fulfil my desires and that I recognise that a constraint on that would be if I am required to serve every need of another human being. The universalisation of this statement through the understanding that other people are like ourselves, must, to avoid inconsistency or contradiction lead to the moral judgement that slavery is wrong. However, while this is an argument against slavery it would not apply to situations where the other human being is a new born baby, and so is not exercising $Power_2$ but is genuinely unable to meet their own needs, because we can also universalise the situation of the new born baby.

Bhaskar's moral realist position can be seen to be universal in three aspects. The first is that he argues that there is a universal aspect of human existence, this is the core universal that was identified in DCR. This is an aspect of the totality as human beings always exist in the 'context of developing four-planar social being' (1993 :211). It is this relationship that is at the heart of Bhaskar's moral realism. In addition, and this does not necessarily always follow, Bhaskar's morality as well as providing a strong version of universality also meets the weaker conception of universality. This is through the universalization of the desire for freedom. Where the 'moral evolution of the species' is 'unfinished' (1994:151) and so - combined with ethical naturalism – Bhaskar's is a moral theory that considers that we can create the eudemonistic society; as our commitment to morality and truthfulness when linked to an understanding of the true nature of the world generates the emancipatory values and practice that leads to universal human emancipation in the future. Bhaskar refers to this as 'ethical tetrapolity' (1994:159). Finally, implicit in his consideration of theory and practice is a fourth way in which Bhaskar argues for universality; the universality of moral action.

In considering the practice of transformation, Bhaskar introduces a prefigurative principle into his moral theory and in doing so not only asserts that there is a universal basis for all morality but also indicates that there is a moral rule that should be universally applied. These are usually considered to be two distinctly different concepts but Bhaskar's understanding of the link between theory and

practice, that is expressed in his concept of ethical tetrapolity, means that this distinction is not drawn within his argument. To prefigure in morality means that whatever you do must, to be moral, prefigure your end. Put simply this is the moral rule that you cannot achieve good ends through bad actions. Bhaskar argues for a prefigurative approach to moral actions on the basis that if 'we are to change the world in accordance with naturalistically grounded theory, then 'the moral truth […] the good, is universal human flourishing and it is subject to the principles of prefiguration and actionability' (1993:292). He clarifies this in *Plato etc*, where, while he recognises 'some limits on the logic of dialectical universalizability' he notes that 'the principle that emergent totalities are subject to control by metaprinciples […] would have to be justified by' amongst other criteria 'the requirements of prefigurationality' (1994:151). This leads to his conclusion that 'the condition of prefigurationality reciprocally requires that the end be consistent with the means' (1994:159).

How a prefigurative principle works can be illustrated by the example of the action of buying slaves, which the prefigurative principle would prohibit regardless of why this action was undertaken. The principle means it is not permissible to buy slaves, even if the reason for doing so is to have the labour available to run a food bank or a soup kitchen. For the action of purchasing another human being is immoral even if the intent was to achieve a good end. However, what the prefigurative principle would also prohibit would be the buying of slaves, where the intention is to remove them from bondage and provide them with liberty and security; as the action of buying another human being is - by reference to the end of universal emancipation - always wrong, and so cannot be undertaken. This aligns with Bhaskar's understanding of genuine transformation, which he considers should occur at all aspects of four-planar social being simultaneously, but in doing so it seems to indicate that gradual transformative agency – the amelioration of states of affairs – is, through some actions, not morally possible.

Focusing on the question of universality means that not all aspects of Bhaskar's moral theory are explored in this chapter. Bhaskar's argument that the recognition of our own desires leads to a recognition that others have similar desires is the question of moral agency; which is discussed in Chapter Three. While the question of how we discover more about morality, what Bhaskar considers to be the ethical alethia, is explored in Chapters Five and Six. What has been described here is

only the key concepts that make DCR ethics a moral realist position. An exploration of if he is successful in this must first consider an alternative approach to the question of universality, Elder-Vass's argument that scientific realism rather than entailing ethical naturalism and moral realism actually refutes both these positions.

2.1.2 Elder-Vass's Realist Critique

Elder-Vass argues In *Realist Critique Without Ethical Naturalism and Moral Realism* (2010) that the metatheory of critical realism 'commits' one to a different approach to morality, one that 'treats values as being socially constructed' (2010:33). His argument is that ethical naturalism and moral realism are incompatible with a scientific realist understanding of values, as 'scientific realism rejects foundationalism - the search for secure foundations for knowledge that enable the avoidance of scepticism - about values'. To explore this argument, it is necessary to first consider the issue of foundationalism.

Elder-Vass's argument that critical realism rejects foundationalism regarding values, is developed from Hostettler and Norrie's answer to the question *Are Critical Realist Ethics Foundationalist?* (2003). Hostettler and Norrie ask if Bhaskar's approach, which they consider bases morality in human nature, can be understood to be a moral realism. Their argument is that Bhaskar's work, going back to *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation* (1986) contains both realist and irrealist strands and that this tension between realism and irrealism, 'emerges as his ethics develop' and take the form of a 'tension between foundationalist and anti- foundationalist claims' (2003:43). They consider that in Bhaskar's work you can see 'him first argue against, then for, an ethical foundation in the basic nature of human being. When he argues against it, he develops the realist dialectic in his work, when he argues for it he encourages its irrealist side' (46). This foundationalism is taken to be 'a sense of common human nature cutting across the social and historical' (49); whereas Bhaskar's statement that 'we cannot identify a common human nature under phycho-socially meaningful descriptions' (1986:208 in 2003:49) show the anti- foundationalism that Bhaskar also expresses. Hostettler and Norrie, consider this unresolved contradiction in Bhaskar's thought to be problematic. And for this reason, while defending the overall 'realist philosophical project developed in Dialectic' (2003:31) and the

possibility for developing an anti- foundationalist ethical position, they draw the conclusion that Bhaskar's attempt to create a realist morality is unsuccessful.

Elder-Vass develops his argument, not from an analysis of Bhaskar's moral writings but, from considerations of metaethics, this leads him to draw a stronger conclusion; the complete rejection of moral realism. Metaethics is the examination of the broader concerns of ontology and epistemology that provide the framework within which ethical theories are produced (e.g. Hare,1993; Augustine, 1958 and Hume,1739). Elder-Vass narrows this wide remit of metaethics to define it as the debate regarding cognitivism – which considers the question of whether beliefs can be true or false or if they just express emotions. Elder-Vass uses his definition of metaethics to consider the 'metaethical implications of a scientific realist ontology of values'. He considers that a scientific realist approach commits one to treating values as socially produced and historically contingent and so scientific realists have to agree with Mackie's position that, 'there are no objective values' (1977:15 in 2010:45). As such, 'Unless and until a more tenable argument can be offered, then, there is no foundation for moral realism that is compatible with scientific realism'. On this basis he concludes that 'Consistent critical realists should therefore discard moral realism and instead accept the socially contingent nature of morality' (2010,45). This is a more problematic conclusion, for the question of the universality of morality, than that of Hostettler and Norrie. The former only considered that Bhaskar had failed to successfully produce a moral realist position, whereas Elder-Vass argues that such a position cannot be produced within a realist metatheory.

Elder-Vass moves from his rejection of moral realism to exploring how we can reason about values; arguing that we can develop 'critiques by combining ethical reasoning with a theoretical understanding of the social world and its possibilities' by drawing on 'Habermas's discourse ethics to offer provisional justifications for value-claims that support a critical stance' (2010:33). Habermas is a social philosopher who explores emancipation and produces a theory of communicative rationality (1984) and a theory of discourse ethics (1985:1986); he is also discussed by Bhaskar, in his development of DCR ethics. A central element of Habermas's theory of communicative rationality is:

> the distinction between the genuinely communicative use of language to attain common goals, which Habermas takes to be the primary case of language use and the inherent telos of human speech and strategic or success orientated speech parasitic on the former which simulates a communicative orientation in order to achieve a common purpose (Outhwaite,1994:45-46).

This leads to Habermas to consider that ethical truths can be established by examining communicative structures; discourse ethics. ‘Habermas makes two related claims’ for discourse ethics:

> first he maintains that it expresses our moral intuitions, at least as those that bear on the process of discursive justification of norms, secondly that this focus on normative consensus as opposed to abstract universibility means that a discourse ethic . . . can go beyond a pure concept of justice to include those structural aspects of the good life’ (Outhwaite,1994:55).

This leads Habermas to identify what he holds to be a discourse principle, that ‘Just those action norms are valid to which all possibly affected persons could agree as participants in rational discourses’ (1985:107 in 2010:50). Elder-Vass uses this discourse principle to argue that the personal values of an individual are shaped through the ‘transformational model of social activity’ by social values (norms). Aligning with norms makes personal values objective and critiques act back on these norms, which are developed through consensus.

Elder-Vass argues that this understanding of values as socially produced and historically contingent is ‘compatible with the development of judgmentally rational grounds for critique’ (2010:45) and also supports his own approach to values, the theory of norm circles (2015). This theory is an attempt to ‘reintroduce the mechanisms behind normativity’ (2015:91). Norm circles are ‘groups of people’ that ‘follow normative standards […] as a result of the influence that these groups’ (81) have. With ‘each norm circle’ related ‘to a single identifiable norm’ (84) These norm circles ‘have emergent causal powers to influence their members, by virtue of the ways in which those members interact in them’ (2010:122). Members of a norm circle:

> may support the norm by advocating the practice, by praising or rewarding those who enact it, by criticizing or punishing those who fail to enact it, or even just by ostentatiously enacting it themselves. The consequence of

> such endorsement and enforcement is that the members of the circle know they face a systematic incentive to enact the practice (2010:124).

This is understood, by Elder-Vass, as a process of 'socio-cultural interactions, of conversations, of moral discourse and debate.' Therefore, What the concept of norm circle is intended to do is to account for existing social norms through an explanatory model of interlocking circles with agents all members of one or more circle and each circle reproducing or transforming the existing norm(s), that have emerged from within that circle.

This approach appears to provide a negative answer to the question of the universality of morality, However, what Elder-Vass considers that he has produced is a weak universalist position; as can be seen from his discussion of the issue of power relationships and social norms. Where Elder-Vass acknowledges that social norms may be negatively influenced by those in power using these processes to consolidate their interests. To address this issue, he returns to 'Habermas's work on communicative action' arguing 'that moral reasoning should be a discursive process, one that allows all those who are involved in those relations to participate in reaching an agreement' (50). Elder-Vass suggests that in this way a determination that arises from a moral debate can be held to be an appropriate value only if the process of debate is: (i.) conducted honestly and sincerely; (ii.) open to participation by all affected parties, or at least their genuine representatives; and (iii.) not distorted by the differential power of the parties. He recognises that this doesn't justify any particular norms and values but instead states that, 'When a norm or a value appears to meet the standards of the discourse principle as closely as is practically possible, we have good reason to consider it valid' (51). His conclusion is that such an approach would be ontologically credible, judgmentally rational and anti-foundational. Elder-Vass then goes on to consider what we should value. He understands this to be a search for a practical ethics that is good enough for its purpose not universal ethical truths. As, 'the issue that confronts us is no longer the moral realist's problem of how to discover universal values that are in principle immune to criticism, but . . . the problem of how to identify values that are in practice more-or-less universally (if provisionally) acceptable' (53). The principles that Elder-Vass suggests meet this criterion are: that we should value all humans and support all humans to stay alive, if they rationally wish to do so; and therefore, meet the basic needs of all humans.

Elder-Vass's conclusion means that the use of the metatheory has led to at least two different answers to the question of the universality of morality, where both are argued to be realist positions. These positions are that morality exists because of a universal aspect of reality or that morality exists and could become universal. This is discussed by Price (2017) in *Moral Realism Revindicated: Response to Elder-Vass.* Where she argues that Elder-Vass has not produced a realist account but a relativistic account of normativity; one that displaces relativism from individuals to cultures and in doing so produces a version of idealism; a version that 'will not be able to identify the deep structure of things'. Price argues that the reason for this is because there is a distinction between an objective, as in intrinsic 'value' independent of being recognised and objective 'values' and without this distinction between what is 'valuable and what is valued' 'it is not possible to critique existing morality' (2017:4). Price states that this distinction is made by Bhaskar and it is a distinction that is central to moral realism.

Therefore, to consider the strengths of these opposing positions, and provide an answer to the question of the universality of morality, that aligns with the metatheory, it is necessary to consider if the metatheory contains the position that there is intrinsic value in the world separate to its identification. If it does, then this will support strong universalism. If it does not, then this may have the consequence that morality can be understood to have the potential to be universal, because all human beings could potentially hold the same values, but if such a position is asserted then this must be on the basis of an identification of the aspect of the metatheory that supports such a position. As such, in the next section this question is explored further by considering transcendental realism and morality.

2.2 Scientific Realism and The Universality of Morality

In this section, the two alternative approaches to the question of the universality of morality that have been discussed are assessed by contextualising them within the ontological aspect of the overall metatheory. To do this I first, return to transcendental realism and introduce a concept that was not discussed in chapter one - the transitive and intransitive dimension of science - and then consider morality from this perspective and the perspective of causation. This analysis provides the clarity, regarding the application of scientific realism to morality, that is necessary to return to the questions of universality; that is the weak universality

of Elder-Vass; the strong universalism of moral realism and the universality of moral action, as introduced by the prefigurative principle.

2.2.1 The Possibility of Moral Realism

Bhaskar argues that reality has depth in three different ways, the first two - the generative notion of causality and the stratification of reality have been discussed in Chapter One. The third way that Bhaskar argues that reality has depth is through the transitive and intransitive dimension of science (2008:21). This distinction can be understood by recognizing that beliefs have causal power regardless of if they are true or false beliefs. This causal power of a scientific theory, as a belief, is different to the causal power of the aspect of the world that the belief is about. For example, the law of gravity causes objects to fall. My belief in the law of gravity causes me to not jump out of windows. This separation between an aspect of reality and the belief about that aspect of reality is, for Bhaskar, the separation between the intransitive object of science - which is the world, or bit of it, that a science is seeking to explain - and the transitive object of science - which is the theories science takes as its starting point, in its attempt to deepen our knowledge about the world. To summarise, 'rival scientific theories necessarily have different transitive objects, or they would not be different; but they are not about different worlds-otherwise how could they be rivals?' (Collier,1994:51).

The consequences of this distinction between the transitive and intransitive dimension of science is that it allows for a coherent understanding of reality, that recognizes that our knowledge about the world is always relative to our own circumstances but that the world itself exists separately and independently to our knowledge of it. As such, this distinction supports the recognition that while we cannot avoid *epistemic relativism*, this does not entail a commitment to *judgmental relativism.* This is because our theories are about something that is real, separate to our theories, and so we should not be committed to the position that all competing explanations of reality are as true as each other. Bhaskar considers that the aim of science is therefore to produce transitive theories that accord as closely as possible to the intransitive object that the theories are intended to explain.

This distinction applies as much to social science as natural science. Because all theories have causal power in two different ways; the causal power inside their own subject, by motivating further research; and the causal power outside of their subject, due to their application to the world. Neither of these is the same as the causal power of the intransitive object, even if the intransitive object is itself a belief. To clarify this understanding critical realists, argue that while the natural world is naturally produced and the social world is socially produced, both the natural and the social world are socially defined (Sayer,1992:26 in Danemark *et al*, 1997:31). That means that while society is a human creation, it exists separate from our knowledge of its existence and so this intransitive dimension is held to exist for both the natural and social sciences.

This distinction between a transitive and intransitive dimension of science has implications for the question of the universality of morality. Moral relativism can be understood to be not just epistemic relativism, the recognition that we have a range of theories about morality and that these theories are separate to the aspect of the world that these theories are about; but also to be judgmental relativism. The postulation of an intransitive object of morality creates the possibility of recognising epistemic relativism while refuting judgmental relativism in morality and providing a theoretical argument for the universality of morality.

In *In Defence of Objectivity* (2003), Collier uses the existence of moral diversity and moral change to argue that there is an intransitive object of morality. He considers that the moral relativist position is based on the fact that morality appears to be socially and historically specific and that there is a range of theories about what morality is, or should be (see Sartre,1957). His argument is that rather than supporting moral relativism, the existence of moral change and moral diversity is more understandable if there is an intransitive object of morality. This is because, according to the metatheory, these are not just a series of competing theories, but theories regarding an object that: is an aspect of an independent reality, separate to the enquirer; we have limited knowledge of; we make rational or irrational judgements about; and through enquiry, gain greater knowledge of. This means that while there is moral diversity, the possibly of making a false moral judgement must be understood by reference to underlying values that sit beneath seemingly diverse moral systems; that ‘our moral codes are varied and more or less erroneous attempts to match that independent order of values’ (2003:230).

The occurrence of moral change also only makes sense, for Collier, if change in morality occurs in the same way as change occurs in all transitive objects. In that we move from one theory of morality to another because one moral theory accounts for more of the relevant facts than any other theory. From these considerations he concludes 'that the phenomena that were thought to make relativism plausible can actually be accounted for more plausibly on objectivist assumptions' (2003:228). This is an argument for a universal intransitive object of morality.

This argument does not lead to the supporting of any specific theory that claims universality; this is for two reasons. The first is that while this is a rejection of judgmental moral relativism the argument that there is an intransitive object of morality does not indicate what that object is. It does not even indicate whether or not such an object is naturally produced (like photosynthesis), socially produced (like banking), or even produced through the actions of some sort of supreme being. The second is that the language of *value* and *values* is confusing. Values can refer to the plural of intrinsic value, the act of valuing or a moral system. As such when Collier argues here that an 'independent order of values' exists it is not clear how he is using the term values. Therefore, while this can be understood to be potentially supporting Price's distinction between objective value independent of being recognised and objective values, it could be read in another way.

Bhaskar's own consideration of the intransitive dimension of morality is found in his dialectical work and while his own use of the terminology of transitive and intransitive dimensions when considering morality can be seen to be complex and opaque he does consider that value is independent of our knowledge of it. Bhaskar refers to dialectical critical realist ethics as a 'moral realist position' in that it 'contends that morality is an objective real property'. In *Dialectic* he twice makes the distinction between 'a *descriptive, redescriptive* and *explanatory critical morality* in the transitive' and '*actual existing morality* or moralities in the intransitive dimension' (1993:211 and 259). This is problematic as the reference to 'moralities' allows for the possibility of there being more than one socially produced intransitive object of morality, thereby supporting the moral relativistic position of Elder-Vass. The fact that Bhaskar makes the same, almost word for word argument, on this issue in two places in *Dialectic* could indicate that Bhaskar himself was still thinking through this concept while writing *Dialectic*. Fortunately

the difficulty is resolved by the clarification that Bhaskar provides in *Plato etc* (1994) where he clearly states that 'morality like knowledge has an intransitive object/ive'(1994:151) where 'morality lies on the transitive side of the divide' (1994:109) This can be understood as stating that moralities are transitive, but they have an intransitive object – intrinsic value.

An exploration of the question of scientific realism and morality is not exhausted by a consideration of the intransitive and intransitive dimension. It must also consider morality and causality. For morality, as an aspect of reality, must be fully understandable within an ontological framework that has a generative notion of causality – with its concepts of mechanisms with causal power necessarily emerging from relatively enduring contingent structures. Or, to use the language of DCR, it is necessary to explore morality at 1M; the level of not just the transitive and intransitive but also of structures and mechanisms. The question here is if morality is a universal aspect of reality, how does it have causal power.

Morality should be understood as having causal power through the use of the generative notion of causality. To develop this understanding, it is necessary to consider at what level of reality morality exists. As it is argued to have an intransitive dimension then it must be understood theoretically to be operating at the level of mechanisms. But this conclusion is based only on the need for internal consistency with the overall meta-theory; it needs to be supported by a consideration of moral concerns with respect to the three levels of reality - experiences, events and mechanisms. By considering these three levels it can be shown that morality is interested in mechanisms. This is because morality is clearly interested in more than experiences; for the moral judgement on a situation does not change if it was not directly observed in the first person. For example, our judgement on the wrongs of the transatlantic slave trade are not dependent on having directly experienced its effects. But morality, as we understand and use it is also interested in more than just events. Moral considerations are not just what happened but why. This can be seen in Norrie's discussion of the criminal law (1998). In this discussion Norrie identifies both the importance of the sentencing stage of the process - where questions of mitigation are considered - and the defence of diminished responsibility. Both of these aspects of criminal proceedings move the point of enquiry away from the event that the 'abstract legal individual' has been involved in to the 'wider social and political context' in which the event

took place and the causes for the individuals' actions. Therefore, whilst the relationship between morality and the generative notion of causality is not explicitly addressed within the critical realist literature, the only way in which morality can be understood within that metatheory is to consider that within reality there are structures that are relatively enduring and from which the mechanisms that are relevant to morality necessarily emerge. These mechanisms can be understood to have causal power, which may be exercised or unexercised and - due to the existence of other mechanisms - may be realised or unrealised and so can only be understood to be tendencies. This means that any transitive theory of morality is a theory about these emergent mechanisms, and their causal power.

These considerations of morality and scientific realism allow for conclusions regarding the possible universality of morality to be drawn. It can be seen that scientific realism facilitates moral realism. For, on the metatheory discussed, moral realism is a concept that states that an intransitive object of morality exists. In addition, on the generative notion of causality, the process of emergence produces mechanisms that did not previously exist and whose properties and powers are not reducible to the component parts of the structure. Therefore, it is possible to postulate an intransitive object for morality by understanding such an object as the specific relatively enduring structure from which the relevant mechanisms necessarily emerge.

Such an approach facilitates universality without foundationalism - which is the criticism of Bhaskar's moral realism, that Elder-Vass develops his approach from - and thereby allows for a non-reductive and nonfoundational understanding of moral realism where there is a possibility of the identification of a universal aspect of reality that exists separate to its identification and which is the basis for morality.

2.2.2 Realism and the Question of Universality

The understanding of how the metatheory can be applied to the broad question of morality as an aspect of reality provides the analytical framework to consider Elder -Vass's and Bhaskar's specific theories and through this analysis draw a conclusion on the possibility of the universality of morality. In the rest of this chapter I undertake this analysis.

Elder-Vass argues for a weak universalism, and in doing so he uses concepts from the metatheory. For example, in his discussion of norm circles he uses the concept of mechanisms; where he states that he is trying to 'reintroduce the mechanisms behind normativity' (2015:91). Therefore, norm circles must be understandable as relatively enduring social structures and that the values that emerge from those norm circles are necessarily emerging mechanisms. This is an understanding that considers that whilst social structures are relatively enduring, they are also historically contingent and, on this basis, the mechanisms that are emergent from these structures will be socially produced and socio-historically contingent. The consequence of this is that each norm circle has a different intransitive object while leaving open the possibility of the future production of values that are in practice more-or-less universally (if provisionally) acceptable' (2010:53). Therefore, this is a moral relativist position that leaves open the possibility of a universal morality in the future.

The problem of this account is that it doesn't adequately address the question of why such mechanisms emerge. This means that it cannot be seen how such an approach is consistent with the overall metatheory and its use of the concept of emergence. One reason for this may be that Elder-Vass doesn't acknowledge the distinction between socially defined and socially produced; as can be seen from his argument that 'moral reasoning should be a discursive process, one that allows all those who are involved in those relations to participate in reaching an agreement' (2010:50). Values on this understanding are the outcome of conscious deliberation; that the process of social definition is the process of social production and values are only what the members of the norm circle decide they are going to be. This has the consequence that if the norm circle cannot agree there will be no values. While this could potentially be a plausible descriptive account of one aspect of reality, it is not a depth realist account of morality; as it is significantly different to a concept of emergence where entities with causal power necessarily emerge from the internal relationships of relatively enduring structures. Therefore, it can be concluded that Elder-Vass has not produced a moral theory that is compatible with scientific realism.

In turning to Bhaskar's strong universalism, it can be seen that an analysis of the role of the concept of emergence in Bhaskar's moral theory does allows for the recognition that it is nonfoundationalist. This is because it can be understood as

stating that values themselves are socially produced as they exist in the social strata, but they emerge from within a social structure where the component parts include individual human agents. What Bhaskar specifically argues for is that the moral good is ‘grounded in conceptions of human nature, in the context of developing four-planar social being with the moral consciousness of the species in principle open’ (1993:211). There is a significant difference between saying that morality is grounded in human nature - which is what Elder-Vass, Hostettler and Norrie argue is Bhaskar’s position - and saying it is grounded in human nature in the context of four-planar social being – which is what he states. The former is a foundationalist position, while the latter is a non-reductionist position where the intransitive object of morality is dependent on the internal relationships of a complex structure that includes material transactions in nature, social interactions between people, social structures and stratified embodied personalities.

This understanding of Bhaskar’s approach as non-foundationalist, through the use of the concept of emergence, is supported by Norrie’s (2010) reassessment of his and Hostettler’s earlier argument (2003). Norrie considers that his earlier position was mistaken, as he failed to grasp ‘the role of Bhaskar's conception of totality’ - the 3L step of Dialectic - and the concepts he uses within this conception of totality ‘in holding together the different levels of human being-in society-in nature which permits both the logic of dialectical universalisation and the materialist diffraction of dialectics to co-relate in a complex non-reductive manner’ (2010:157). This theoretical understanding can be explored by considering how four-planer social being is modelled.

Bhaskar’s model of four-planar social reality, as described in Chapter One, can be re-labelled using considerations relevant to morality. (Figure 6) In this way it can be seen that while different social structures exist, and therefore different transitive moralities always exist, which deal with different aspects of morality, there is something common to all these structures; the presence of human agents, the presence of society and the presence of nature. It is from all of, or some aspect of, this universal relationship that a universal intransitive object of morality can be understood to necessarily emerge; and so, while this object may be naturally and/or socially produced it is not historically contingent.

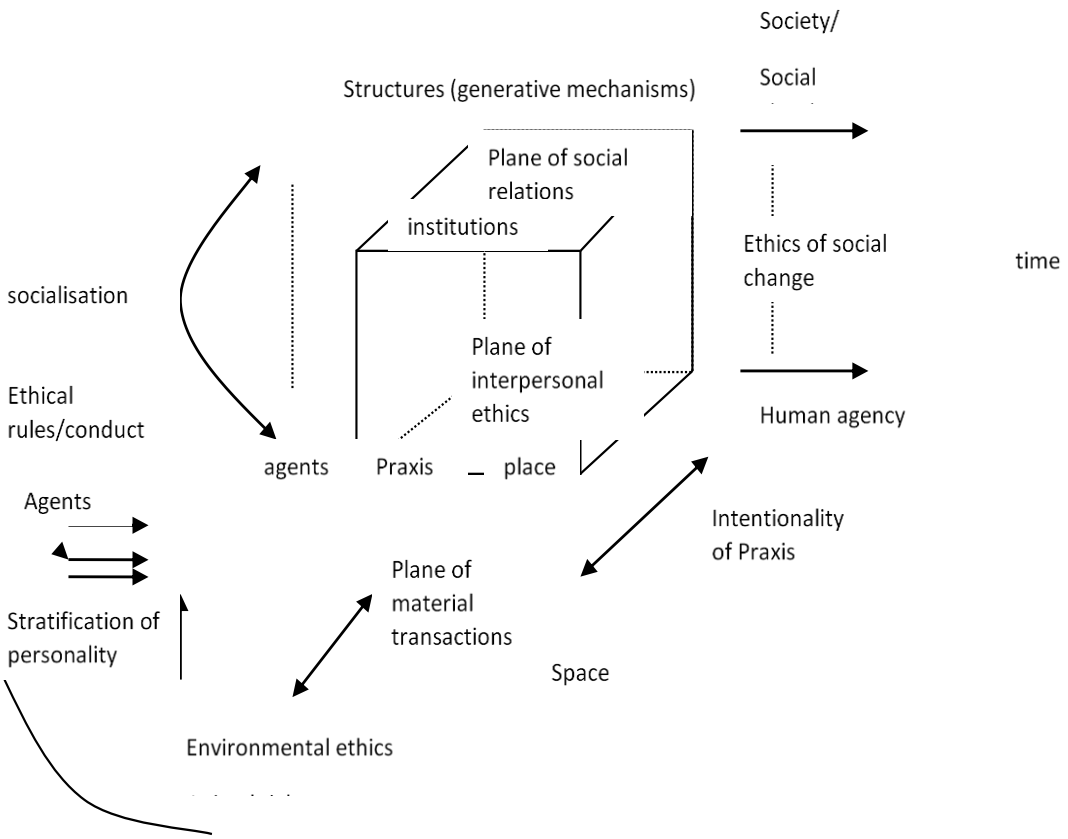

Figure 6.The Social Cube in its Natural Setting and Morality

A possible intransitive object has not been labelled on this diagram, as that would to be to assume what has not yet been explored. However, what can be seen is that there are different aspects of the social cube where the intransitive object may be located. It may be found that this relationship of humans-in society-in nature in its entirety has value and so leads to the subsequent emergence of social values - for example values that enable the navigation of competing desires in relation to both human agency and the other component parts of this structure. Or it may be that some part of this relationship allows for the recognition by human agents of value that has emerged in other aspects of the social cube in its natural setting and it is this recognition that leads to the consequential emergence or adoption of values. For example the existence of the values of environmental ethics indicates that potentially the relationship of humans with the bio-sphere has an influence on the creation of the intransitive object. Either position at this point would be speculation but, on either account, it should be clear that Bhaskar's argument for moral realism is compatible with scientific realism and so his strong universalism is supported by the metatheory.

However, this is not the same as a conclusion that Bhaskar has produced a successful theory of what that universal intransitive object is. The specifics of his theory can be considered through the charge of formalism. This is the criticism of Bhaskar's moral theory made by Collier (1998) in *Realism and Formalism in Ethics*. A theory can be described as formalist if it is considered to emphasise form over content or meaning. A moral theory that is held to be formalist can be seen to be like a well-structured meeting with a chair and a secretary and an agenda, but where the agenda is blank. This is a charge that is usually levied at Kant's categorical imperative, which is a moral theory that argues that 'I ought never to act except in such a way that I could also will that my maxim should become a universal law' (1964:70). The charge of formalism is the criticism that Kant has produced a necessary but not a sufficient condition for morality; in that it's criterion of universality cannot tell us what principles one should adopt. Collier's argument is that this charge of formalism also applies to Bhaskar, as he is also using a formal principle of universality but in a different way to Kant. The difference for Collier is that for Kant if you cannot universalise it you should not do it, whereas for Bhaskar if you cannot universalise it you cannot want it.

Collier recognises that Bhaskar accepts the formalism of his position. As Bhaskar, in discussing universality, states that what his argument supplies is only:

> the *formal* criterion of freedom qua universal human flourishing. The *substantive* criteria have once more to be fleshed out by a *naturally grounded* four-planar theory of the possibility of social being in nature the direction indicated by the formal criteria. That is to say by a concretely utopian exercise in social sciences conceived now as absenting constraints on absenting absences or ills (1993:264).

Collier thinks that, while this shows that Bhaskar recognises that he has produced a formal criterion, in practice Bhaskar tries to get 'much more out of his formal principle than it can sustain' (1998:696). This can be understood as the distinction between the recognition that the relationship of humans-in society-in nature is universal and so there must be a universal object of morality and the argument advanced by Bhaskar that the human desire for freedom must be universal/universalised due to the principle of universality.

Collier draws three conclusions on this universality of desire. These conclusions are shaped by his consideration of under what description an action can be

universalized; as ‘one has to presuppose that the description under which the act is universalized is the relevant one. But the universality principle cannot itself provide a criteria of relevance’ (697). His first conclusion is that: ‘a human desire or action does not in every case imply a commitment to freedom’. He supports this argument with the question of what is implicit in the child’s primal scream; Bhaskar argues it is universal human emancipation, but Collier considers it could just as easily be universalized as ‘all should yell’ as ‘all should be free’. The second is ‘That a commitment to one’s own freedom does not by itself commit one to universal emancipation’; a conclusion that Collier supports with the example of the Pilgrim Fathers wishing not the ‘freedom of worship’ but ‘the freedom to worship in a puritan manner’. And thirdly, that ‘if universal human emancipation means the freedom of all in all ways, it is not a coherent goal’. He supports this final conclusion with a discussion of competing freedoms - such as the right to roam and the freedom of the landowner to put up fences. Concluding that ‘human emancipation consists in the prioritisation and rationing of freedoms not their indiscriminate affirmation’ (701). Therefore, on the basis of his analysis, Collier argues that the transition from individual desire to universal emancipation breaks down at three points.

All three conclusions question the legitimacy of Bhaskar’s moral theory but while the first two conclusions are strong arguments against the specifics of Bhaskar’s moral theory, the third conclusion is also an argument against the feasibility of his moral theory. The legitimacy of this theory is the issue of concern here; as the question of Bhaskar’s conception of freedom is separate and subsequent to the question of universality. This question of legitimacy is because Bhaskar has not provided any substantive argument for why the following of the principle of universality should be understood to be an aspect of morality. Specifically, Bhaskar’s theory provides no analysis of human nature and human desire that demonstrates why the universality of desire would be accepted by human agents on the grounds that it is logically entailed; either in existing societies or a future eudemonistic society. This can be understood as the question of how an unmet need, our own desires and our rationality can form part of a causal configuration that generates the commitment to the abolition of all ‘dialectically similar constraints’. This is the question of moral agency that is considered in Collier’s own moral theory and which is discussed in the next chapter.

At this point it can be concluded that while scientific realism entails moral realism and Bhaskar has identified a relationship from which, in some way an intransitive object of morality, can be understood to emerge, his own moral theory cannot be accepted without further exploring how the metatheory applies to other questions in morality. Before progressing to those questions, in subsequent chapters, what remains is to consider the final aspect of how Bhaskar uses universality. That is the question of prefigurative action.

It is possible to consider if Bhaskar's universal prefigurative principle aligns with the metatheory through exploring existing arguments against a prefigurative principle in morality. One such argument is made by Honderich in *Violence for Equality* (1976). The relevance of Honderich is that he argues from considerations of humans-in society-in nature, through a principle of equality to conclude that some 'democratic violence' can have 'moral justification' (1976:162); he refers to this political violence as 'shouting loudly' (1976:167-168). Honderich considers the question of whether it is morally correct to resort to political violence to create structural change to narrow down the difference in life expectancy and differentials in access to other goods such as respect, freedom and power. These are outcomes that can be seen to be absenting a constraint - the aspects of the structure where change is aimed - on absenting absences, where the base absence is this lack of freedom or power or years alive. He starts from facts about current society, such as unequal life expectancy and then assesses those facts through drawing out what he believes is a fundamental moral principle, the principle of equality. He summarises this principle as 'we should give a priority to policies whose end is to make well off those who are badly off' (1976:47). He clarifies this by ensuring well off is not a reference to socio-economic goods but to wellbeing, which, on his definition, includes having the 'desire for freedom' (1976:40) realised.

Bhaskar and Honderich clearly have different approaches to prefiguration. They both can be understood to support the principle that morality is concerned not just with what is done by agents – acts – but also includes what is failed to be done - omissions or absences (see Glover,1977, for a general overview of the acts and omissions debate in moral philosophy or Ash, 2016 for a practical application of the concept of absence to the moral judgement of neglect in a care setting). This can be seen in Honderich, but it is also clear from Bhaskar's conception of

ontological monovalance with the primacy of absence; that an omission is always the absence of absenting a constraint on the absenting of absences. But while they would both consider that there is a moral requirement for action, Bhaskar, with his argument that you cannot achieve good ends by bad actions within the totality of the situation limits what can be done to morally absent the absence.

In considering this from the perspective of the metatheory clarity can be gained on why some omissions are immoral but this clarity supports Honderich's position over Bhaskar's. This is because on this understanding of causation the specific circumstances of an omission mean that it may be judged as immoral; in that it is, as an omission, an unexercised or unactualised power that if exercised and actualised would prevent an event or state of affairs that is judged as immoral to occur. But, in other causal configurations the same omission is not immoral as it has different causal power in respect of an immoral event or state of affairs. For example, my failure to report that I believe my neighbour is keeping someone in domestic servitude has a different outcome to my failure to report the location of someone who is fleeing domestic servitude, if, in doing so, it will lead to them being returned to their captors. In the same way an act can sometimes be considered immoral in that it is an exercise of a power that when actualized in a specific causal configuration leads to an immoral event, but in different circumstances, such as those described by Honderich, that exercised power may lead to a moral state of affairs. From this it can be seen that a separate moral judgement has to be made in each individual case, and an understanding of causality provides a more effective intellectual tool for the achievement of moral outcomes than the adherence to a principle would. Therefore, Honderich's conclusion that in some circumstances not only should political violence be undertaken but there is a moral imperative to undertake such action - is more aligned with the critical realist understanding of causation, than the postulation of a universal prefigurative principle.

To summarise the argument of this chapter, the exploration of how the question of the universality of morality can be understood through the application of the metatheory allows several conclusions to be drawn. The overall conclusion is that the concept of an intransitive object of morality makes sense within the meta-theory and aligns with the existence of moral diversity and moral change; therefore moral realism is supported by the metatheory. It can also be concluded that Elder-

Vass's rejection of moral realism and his version of weak universalism - that we may potentially 'identify values that are in practice more-or-less universally (if provisionally) acceptable' - does not appear to be grounded in this metatheory. Bhaskar's understanding of morality can be seen to have two components. An intransitive object of morality; that necessarily emerges from within the internal relationships between human agents, society and the biosphere. And existing transitive moralities; as values, that may emerge in different forms due to this relationship taking different socio-historical forms, but that always emerge due to something fundamental and intransitive. It can be concluded that this aligns with the understanding of emergence contained in the generative notion of causality; and, in this way, it recognizes epistemic moral relativism while refuting judgmental moral relativism and thereby supporting a strong universalist understanding of morality.

However, as the area where the possible intransitive object may be is, as described, the entirety of reality, further enquiry is required to try and narrow down where this intransitive object may be located. To achieve this requires the exploration of further questions in morality. How such an enquiry can be progressed is suggested by both the metatheory and the existing application of critical realism to questions in morality. The structure of the Transformational Model of Social Activity suggests that to consider morality further it is possible to separate questions of moral agency from questions of moral values as an aspect of the social structure. While the chronological ordering of how these separate questions have been approached suggests that the theory of Collier regarding moral agency (1999) is considered before Sayer's approach to the moral values that exist as an aspect of society (2004,2011). These questions are therefore considered in Chapters Three and Four.

Without this further exploration of the questions of moral agency and moral values, Bhaskar's theory of the universalization of desires cannot be supported. And without a conclusion on this specific aspect of his theory it is only possible to draw one firm conclusion on his specific version of moral realism. This is the conclusion that his universal moral rule that arises from his consideration of practice -the prefigurative principle - cannot be seen to align with the overall metatheory and so should not be accepted.

Chapter 3 The Question of Moral Agency

> Those whose condition is such that their function is the use of their bodies and nothing better can be expected of them […] are slaves by nature. For them it is better to be ruled. For the 'Slave by nature' is he that can and therefore does belong to another, and he that participates in reason so far as to recognize it but not so to possess it. (*Politics*, Aristotle,1254:b16)

Collier uses the metatheory of critical realism to produce the moral theory that is found in *Being and Worth* (1998). This theory provides a possible answer to the question of moral agency. This is the question of how agents can be understood to be implicitly or explicitly, informed by considerations of right and wrong in making choices and taking actions. This question has two aspects. The first is how moral agency works. While the second is if moral considerations are wider than just the community of moral agents. As can be seen by the quotation above these two aspects are linked together. For Aristotle's justification of slavery rests on his claim that moral agency consists of the possession of rationality and his argument that not all humans have this ability, and therefore the enslavement of some humans is not immoral.

There is a variety of approaches to the question of how moral agency works. For example, Hume's position is that it consists of the use of sentiments (1739), whereas Kant takes the opposite view and considers that the exercising of moral agency is through the use of logic and reason (1964). While the argument of if moral considerations are wider than just moral agents is seen in Singer's defence of animal rights (1975) and Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina's argument from human powers to moral responsibility for the environment (2015).

From a critical realist perspective, Bhaskar and Elder-Vass both recognize the need for moral agency to be considered, as part of an understanding of morality. This recognition of the importance of moral agency is most clearly indicated by Bhaskar's description of the intransitive object of morality as emerging from the relatively enduring structure of human beings within four-planar social being; this shows that he considers that morality cannot exist without moral agency. The

account that Bhaskar provides of this agency, is that it consists of our desiring nature linked with our rational recognition of, and drive to achieve, logical consistency. While Elder-Vass can be seen to understand moral agency as a discursive and deliberative facility and the ability to follow rules arrived at through this process. Collier's approach to moral agency is developed from the concepts contained in basic and dialectical critical realism, and his criticisms of Bhaskar's own moral theory. This produces an account of how moral agency, works which expands moral considerations beyond the realm of moral agents.

In this chapter I examine how Collier's theory addresses the question of how human beings can be understood to be implicitly or explicitly, informed by moral considerations in making choices and taking actions. My conclusion is that Collier's moral theory provides a compelling account of moral agency, but that its acceptance is problematic due to difficulties with aligning his conception of moral realism with the overall ontology of transcendental realism.

In Section One I describe the three separate aspects of Collier's theory of moral agency: (i.) how we recognise value that exists separate to ourselves; (ii.) that value is independent of its recognition; and (iii.) that some aspects of realty are more valuable than others. In Section Two I explore the strength of his theory, by considering it within the overall ontology of transcendental realism. This involves revisiting the generative notion of causality in more depth, by describing Archer's morphogenetic approach (1995), and then considering the three aspects of Collier's theory in the light of this discussion.

3.1 Collier and the Cognitive Paradigm of Morality

In exploring the question of moral agency, Collier builds on the earlier writings of Bhaskar which provide arguments for the acceptance of both ethical naturalism and moral realism. He describes *Being and Worth* as 'an essay in critical realist ethics' in that it presupposes that you can derive an ought from an is' and that there is 'a moral reality that it is up to us to discover rather than one that is down to us to have invented' (Collier 1999:vii). However, that does not mean that he accepts all aspects of Bhaskar's dialectical critical realism. This was seen in his criticism of Bhasker's specific moral theory, for its formalism, where Collier drew the overall conclusion that 'to determine what freedoms are desirable we must turn

not to formal considerations, but to considerations of intrinsic worth' (1998:701). It is through this consideration, of how entities can be understood to have intrinsic value or worth separate to its recognition by a valuing agent, that Collier, in *Being and Worth* (1999), produces a different account of moral agency than Bhaskar's.

Collier's account of moral agency has three components. The first is a conception of moral agency - the cognitive paradigm of morality - that regards the act of valuing as the use of rationally directed emotions; to identify something that is intrinsic to an entity and which allows us to choose to value it appropriately. This is a conception that is dependent on his second component. The consideration that entities have intrinsic value as opposed to having value only because we value them - a conception that therefore considers the boundaries of moral consideration to be wider than just other moral agents. The third aspect is that entities and consequently value can be ordered in a hierarchy, which a moral agent can recognise through the use of these rationally directed emotions. In exploring this theory of moral agency, it is important to recognise that Collier considers that, in comparison to his political theory in *Socialist Reasoning* (1990) he is 'nothing like so convinced' (1999:viii) about the robustness of his own argument.

Collier considers how it is possible to makes sense of moral agency if moral realism is accepted. He argues that if you accept that there is value independent of human kind then human beings, in making value judgements, are attempting to describe something that is external to us, in the same way as stars and rivers are external to us. This external *value* is not *values* as ideational elements but something that exists in reality regardless of if it is recognised. This raises the question of, what is it about human beings that means they can recognise this value. Collier argues that in considering this question there are two possible positions. These are described by Collier as the moralistic paradigm of ethics - that we are born with an intrinsic moral sense that allows us to instinctively recognise what is good in the world - and the cognitive paradigm of ethics - where the recognition of value is a cognitive process.

Collier's answer is a version of the cognitive paradigm of morality. He develops this by modifying Spinoza's moral psychology (1963) though the use of Macmurray's conception of the relationship between *Reason and Emotion* (1962). Spinoza is a significant seventeenth century rationalist philosopher whose approach is to apply the deductive method to philosophical problems. Spinoza

works from a pantheist conception of God to produce an ethical theory that contains a non-dualist theory of the mind. Macmurrey is a little known twentieth century philosopher, who also rejects mind-body dualism and explores the role of emotion and the relational character of agency. Collier draws on both of these to produce his own understanding of moral agency; a version of the cognitive paradigm of morality where the cognitive process - for all aspects of agency, not just moral reasoning - consists of rationally directed emotion. Collier arrives at this position by considering why, in general, there are different approaches to agency and then using this understanding to explore Spinoza's theory of agency.

Collier recognises the Spinoza is only one approach to the question of agency and so he needs to demonstrate why he considers it to be superior to other approaches. He argues that the reason that there are different positions on agency is that they all take a different approach to the relationship between *will, reason* and the *emotions*. He describes Descartes approach (1996) as *reason* being good and setting out aims, but that reason cannot direct an individual to those aims without will. This has no aims of its own but has 'shoving-power' to get the aims done. However, *will* can also shove an individual to follow the aims of an individual's passions (*emotions*), which are bad. On this conception *will* is 'the policeman who forces the decisions of the legislator or judge (reason) on the unruly passions' (1999:14). Whereas, Kant (1964) has no requirement for *will* within his consideration of agency, as both *reason* and *emotions* have their own 'shoving-power' with *reason* being aimed at the good and emotions being aimed at the bad. This is the conception of the heart and the head being in conflict. Collier argues that popular romanticism is the opposite of Kant, in that it also only contains reason and emotion, with no will, but it considers the demands of the heart as good and those of the head as bad. Finally for Hume 'emotion dictates ends' while 'reason discovers the most effective means' (15) Although Collier doesn't discuss other critical realist approaches to moral agency, it can be seen that on this description Elder-Vass can be understood to have a Kantian conception of moral agency, while Bhaskar's can be understood as rationally directed *will*.

Collier argues that these conceptions 'rest on a false dualism. They assume reason and emotion are separate forces' (14). Collier's argument is that Spinoza provides the best account of agency as he avoids this dualism by considering that

'reason and emotions are not separate faculties' but that instead, 'reason is implicit in all emotions.' On this understanding of agency 'only emotions can move us to action; but there are rational and irrational emotions' (16). This is a general position that can be seen to apply to all cognitive processes. Where:

> nothing can overcome an emotion except for another emotion; but emotions can be more or less rational insofar as they are based on more or less adequate (cognitive) ideas - and it is sometimes possible to transform irrational into rational emotions by passing from inadequate to (more) adequate ideas (16).

On this conception of the mind mental states such as fear are rational, if you are faced with genuine danger; as the facts of the situation mean that fear is a rational emotion and actions taken in accordance with this rationally directed emotion would be correct. Whereas if you feel fear due to a phobia - such as a fear of ducks - then this would be an irrational emotion as the facts of the situation would not support the feeling of fear. Collier argues that this conception of rational or irrational emotions makes more sense than any attempt to explain the same examples with a separation of *reason* and *emotion*. On this understanding of agency, moral agency consists of using these rationally directed emotions to make judgements of right and wrong.

While Collier takes the cognitive paradigm from Spinoza, he makes clear that this does not lead to an acceptance of Spinoza's ethics. This is because Spinoza explicitly argues that the boundaries of moral consideration should not be greater than the community of moral agents; as he 'took no account of animal welfare' (53). This in Collier's view, is inconsistent with the cognitive paradigm. Collier's position is that if the cognitive paradigm is accepted then the boundaries for moral consideration should include more than just moral agents. Collier holds that the reason that Spinoza fails to recognise this is due to a tension in Spinoza's work between the 'cognitive paradigm - and the stoic residue which it also contains' (56). By 'Stoic residue' Collier is referring a to tendency in Spinoza's thought to consider bad emotions as not only being ones based on falsehood but also ones that bring sorrow. And that 'the wise man should be invulnerable to sorrow' (53). For Collier, it is this prescription to suppress sorrow, remorse and pity that leads to the failure of Spinoza to account for other beings. A failure Collier addresses by the modification of Spinoza's paradigm through the introduction of MacMurray's

conception of reason and emotion.

Collier introduces Macmurray as he believes this is one of the best accounts of the position that ‘reason is inherent in emotions’; as it shows that emotion can ‘consequently have qualities which have often been attributed only to reason’ (24). Macmurray does this through an understanding that the fact gathering, that is relevant to the exercising of moral agency must, to be effective, use both empathy and self-reflection. With empathetic skills described as the skills of gaining explanatory knowledge by ‘putting oneself in the place of others’ and therefore, allowing an appraisal of the facts, as part of rationally directing emotions, to include the facts of how the other people in a situation may feel about that situation. Self-reflection is described as the cluster of skills that centre on self-awareness and consist of gaining explanatory knowledge through reflection on your own actions. This allows facts centring on why we are taking the action in question to be considered and consequently can lead to the recognition of emotions as irrational. Such as when we may feel the way we do about a situation not because of the facts of that situation but because of the facts of a different situation that we have no control over. For example, a road rage incident, that may appear to be triggered by a minor disagreement, but where the driver is late for a meeting and is worried that he is going to lose his job.

This understanding of the attributes of empathy and self-reflection means that they can be considered to be ethical virtues, as they assist in rationally directing emotions in the consideration of issues of right and wrong. On this approach moral agency is a cognitive skill that can be directed and developed; in that ‘as one becomes more rational/interactive’ one will begin to ‘care more for more of the universe, as it becomes more integral to one’s own being.’ (42). And that through the exercising of moral agency we can alter ourselves and the world around us.

For Collier, this leads to moral agents not having clearly defined boundaries. For if I understand another’s feelings through empathy then those feelings become my feelings. In this way selves include those that they interact with. This is the antithesis of the atomistic view of society. Collier describes it as a conception of the self as ‘a cross and not a circle’ (40), in that ‘myself’ is not just my body but the systems my body is part of and that support my body. Through greater interaction with the world my self extends to include more of the world. In this way, the boundaries of moral considerations include the environment and other species,

because the boundaries of the moral agent include these systems and the considerations of other species.

Collier's summarises the cognitive paradigm as a recognition 'that morality is about emotions'. These emotions can be descriptively rational 'in that they include representations of other beings' and normatively rational 'in that they correspond to how the other beings really are'. On this basis 'the transition from irrational to rational emotions is the work of the intellect in discovering the truth about those beings with whom or with which we interact' (33-34). While in respect to agency this is an understandable account of the relationship between reason, emotion and external reality; Collier recognises that this can only be supported as an account of moral agency, if it is possible to understand that value is separate to ourselves and that the cognitive process is used to discover that independent value. This leads to the second aspect of Collier's theory, an account of what it is that we are rationally recognising when we recognise value.

For Collier this independent 'value' it is the 'worth' that all beings possess. Collier deliberately uses the term worth as the referent rather than the more familiar descriptor value because Collier considers that the term 'value,' is 'tied up with the ideas of extrinsic value that is conferred by us' (117). Worth is therefore the intrinsic value that any being has and it is exists independently of its recognition by a valuing agent.

Collier argues that all beings in both the natural and human worlds have worth in themselves and the intransitive object of morality is the 'intrinsic worth of beings' (62). This is a position that he identifies as being drawn from the philosophy of St Augustine, who was an early Christian philosopher who profoundly influenced medieval and reformation religious thought. Augustine argues that value is intrinsic to beings, in that 'all being as being is good'. However, while Augustine looks to Christianity theology to support this position, Collier seeks to make his case 'without appeal to theological premise.' (7). Collier's argument for all beings possessing worth is that 'if the cognitive paradigm is true, what makes an emotion appropriate or inappropriate is nothing self-referential about the person whose emotion it is, but the nature of the emotions' object.' This 'means that the quality of (for example) goodness must inhere in the object'. Collier's justification for this is not theological but is mainly a version of Ockham's Razor; that 'when everything is as if something were true it is reasonable to assume it to be true unless we have

some special reason not to do so' (56). Collier argues that if it is accepted that our emotions work as described then 'we have emotions in a manner as if things have intrinsic value.' It makes sense, on this basis, to draw the conclusion that things really do have intrinsic value as no special reason has been identified that indicates that this is not the case.

To reinforce this argument, that the intrinsic worth of all beings is the intransitive object of morality, he considers existing transitive theories of morality. His argument here is not just that the existence of moral change and moral diversity supports the existence of an intransitive object of morality; but that it supports his specific formulation of what that intransitive object is. In considering the diversity of transitive theories Collier argues that:

> every moral code should be understood to approximate more or less well to [his] position. As such existing moral codes can be seen as more or less successful attempts to discover real worth and can be more or less rational as they do so better or worse (90).

Collier also argues, that moral change supports his position on the intransitive object because 'we can change our judgement about something's worth' (57). Which must mean that its worth is independent of our recognition of it.

Collier recognises that if all being is argued to be good then this creates a problem for the understanding of evil. To overcome this, he draws on the conception of absence that is found in *Dialectic.* That absences are real and have effects. He considers that the concept of absence 'opens up the possibility of a value-realism which is based in the nature of being' (1998:691). Collier argues that if all being is good that means that evil must be understood as an absence; that 'evil is not being but privation or lack of being' (1999:63). Collier uses the example of the extinction of species to clarify this point. He argues that 'the extinction of the moa' can be understood to be an evil, in that it removed an entire species from being, 'but the nonexistence of unicorns is not' an evil (74). However, when Collier says evil is an absence, he is not implying that evil has ontological primacy over good. Collier's use of the concept of absence differs from Bhaskar in this respect as Bhaskar argues that absence is always ontologically prior to presence and so non-being has primacy over being, Collier, expressly argues against this position as he considers that, in making this argument, Bhaskar is 'legislating in advance for the sciences'(1998:691) As such the use of the concept of absence, and his

recognition of their importance, does not indicate the acceptance of all aspects of Bhaskar's dialectic.

This conception of evil as an absence extends to the concept of the cognitive paradigm. Collier sees the existence of false beliefs 'as a real lack, and not just a grammatical one' (1999:75); in that 'there is a real extension of the organism into the world underlying knowledge, which is lacking in the case of a false belief.' As such, the 'doctrine of the objectivity of worth' leads to the 'recognition of the worth of objectivity', that 'objectivity is not just a virtue but the core of all virtues' (2003:238). As such, this lack of objectivity can be understood to be the absence of interaction between the organism and its environment, so that the absence of this virtue is an evil.

On this understanding worth is intrinsic to the object. However, Collier does qualify his position with the reservation that our relationship to an object may be a secondary determinant of worth. As 'the being of the object is partially relational, and it may be the relational properties that make the emotion appropriate to it, as well as the non-relational properties' He clarifies this statement with the example of a dangerous dog which is dangerous to you 'but not to a tiger or a telegraph pole'. On this basis he argues that 'among the relational properties will be relations of utility to the person who feels the emotion' and, for this reason, the use that an object can be put to 'may justify emotive attitudes to the useful object' (1999:56). As such, relational properties do, on occasions, have some place in considerations of value.

While this theory of intrinsic worth can be seen to support the concept of moral agency consisting of the cognitive process of rationally directed emotions it does so in a way that creates difficulties. For if moral agency consists of making choices to act in accordance with the worth of being and if all beings have worth how is it possible to use any considerations of worth in our thought process? Collier suggests that this can be overcome because the Augustinian conception of 'being as being is good' contains a hierarchy of being that can be used when making moral judgements. However, as with the overall position of intrinsic worth, Collier recognises that he needs to find a different premise for this concept than that of Augustine's theology.

Augustine argues that there is a hierarchy of being that is based on assessments

of rationality and sentiency. For Augustine:

> living things are ranked above inanimate objects; those which have the power of reproduction or even the urge towards it, are superior to those who lack that impulse. Among living things, the sentient rank above the insensitive, and animals above trees. Among the sentient the intelligent take precedent over the unthinking - men over cattle. Among the intelligent, immortal beings are higher than mortals, angels being higher than men (1958:447-448 in 1999: 52).

Collier's argues for a hierarchy that is the same as Augustine's, non-supernatural, ordering while clarifying that this doesn't mean the wholesale acceptance of Augustinian ethics 'which is conditioned by its time and place – a superficially Christianised Roman Empire, still founded on slavery, and threated to its heart by barbarian attacks' (1999:63). To make this differentiation, Collier offers a different ontological argument to Augustine's to support this hierarchy.

His claim is that beings can be ontologically ordered according to their 'power of being'. This is an understanding that draws on Spinoza's concept of *conatus* that "each thing, as far as it lies in itself, strives to persevere in its being" (1963: part 3, prop. 6). Collier argues that 'entities have 'more or less being in the senses of extending ones being more or less beyond the boundaries of one's own body' (1999:77). So that humans, as they can 'actively preserve and extend' their being 'by interacting more with more of nature' have more worth than 'non-human animals', which because they 'interact more with more of nature than do plants, which interact more with more than nature than minerals, and so on' (77). This produces a hierarchy of worth that aligns with a hierarchy of being that is based on this power of being.

This doesn't mean morality is just a matter of checking a hierarchy and acting in accordance with the identified positions. For while the hierarchy indicates a specific ordering of being, Collier deliberately does not provide any specifics of this ordering in more detail; arguing that to do so would be to ignore the complexities of the issues that are considered by morality. Instead, he provides a limited number of examples to ensure his position is not misunderstood. One example is a plant that may need defending against a goat; as although it is only a plant it is an endangered plant. This he describes as the qualitative aspect of moral judgments. The recognition that 'not only individuals but species and eco systems

have being and therefore worth and may rank higher than individuals of higher species' (78). It is this distinction, that a moral choice is not always to support the individual being that ranks highest on a hierarchy, that distinguishes Collier's practical morality from Augustine's.

On this understanding morality is the use of the cognitive paradigm 'to love all beings proportionate to their goodness'; where 'non-human and even non-living entities are good in the sense that' Collier is using the word. This is:

> not the same as moral goodness. It could be called a pre-moral good that morality is based on. Morality presupposes ontological good and being moral consists of loving being in due order and-very largely in fighting off threats to ontological good. Morality on this conception consists of, in the most part, the negation of the negation of ontological good. But moral good and evil may lead to an ordering of our sympathies that is not the same as the ontological ordering (77).

This distinction between pre-moral good and the morality that is based upon it, provides further clarification to his thoughts regarding the transitive and intransitive object of morality, For Collier, it is this intrinsic property that is the intransitive object, which existing transitive moral codes are more or less approximations of. This means that transitive morality emerges from a relationship between the pre-moral good (worth) of being and socio-historical specific valuing agents who recognise this attribute. This can be seen to align with Bhaskar's understanding of the intransitive object for morality; where the moral good is 'grounded in conceptions of human nature, in the context of developing four-planar social being' (1993:211). However, valuing agents are also entities and so as well as recognising value they must be understood to have worth. Collier's understanding of this worth leads to the emancipatory conclusions of his theory.

As human beings are understood to have worth this raises the question of if it is possible for some humans to have more worth than others? Collier's answer is that his theory leads to a metaphysical equality of worth of all human beings as 'having a life to live'. Within this equality of worth of all humans, while 'the virtues, which are cognitive and physical powers and liabilities are unequally distributed' it is 'important that we value these and do not [. . .] inappropriately extend our ideas of equality to our judgements about them'; for while they are unequally distributed not all virtues are equally important. So that while 'different spheres of interaction

generate differently valued virtues.' they are differently valued, on objective grounds. So that 'it is better to be a good friend than a good physicist and it is better to be kind to animals than to be good at producing marketable cosmetics' (1999:103-104). This can be understood as Collier supporting the ethical virtues of empathy and self-reflection over other virtues. His conclusion is that worth is 'the foundation of the virtue of social justice,' and that to achieve this 'requires stricter material equality than any literate society has hitherto practiced'. In this way Collier argues from moral theory to practical emancipatory conclusions.

This hierarchy also clarifies the question of the worth of non-human entities. Collier explicitly extends the boundaries of the considerations of morality to be wider than that of moral agents. This is because Collier's specific motivation for writing *Being and Worth* was to engage with environmental ethics (viii) and as such, his conclusions are an attempt to move away from a purely anthropocentric approach to morality. Collier considers that his conclusions, that 'beings other than human beings have some intrinsic value,' but that 'human beings have more value' can be understood to be 'non-anthropocentric in its meta-ethics, and still perniciously anthropocentric in the contents of its ethics' (85). In that his theory recognises our duties to other beings but tempers this with a recognition that some duties can only be owed to other humans.

The consequences of this approach to moral agency and the morality that is produced from it can be considered through how it would apply to the issue of slavery. On Collier's formulation Aristotle is wrong, as all human beings have equal worth, and so other human beings should never be the subject of forced labour. However, Collier's position would also extend the boundaries of moral consideration, through the use of empathy, and such an approach would consider the forced labour of other species to be of moral concern.

To summarise, Collier has argued that all beings as beings have worth but that some beings have more worth than others. This is because there is a hierarchy of being, with evil being understood as an absence. This worth of beings is independent of its recognition by moral agents. Moral agency consists of using a cognitive process to recognise the intrinsic worth of things (or the absence of worth) and then make moral judgements that in the majority of cases support the continued flourishing of the greater degree of being. On this conception, when we hold true moral beliefs this 'corresponds to a high degree of interaction between

an organism and its environment'. On the basis of this understanding of moral agency and the intransitive object of morality, Collier considers that a democratic socialist society with a planned economy that has due regard to environmental considerations is the right approach to achieve human flourishing and the flourishing of all entities.

Collier's theory has been criticized by Benton in *Realism about the Value of Nature* (2004) due to difficulties with its moral ontology. Benton argues that while he sees the cognitive paradigm as a good starting point for a theory of 'moral sentiments' and he shares Collier's commitment to the metatheory of critical realism he cannot follow Collier in 'his commitment to an analogous realism about value' (2004:241). This is because, he considers that 'there are difficulties in sustaining the deep ecologists' attribution of intrinsic value even to non-sentient beings short of some theological or broadly super-natural premises' (241-242). In making his argument Benton raises issues with both the conception of all being, as being, is good and the hierarchy of being.

In considering the central proposition that all being, as being, is good. Benton argues that 'non-sentient living beings, inanimate objects, concrete assemblages of them in ecosystems, landscapes, etc., cannot be said to have values or purposes by any plausible stretch of the meaning of these terms, yet it is claimed that they possess worth, or goodness simply by virtue of their existence' (243). Benton considers that Collier's justification for this is by an 'analogy with the critical realist view of science' as 'having an intransitive object'. Benton is unsure of if he disagrees with these claims or if he doesn't understand them. He states that one interpretation is that 'worth or value' is 'a property of things, over and above the properties established by perception or scientific investigation' (243) while another is that worth is the 'is' that 'ought's' are derived from. Benton considers that the issue of 'oughts' and moral sentiments suggest that value rather than inhering in the object emerges in the course of the encounter between an object and a human valuer.

Benton recognises why Collier needs a hierarchy of being as without it, Collier's theory 'may not carry us very far when it comes to decision-making in concrete situations' (244). However, while he understands it purpose, Benton holds that this concept itself just builds on the existing problems with worth. Benton considers that the hierarchy of being 'is called into question by modern science' (245).

Specifically, that the theory of evolution questions human superiority and ‘the great chain of being’. For Benton the difficulties with Collier’s ‘moral ontology’ are made more complex by ‘Collier’s reliance on St Augustine’s theologically grounded moral ontology, whilst simultaneously attempting to defend its conclusions on a secular basis’ (240). As it is paradoxical that Collier adheres to both ‘a medieval ontology of nature’ and ‘a realist defence of the rationality of modern science’ (246).

These are significant criticisms of Collier’s position. Intrinsic worth that varies between beings is central to Collier’s version of moral agency. As Collier’s theory of moral agency only works if its explanation of how the cognitive process recognises a separate aspect of reality that informs moral decision-making works. This is the role of intrinsic worth. That the criticisms are based on the alignment with the metatheory make these criticisms even more pertinent. Collier’s theory is expressly a ‘critical realist ethics’ Benton’s criticisms suggest that it is not. In that the conception of worth as the intransitive object of morality is an analogous use of the metatheory and the concept of worth that is a property of all being, but that varies between being is incompatible with a realist metatheory. If Collier’s theory is not compatible with the metatheory it has failed on Collier’s own terms. Therefore, to consider if Collier’s position can be defended against Benton’s criticisms it is it is necessary to assess it from the perspective of its compatibility with the overall ontology of transcendental realism.

3.2 Moral Agency and The Nature of Reality

To explore Collier’s theory, from an ontological perspective it is necessary to consider moral agency and worth by reference to the relevant aspects of metatheory. As Collier talks about worth as ‘the power of being’, then the relevant aspect is the approach of the metatheory to causal power; and how this ‘power of being’ can be understood by reference to mechanisms, which have emerged from structures.

To apply this aspect of the metatheory, I introduce Archer’s morphogenetic approach (1995), which is a development of the metatheory which assists in the understanding of emergence. The purpose of this discussion is to ensure that in exploring ‘mechanisms’ the term is not just used as a synonym for causal power but actually facilitates explanations. This understanding is used to explore the questions of: (i.) Is the cognitive paradigm understandable within the ontology of

transcendental realism? (ii.) is it possible to understand a property (worth) that is held to belong to all beings, to a greater or lesser amount, within this understanding of reality? The discussion of emergence also identifies a further issue with Collier's theory, that is not critiqued by Benton. This is how Collier's theory of moral agency aligns with the understanding of social reality that is found in the transformational model of social activity (TMSA). where 'society is a condition of our agency' (1986:123). This is discussed in the final part of this chapter where I consider: (iii.) How can socialisation be understood in Collier's account?

3.2.1 Emergence and the Morphogenetic Approach

Archer, in *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach* (1995), develops the analytical separation of the social strata, that is shown in the TMSA to take account of temporality and culture. In doing so she develops the understanding of emergence that is contained in the metatheory. Her aim is to identify more clearly how people reproduce or transform society and how society acts on people. What she introduces to the interdependence of structure and agency are two principles of temporality. Which are that, while structures may be activity dependant, the current structure necessarily predates the actions that transform it, and structural elaboration necessarily post-dates that action. She calls this a morphogenetic approach; as this phrase indicates how society has no preferred form but is constantly shaped and reshaped by the interplay between structure and agency, as shown in Figure 7.

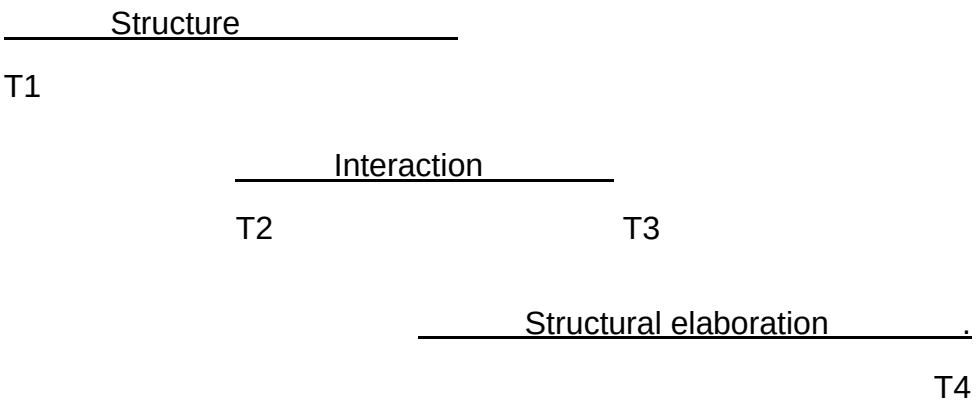

Figure 7. The Morphogenetic Sequence. (Archer 1995:76)

The use of the term structure is deliberate here. Archer doesn't talk about society and agents but structure and agency; as she distinguishes between structure - which is made up of material things - and culture - which is made up of the ideas of a society. This is because Archer argues that it makes as much sense to talk about the causal power of cultural systems as it does to talk about the causal power of social systems. Culture as well as structure can be understood using the morphogenetic approach. with the pre-existing cultural system predating the actions of agents and agents elaborating the cultural system. This separation facilitates the identification of some specific groups of mechanisms - which she refers to as emergent properties. These are structural emergent properties (SEP), cultural emergent properties (CEP) and personal emergent properties (PEP). A brief summary of the difference between these three separate emergent properties provides a greater understanding of how specific mechanisms with causal power can be understood to emerge.

The concept of SEPs is relatively straightforward. Mechanisms emerge from structures and from the overall ontology it is clear we can talk about a structure in society and its causal effects. Therefore, A SEP is 'irreducible to people and relatively enduring'. It is defined as 'those internal and necessary relationships which entail material resources, whether physical or human, and which generate causal powers properly to the relation itself' (1995:177). From this it can be seen that a SEP is not a specifically designed structural feature such as a political or economic system but a necessary consequence of some of the relationships between material resources. SEPs are such things as roles, institutions and systems.

In considering culture (179-183), Archer argues that 'like structure, culture is a human product but it to escapes its makers to act back on them'; in that it has its own emergent properties. To understand how these, emerge, Archer distinguishes between the cultural system (C-S) - the 'relationships between the components of culture'- and socio-cultural interaction (S-C) - the 'relationship between cultural agents'. Archer recognises the intertwining of C-S and S-C, but stresses they can be analysed separately in their interplay; through a distinction between 'the meanings held by agents at any particular time' - which have 'causal relationships' between 'causal agents' and can be seen as 'contingent' - and the 'internal logical relationships of the C-S' - which are independent of 'power and influence' and

‘exist even if they are unrecognised’. The C-S is emergent from the S-C. It is ‘equivalent’ to the ‘propositional register’ at any given time; in that it is what the ‘particular society’ holds to be ‘true or false’. As an entity, it has an ‘objective existence and autonomous relations between its components’ for ‘values, theories or beliefs’ are ‘independent of anyone’s claim to know or believe them’. It from the internal and necessary relationships of the C-S that CEPs emerge.

Archer also identified PEPs. She stresses that, when considering human agency, while both structure and culture are antecedent to present agency that only means that agency has conditional influences upon it, which predispose it to certain courses of action, and not that agency is determined by the latter. This is because agency itself is the bearer of emergent powers. For example, agents are reflective, they evaluate influences against other concerns; this is due to the emergent properties of self-consciousness and self-monitoring. But agents also relate to other agents. These relations, if relatively enduring, produce PEPs. These have two defining characteristics ‘they modify the capacities of component members (effecting their consciousness and commitments, affinities and animosities) and exert causal powers proper to their relations themselves vis a vis other agents or their groupings’ (184). It can be seen that PEPs are analogous to CEPs, In that the existence of more than one idea means that the causal power of ideas in society, is not just the powers of separate ideas but, include the powers that emerge from their relationship to other ideas (CEPs) and the existence of more than one person means that the causal power of people in society, is not just the powers of separate people but, include the powers that emerge through their relationship with other people (PEPs).

To contextualise this, consider the issue of slavery, within a socio-historical situation where slavery is legal, and the emergent properties that could possibly be identified as having causal power relevant to the actions of agents in reproducing that institution. Archer’s categorisation allows for the development of an understanding of this institution which considers more than just the legal framework and the existence of specific masters and slaves. The concept of SEPs can facilitate an understanding of not just the roles of master and slave but can potentially be used to understand - through reference to material resources such as food and shelter - the emergence of other roles. Such as, indentured labourer, overseer, and specific slave roles that carry a level of comparative privilege; and

which all, as SEPs, perhaps have causal power in maintaining or transforming this institution separate to the legal framework. The concepts of CEPs could possibly be used to analyse the different ideas in the cultural system that lead to the acceptance of slavery. This would not just be singular ideas in the cultural system, such as Aristotle's justification of natural slavery but, due to this existing in the same cultural system as the ideas of human equality expressed in The Sermon on The Mount, would include any CEP that is generated by the contradiction between these two ideas. This may provide a plausible explanatory framework for the emergence of the idea of race superiority, that was used to justify the continuation of slavery on racist grounds. Whereas, the concept of PEPs could potentially apply to attempts to understand the issues of dependency, which are sometimes identified when there is a discrepancy between the actual interests of some people who are subject to extended periods of forced labour, with regard to their future wellbeing, and their actions when they have an opportunity to escape from their captors.

Archer's understanding that in society there are a variety of emergent properties - structural, cultural and agential - aligns with Collier's own understanding of social reality. This can be seen in the issue of agential powers. As Collier's conception of a cognitive paradigm of morality - with its ethical virtues of empathy and self-reflection and a non-atomistic view of moral agency - aligns with Archer's description and examples of the emergent properties of people. While the latter potentially provides the analytical tools to explore the former further. Collier also supports the separation of culture and structure. This can be seen in *Stratification and Marx's Conception of History (*1998:266), where Collier recognises and discusses the existence of ideological mechanisms as separate to economic mechanisms. On Archer's formulation the former emerges from relationships between ideas, while the latter emerges from relationships between material resources. Therefore, Archer's understanding of the influence of culture and structure on agency and her account of emergence must be accepted by Collier.

The relevance of this discussion of emergence for the question of moral agency is twofold. The first is that this understanding of emergence should assist in considering the specifics of Collier's account of moral agency and worth, from the perspective of causal power. As what it indicates is that it is not enough to just label an aspect of reality a mechanism; for this to make sense, this label must

refer to a postulated aspect of reality whose specific emergence is, in principle, explainable. The second is that it shows that when considering moral agency from a causal perspective it is not just worth and valuing agents that need to be considered. This is because moral agents are part of a social structure and so are influenced, through a process of socialisation, by existing moral values in the cultural realm. Therefore, an examination of moral agency from a perspective of ontology and causation must include, not just agency and worth but also, an understanding of Collier's theory and the process of socialisation. In the next section I explore these issues.

3.2.2 The Mechanisms of Moral Agency

In returning to moral agency, the first question is if the cognitive paradigm can be understood through the use of the generative notion of causality? That is by reference to mechanisms that work as tendencies and that emerge from structures. It can be seen that Collier is not arguing for a single psychological mechanism that causes the recognition of value but for a multitude of mechanisms. As on the cognitive paradigm the recognition of value is the same as the recognizing of any aspect of reality and so consists of a multitude of mechanisms; that are aspects of agency. Of these mechanisms he identifies two - empathy and self-reflection - that if used, or developed further, make the reasoning process more moral. But he doesn't limit moral reasoning to just the application of these two virtues.

The cognitive paradigm aligns with an understanding of these mechanisms working as tendencies. This is because it must be recognised that moral agency doesn't always lead to moral actions or moral outcomes. Understanding that the relevant mechanisms may be present but unexercised or unactualized in specific situations allows for an analysis of a situation to recognise what it is about a specific situation that led to the tendency not operating, if it was appropriate that it did. In addition, it also allows for the tendential prediction, that an agent who is capable of empathy and self-reflection, and so is able to exercise those relevant mechanisms as part of an overall causal configuration is more likely to undertake moral actions or seek moral outcomes than one who does not possess, or choose to exercise, those mechanisms.

In considering what structure these mechanisms could be understood to emerge

from, Collier must be seen to be building on Bhaskar's concept of synchronic emergent powers materialism (SEPM). This is Bhaskar's answer to the question of how mental events such as beliefs can be understood to cause physical events by reference to mechanisms (2007:314-315). Bhaskar describes the relationship between psychology and neuroscience as one of SEPM. In that mental powers, such as cognition and self-reflection, are emergent powers not occurring in the absence of matter but not reducible to material powers. The concept of SEPM does not provide an answer to the problem of consciousness or an understanding of how the mind works but it does ensure that it is possible to understand that mental events cause physical events and to be able to go on to examine the mechanisms that underlie those mental events, and the structures they emerge from, without getting caught up, through an assumed reduction, in mind/Brain identity theories.

While the cognitive paradigm is understandable within a generative notion of causality, that doesn't mean it is a better explanation of the moral reasoning process than other potential explanations. To accept the cognitive paradigm, it is necessary to consider the strength of the moralistic paradigm from the same ontological perspective. For the moralistic paradigm is understandable on the metatheory, it must be held to consider that the moral sense of individuals is a mental mechanism that allows us to recognise good in the world. While this appears more understandable on a positivist notion of causality, it could also align with the metatheory. However, it can be seen to have less explanatory power than the cognitive paradigm. This is because on the moralistic paradigm it would not be possible to understand how disagreements between two human agents over morality can be resolved. For if we all had our own internal moralistic mental mechanisms than recognising good would be analogous to recognising colour; which leads to the problem of if we disagree how do we determine who is correct. Disagreements could only be settled through the use of a cognitive process; as such, the moralistic paradigm of ethics is unnecessary. It is just the introduction of an additional mental mechanism, a special moral compass, which provides no greater explanatory power than considering that the recognition of worth requires no more than our normal abilities, that allow us to gain knowledge of anything in the external world. However, both paradigms, as formulated by Collier, are dependent on the conception of intrinsic worth. If it is not possible to make sense

of the idea of value as external to the observer then neither account provides a supportable explanation.

In considering the concept of intrinsic worth, Benton's criticisms were focused on the difficulties of worth being understandable as an intransitive object and as a property that varies between being. The first aspect of Benton's argument is that he considers the reference to intransitivity is an analogous use of the metatheory. But this can only be accepted if value and values are seen to be different to the rest of reality. Nothing in the metatheory's conception of reality suggests this is the case. As all theories of aspects of reality with causal power are concerned with mechanisms that emerge from structures. And as morality is an aspect of reality with causal power, it must be understandable in the same way as the rest of reality. Therefore, it is as reasonable to suggest an intransitive object for the theories of morality as much as any other theory. On this basis, the question is not defending this use of intransitivity but identifying how Collier's theory of worth - as a property that is intrinsic to, but varies between different types of, being - can be understood using the generative notion of causality. If it can be seen to be comprehendible, then it is possible to postulate worth, as an emergent property, that may be the intransitive object of morality.

Collier argues that all beings have this attribute of worth but that some entities genuinely have more worth than others; and so, there is a hierarchy of worth that is due to variations in the 'power of being' (1999:77). This power cannot be something like the stability of the atomic configuration, that most beings possess, as the understanding that those with the greatest ability to interact with the world have this 'power of being' more than those who do not means that it has to be understood as a reference to causal powers that are not just internal to the entity. Therefore, to support Collier's theory, variations in being must be understandable in the same way as Archer describes the emergent properties of people, social structures and culture - by reference to mechanisms that emerge from structures, and have causal power beyond that structure. Two ways that this may potentially be understood are: (1.) to consider that the power of being is just a reference to the amount of mechanisms or amount of causal power that specific structures have, and (2.) consider that the power of being is referring to a specific mechanism.

The first approach is to consider that the concept of worth itself is a reference to the process of emergence. This has to be understood as stating that what is recognised by the cognitive paradigm is simply the numbers of mechanisms that are potentially present or the amount of causal power these mechanisms possess; as the more mechanisms that emerge from a structure, or the greater the causal power, the more worth that structure or being has. On this understanding some wholes are significantly greater than the sum of their component parts whereas other wholes are only slightly greater than this sum. The consequence of this is approach is that the entities with the greatest number of mechanisms present or the mechanisms with the greatest power would have the greater worth. However, this cannot be what Collier is implying with his theory. His conclusions on humanity, that all humans have equal worth, would prevent an understanding of worth as aligning with complexity/power; as such an approach would lead to young children having less worth than adults and adults that lack some physical or mental capacities having less worth than adults that do not lack these causal powers. This is the opposite of Collier's own conclusion; therefore, Collier cannot be inferring that the power of being, and subsequently worth, is a reference to just the amount of causal power that an entity possesses.

The second approach, that worth is a reference to a specific mechanism that emerges in all entities, can be considered through the question of absence. That is considering what it is that is lacking when something is held to be evil. As if worth is referring to a property that necessarily emerges from a relatively enduring structure and gives intrinsic value to being and absence is an evil then it could be that it is the absence of a specific mechanism or mechanisms which is evil. This would mean that it is the presence of this mechanism(s) that gives a greater or lesser degree of worth and the cognitive process of moral agency is the recognition of this specific mechanism(s). However, such an understanding doesn't align with how Collier understands absence, Collier talks about absence as an absence of being, such as the extinction of an entire species, he is not referring to the absence of mechanisms.

This second approach can also not account for variability within a hierarchy. Variability is straightforward if this is a single mechanism that has the same effect; as can be seen by other examples of variable properties. For example, the power to lift heavy objects varies between different levers with some levers having a

greater mechanical advantage than others. But what this variability allows for is the ranking of levers, it doesn't allow for the ranking of levers against other types of being; such as people or plants. it is not the idea that a property can vary that is problematic it is the idea of a property that all beings have that can vary which is problematic on a non-reductive metatheory.

The problems with this can also be seen by considering Archer's discussion of emergence. For example, cultural emergent properties can only emerge from the C-S they cannot emerge from other strata. The same occurs with all mechanisms. As such, it is difficult to comprehend how worth, as a property with causal power can emerge within all entities as the only structure that occurs in all naturally produced entities is the atomic structure. But if it is this structure from which worth occurs, socially produced aspects of reality have no worth and worth cannot be aligned with power of being in the way that Collier has done so on his hierarchy.

This is not to completely dismiss the idea that worth can be understandable as a reference to specific mechanisms, it is just to recognise that Benton's criticisms of worth and its hierarchy are legitimate; in that this concept is problematic from the perspective of the metatheory and the solution is not identifiable in Collier's own work. This problem can be understood as the use of a concept that refers to mechanisms – the power to persevere in ones being through interaction - to justify a concept that is held to occur in all entities - worth and its variability and absence. The consequences of this for Collier's concept of worth is that further exploration is required to determine how worth and its hierarchy can be understandable on the metatheory.

This does not conclude an examination of Collier's theory of moral agency as to avoid a non-atomistic view of moral reasoning, it is necessary to also consider the process of socialisation. This is not just because socialisation is an aspect of the TMSA, but because it is implicit in Collier's understanding of morality. For Collier doesn't just argue that moral agency is the exercising of the attributes, which every rational person has, he argues that they can be developed. This leads to the question of how are they developed? This cannot be just the recognition of worth by the agent and the observation of the impact of the agent's actions by the agent themselves. As this would be a causal chain and not a causal configuration. On a generative notion of causality, the question of development must be understood as from what relatively enduring structures can mechanisms necessarily emerge that

then, as part of a causal configuration, lead to the development of the mechanisms of empathy and self -reflection. This must include social mechanisms.

This point can be clarified by considering the cognitive process that occurs when a moral agent witnesses a slave auction. The reaction of a moral agent may differ depending on if the agent lives in a slave owning society - where there are dominant beliefs regarding the naturalness of slavery - or in a society where slavery is one of the evils of the past. In the former the tendency to empathise is more important in generating the recognition that this is something which requires a moral judgement than in the latter. Therefore, an account of the reaction of the moral agent must include the influence of existing moral and other theories and beliefs that are prevalent in society.

This indicates a significant gap in Colliers theory. For while he discusses transitive theories of morality his moral agent seems to only, when exercising moral agency, take account of intrinsic value and no other factors. Considerations of how mechanisms from both culture and structure would influence moral agency are not discussed in any way by Collier.

A possible reason for this may be Collier's background within philosophy. Philosophy has traditionally approached decision making by moral agents through the use of the model of deliberative reasoning that is intrinsic to the undertaking of philosophy; that of rational individuals exploring issues and developing conclusions through logical arguments. This model of moral reasoning is an explicit part of the study of moral issues (for example, Vaughn, 2008) and it is assumed, when drawing conclusions on morality from the study of imaginary problems (i.e. Foot 1967, Williams 1976). Whereas in real life moral problems - such as making the decision to flee or not to flee domestic servitude when the opportunity presents itself, if doing so means leaving young children that you have been forced to care for alone and unsupervised - the moral agent is often making decisions by applying their already existing moral framework in time pressurised situations with incomplete information and significant consequences. As such, the model of rational deliberation can be considered to be not applicable to understanding how people genuinely come to decisions in the vast majority of real-life situations where moral agency is exercised. On this basis, this absence in Collier's theory can be understood to be due to him following the approach to moral decision making that is found in moral philosophy.

As an alternative to this approach, the influence of socialisation can be understood through the use of naturalistic decision-making models. The focus of the research, that has led to the development of these models, is to understand and subsequently improve decision making in genuine emergency situations. These models (Klein *et al*,1993; Zsambok & Klein, 1997; Flin *et al,* 1997 in Flin 2008) are developed from observations of decision making in dynamic environments - such as the deliberation of juries or nurses in emergency rooms - where decisions can have life or death consequences. As such, they may be more applicable to understanding the ethical reasoning process than models of analytical decision making. These naturalistic models are explored and discussed, though not in respect to moral considerations, by Flin (2008) Who argues that 'In the view of the NDM [naturalistic decision making] researchers, traditional, normative models of decision making which focus on the process of option generation and simultaneous evaluation to choose a course of action do not frequently apply in NDM settings' (2008:108) Instead decisions are made using *recognition primed decision making* where, in its most simple model, the 'decision maker recognises the type of situation, knows the appropriate response and implements it' (2003:110). If a situation is more complex, then the decision maker makes sense of complexity through 'story building'. While in the most complex situations a decision maker, before action, undertakes a 'mental simulation' to identify problems and if any are identified determine 'a second course of action'. Flin concludes that for the decision maker NDM type strategies may feel like an 'intuitive response rather than an analytical comparison' (2008:110). Further research in this area (Cohen-Hatton *et al,* 2015) consider NDM and *conditioned response* as alternative explanations for their observations of real-life situations that are similar to those that were studied to develop models of NDM. In conditioned response the decision maker is not consciously making a decision at all but responding to a situation in a way that they have learned to do so from previous positive experiences.

Because of the situations that were studied to develop the models of recognition primed decision making and conditioned response it can be argued that they both describe the thought process in moral situations more fully than the traditional analytical model. That is not to say that moral reasoning by moral agents never follows an analytical process. For in considering issues such as vegetarianism or the death penalty, the decision making can be understood as moral deliberation. It

is just that this style of decision making doesn't reflect the majority of moral situations at the point of decision. Applying the understanding of naturalistic decision making to moral agency means that our adherence to existing moral beliefs and values can be understood as morphogenetically developed cognitive shortcuts. This may enable the identification of the unconscious impact, through socialisation, of mechanisms from other strata, on the decision making by moral agents; in a way that the alternative of considering analytical decision-making as the paradigm of how real-life actors come to use moral considerations to inform their actions doesn't.

This argument, that the cognitive process is not always an analytical process, should not be seen as a rejection of the cognitive paradigm. As what these NDM models allow for is the development of a possible explanation of the influence of social mechanisms - as emergent properties - on the cognitive process of moral agency, as part of a causal configuration that also involves Collier's moral virtues of empathy and self-reflection and the intrinsic worth of entities. Therefore, when considering the mechanisms that are identified as existing within social reality, Collier's account can be understood to be only providing an explanatory account of some of the aspects of cognition, and that the role of the existing moral values in the cultural realm (which is the subject of the next chapter) and the process of socialisation, as an aspect of moral agency, will also need to form part of any explanatory account.

To summarise, in this chapter I have, by exploring Collier's theory, considered the application of critical realism to the questions of: how moral agents can be understood to use morality in their reasoning process; where the boundaries lie regarding being eligible for moral consideration; and the role of socialisation in the development of moral agency. Collier's conception of moral agency considers this to be an aspect of human agency; in that what makes agency moral is its ability to discover value that is external to ourselves. A consequence of this is that some aspects of rationality - those that increase our capacity to recognise worth - can be understood to be moral traits. This understanding of worth has the consequence that the boundary of moral consideration must to be wider than just moral agents. Collier is silent in *Being and Worth* on the role of existing values in the development of moral agency but his account can be understood to be compatible with an understanding of the process of socialisation.

The strengths of Collier's theory are that it doesn't require the postulation of anything more than our existing reasoning process to enable moral agency to be understood and its broad alignment with the metatheory. Collier also expresses the moral realist position of objective value slightly differently than Bhaskar does in *Dialectic.* By proposing a concept of moral reality as the worth of beings; he considers this 'pre-moral good' to be the intransitive object that morality is based on. This is joined with an understanding of the ability of valuing agents to recognise and respond appropriately to worth. This can be seen to be an understanding of existing morality as emerging from the relationship of moral agents with the pre-moral good that exists in, and emerges within, all aspects of humans-in society-in nature. This two-aspect theory of morality is consistent with the generative notion of causality and Bhaskar's discussion of the intransitive object but only if it is possible to understand Collier's concept of worth as referring to an emergent but variable property. This is the central aspect of his theory and the criticisms of it have been seen to be legitimate.

At this point it has therefore been seen that both Bhaskar's account of moral realism and Collier's account of moral agency have some problematic aspects. The remaining ontological question is how the metatheory has been used to understand the existing moral values, concepts and theories that are part of social reality. This is discussed in the next chapter. Following that discussion, a conclusion is drawn regarding how these problematic aspects may be explored further in a way that aligns with the metatheory.

Chapter 4 Morality as an Aspect of Society

> [Slavery] was established by decree of Almighty God […] it is sanctioned in the Bible, in both Testaments, from Genesis to Revelation […] it has existed in all ages, has been found among the people of the highest civilization, and in nations of the highest proficiency of arts
>
> (Davis, J. President: Confederate States of America 1850
>
> in *religious.tolerance.org/slavery in the Bible*)

Morality, as part of society, is considered by Sayer. This aspect of social reality is not just the moral values and concepts that are used but also - because they are real and have effects - the existing transitive moral theories that seek to explain what these values refer to and how they should be applied. The questions of what moral values refer to and their application can have significant consequences. Such as the continuation of the practice of slavery - which Davis, and many others, tried to justify was sanctioned by the Judaeo-Christian morality system – or its abolition, which was argued through a different interpretation of the same morality system.

The significance of these questions has led to a range of theories concerning moral concepts and values, which will be introduced in this chapter. What they all share is a definition of the good and an understanding of how that good is achieved. While each theory is different from the others, these theories can be categorised depending on if their approach to defining good is by reference to: ends aimed at or achieved; rules that are followed; virtues that should be nurtured; or a combination of these approaches. These theories attempt to do two things. They seek to provide guidance for the practical application of morality to specific issues and circumstances, and they attempt to provide a justification for why they should be accepted as an accurate understanding of moral values. However, after almost three thousand years of debate and enquiry not only is there a range of definitions of moral concepts, a range of views on how they should be applied and

a range of justifications for those specific positions, there is also a range of arguments on if and how a moral theory can be actually be justified.

Sayer uses the metatheory to consider the question of morality as an aspect of social reality. His focus is what he refers to as lay morality (2004,2011). His aim is to 'help social science do justice to' (2011:3) lay morality; by providing an account of existing moral values, that is sufficient to support the use of these values within social science and indicates how social science can be used to develop this understanding of lay morality. In this chapter, I only examine Sayer's understanding of what lay morality is. This is because in the next chapter I consider all the applications of the metatheory to the question of how we can discover more about morality. The argument of this chapter is that the metatheory suggests a specific way to approach the question of the justification of any moral theory and that if examined from this perspective then Sayer's account can be understood, at this stage, to be a justifiable theory of morality, which requires further development to be justified as a more accurate account of morality than other theories.

This Chapter has four sections. In Section One I undertake the work that is required to contextualise Sayer's theory. This starts with an examination of the theorising that occurs with respect to morality and how this can be positioned within the distinction between lay and scientific knowledge that is found in Collier's work on objectivity (2003). I then describe the three general categories that are used to distinguish theories of morality, the issues with these theories, and their common commitment to human flourishing. This leads to Section Two, where Sayer's understanding of Lay morality – as a commitment to human flourishing - and the issues of the justification of this specific theory is discussed. I then, in Section Three, examine how the metatheory can be applied to the question of the justification of theories of morality. This leads to conclusions on Sayer's theory, which I identify in the final part of this chapter.

4.1 Types of Moral Theories

In this section I discuss the types of moral theories that are used to try to comprehend and guide the use of moral values. To consider these theories it is first necessary to understand their status as theories. The word theory, with its extensive use in scientific practice conjures up a mental image that is formed from

our knowledge of scientific practice and the existence of such theories as those of thermodynamics or evolution. That is well structured and developed explanations with an empirical basis. Moral theories are not like that. The phrase ‘moral theory’ predates the scientific method and it is seldom used in the same way. This status of moral theories can be understood by first considering the focus of moral theories and then considering the status of these theories within Collier’s distinction between lay and scientific knowledge.

Moral concepts and values are used in society. They are socially produced and so are ontologically different, in that respect, from naturally produced aspects of reality. The first level of moral theorizing about these concepts and values is applied ethics. This is the considerations of the ‘practical implications of the principles deemed appropriate for the evaluation of human life’ (Calder,2007:183). For example, I may ask is it right to buy tuna from a supplier, when I think they might use modern slavery in their supply chain or I may ask if slavery is wrong. Reflecting on either of these issues is ‘applied ethics’. In applying moral considerations some situations are more problematic than others. One way of separating these situations is to consider if the practice where moral considerations are being applied is one where human agents carry out activities that are aimed at specific and agreed ends or is it a practice which is part of human life in general. In the former the question of what good looks like is both understandable and answerable while in the latter there is no generally accepted end and so no clarity over the concept of good. This question of agreed ends enables morality to be applied - through the development of specific rules and standards of behaviour - in diverse fields of human agency, such as medicine. The benefit of this distinction is that a situation such as a doctor removing a healthy kidney from a healthy person can be examined and a moral judgement made, by a committee of peers within a professional ethics committee, by reference to the rules of the Hippocratic oath and the agreed end of promoting healthy human life. While ensuring that issues such as euthanasia and abortion (Glover, 1977), which involve more than just the concerns of medical practitioners are part of the more general moral discourse, which all moral agents can engage in.

The difficulties with applying moral considerations - particularly when applied to issues which are of general human concern, such as slavery or the right to life –

lead to the development and use of a range of normative moral theories that seek to step away from specific applications and examine the content of these principles. These moral theories, as aspects of social reality, are about moral concepts but also have causal power in society.

That these moral theories should not be considered to be scientific theories can be established from Collier's discussion, in *In Defence of Objectivity* (2003), of the distinction between lay and scientific knowledge. Scientific knowledge is defined as the knowledge that is gained from the use of a scientific method and lay knowledge is defined as 'all non-scientific knowledge'. While it is clear how the scientific method can make scientific knowledge more objective, Collier argues that our lay knowledge can also be made more objective. This is because while 'a central place in this knowledge is held by knowledge that is 'acquired by and implicit in, our practical interaction with our environment' (2003:210) that does not exhaust all lay knowledge. As lay knowledge also contains hearsay; the unverified information that is gained or acquired from another.

Collier argues that this hearsay aspect of lay knowledge is made more objective through reflection and comparison with other knowledge and reality. That 'lay knowledge should put in the foreground hearsay and its correction by logic, experience and suspicion' (217). Where logic can correct hearsay by examining hearsay statements for contradictions. Experience - by which Collier means not just observing but causal interaction - can be used to determine if a hearsay statement works in practice. And suspicion is about questioning the source of the hearsay statement for concerns about the reasons behind that statement and how truthful it appears to be. In this way, while it will never become scientific knowledge, we can take our ordinary unreflected hearsay knowledge and begin to make it more objective.

This distinction can be applied to approaches to morality. As this description of how lay knowledge is made more objective accords more with how the moral theories, that will be considered in the rest of this section, have been developed than a description of a scientific method does. Enquiries into morality are usually conducted through philosophical enquiry; that attempts to work out 'ways in which our concepts can be backed with argument rather than authority' (Neiman,2009:80). This means that the moral theories, that I will move onto discussing should be understood to be, not scientific theories but attempts to make

lay morality more objective through the use of the techniques of logic, experience and suspicion. And their application should be understood as the use of hearsay knowledge.

Moral theories are usually divided into three separate groups depending on how they define good. In the rest of this section I introduce the arguments that morality is concerned with consequences, rules or virtues and provide examples of each approach. This description shows the common difficulty with all moral theories; that regardless of how they define the good there has to be a reason for preferring one specific theory over another.

Consequentialist theories of morality define the good in terms of the end, outcome or consequence, of an action; so that an action or intention is understood to be moral if it is aimed towards - or on some formulations, specifically achieves - the desired end. Consequentialist theories consider agents and society within their formulation. The most well-known consequentialist theory is Utilitarianism (Mill,1969). This theory considers that the moral action in any circumstances is the one that is aimed towards - or achieves - the maximisation of utility; which is defined in terms of human happiness. On this theory actions are right if they tend to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number of people, wrong if they tend to produce the reverse of this. A second consequentialist theory is that of Trotsky. Who argues that the moral action in any circumstances is the one that 'leads to increasing the power of man over nature and to the abolition of the power of man over man' (1938:19). Which is a different definition of moral good.

The existence of at least two different formulations of an ends-based morality shows the difficulties for this type of moral theory, for they cannot both be right. This can be established by considering what actions would be moral in a society where slavery is prevalent. Trotsky argues, on the basis of the end stated above, that for 'a revolutionary Marxist there can be no contradiction between personal morality and the interests of the party' (1938,19). As such, an adherent to his moral theory would consider that any action including murder and terrorism would be moral if it had the aim of eradicating slavery or other forms of exploitation. Whereas for Mill, who considered that utility is collectively maximized, the institution of slavery would itself be moral as long as it only affected a minority of the population and the consequences was a greater level of wellbeing for the rest of the population than would occur if that minority was not enslaved. That these

moral theories can lead to such opposing positions on an issue of fundamental moral concern indicates that there are issues with theories that attempt to only consider ends.

The second general approach to morality is that of rule-based theories of morality. These consider that the good is defined by a set of rules and that the good is achieved by acting in accordance with those rules, regardless of the outcome of a course of action. These moral theories therefore focus on regulative norms or conventions. Moral theories that are drawn from Abrahamic Religions tend to cluster within this rule-based approach. In that the good is the word of The God of Abraham and the moral action in any circumstances is to follow the rules that are contained in the religious texts. There are also many secular rule-based approaches to morality; which can also be known as contractual approaches to morality (Rawls,1999) or deontological approaches to morality (Davis,1993). The latter definition is due to the point of moral concern, in these theories, being understandable as the *deon* or duty. Elder-Vass's approach, that was discussed in Chapter Two can be understood to be a rule-based approach to morality, in that the norm circle agrees a set of rules that apply to its members.

The problematic nature of rule-based approaches can be illuminated by again considering the issue of slavery. This is not just the issue of interpretation of the rules - as observed in the use of religious moralities, where both sides in the abolition debate drew on the Bible to support their arguments - but in the existence of different sets of rules which lead to different outcomes. For example, the use of the concept of 'human rights' produces a set of rules (United Nations, 1948) that prohibit the act of the enslavement of another but the contractual approach of Locke (1821) supports the institution of slavery. Locke argues that 'having by his fault forfeited his own life, by some act that deserves death; he, to whom he has forfeited it, may (when he has him in his power) delay to take it, and make use of him to his service, and he does him no injury by it' (1821:IV.23). Locke's argument doesn't justify all acts of enslavement but only slavery when certain conditionals are met. This introduction of conditionals occurs regularly in rule-based theories. They have the aim of preventing a rigid adherence to a rule leading to an outcome that breeches a different rule. For example, Locke's defence of slavery doesn't just contain a conditional clause but is dependent on the conditionals to the prohibition of murder that are supplied by Just War Theory (McManan, 1993). However, the

introduction of conditionals fails to prevent the adherence to different sets of moral rules leading to significantly different actions. As such, a criterion is required that enables a judgement to be made about the strength of any specific rule-based theory that is separate to the theory itself.

The third category of moral theories are those that argue that what is good is the possessing and exercising of a specific set personal attributes or virtues. On this understanding, the character of the moral agent is all that is of concern for morality and morality as an aspect of society is a reflection of this agency. Originally this approach was found in Aristotle who was concerned with 'the nature of virtue. That is, the various qualities attributed to emotion and action expressible in right conduct' (Morgan, 2017:260). Aristotle argues for a specific set of virtues as belonging to a 'Magnanimous Man' (1976:104) and while virtue theory has been updated and reinvigorated in the writings of Macintyre (1981); the problem with all virtue theories is how to determine which specific cluster of character traits are the moral virtues.

Again, the concept of slavery illustrates this problem. In Aristotle's original conception a virtuous man is a slave owning man of leisure; if this is accepted then it can be understood that the approach of virtues is compatible with supporting the institution of slavery. By comparison, Russell discusses the virtues that would be considered to be the personal attributes of a Christian Saint (1947:197-206). The possession of which would be incompatible with the possession of other human beings. This means that to decide which one of these two - or any other - approaches to virtues is the most appropriate requires referring to something other than personal virtues.

In considering the catagorisation of moral theories it has to be recognised that while they are generally divided into these three groups that does not create mutually exclusive categories. All of these three groups contain theoretical positions that overlap with each other. This can be seen in end-based approaches; as within utilitarianism there is a tradition of rule utilitarianism (Hooker,1994) – which considers that rules that promote the end of the greatest happiness can be formulated and followed. While the virtue-based theory of Aristotle contains an argument that the highest human good is *eudaimonia*, which is usually translated as happiness, prosperity or human flourishing. Aristotle argues that the cultivation of the virtues is not just for their own sake but 'we choose them also for the sake of

our happiness, in the belief that they will be instrumental in promoting it' (1976:74). This makes his virtue-based approach also an ends-based approach to morality, but where that end only applies to the individual moral agent.

This description of the different types of moral theories, categorized according to what they consider the good is and how it can be achieved, indicates why all of these theories of morality are problematic. This is because every single theory requires a justification for why it should be accepted as: a.) an objective account of how morality actually is or should be; and, on this basis, provide b.) an argument for why that particular theory, and not others, should be applied by agents to moral problems.

To address these problems one approach is to work from what they all identify as having value. This can be argued to be human flourishing. This is clear not just in the theories themselves; as Mill, Trotsky, The Universal Declaration of Human Rights and Locke all join Aristotle in being committed to human flourishing; but, also because, when considering all three groups of theories, the example of slavery shows how supposedly moral formulations can lead to ends that can be understood as immoral. What felt wrong in these situations was the use of a moral position to produce an outcome that goes against individual human flourishing. On this basis, it can be argued that lay morality is concerned with human flourishing; and what all these theories are attempting to do - in trying to make lay morality more objective - is to produce a more objective account of human flourishing than untheorized lay morality provides. It is this understanding of lay morality, as concerned with human flourishing, that is used by Sayer.

4.2 Sayer's Theory of Lay Morality

Sayer's considers that lay morality consists of a 'conception of human flourishing' (2011:245). He develops this theory in *Restoring the Moral Dimension: Acknowledging Lay Normativity* (2004) and *Why Values Matter to People* (2011). This development can be understood as a response to his own earlier conclusion, in *Realism and Social Science* (2000), that 'if critical realism […] is to have emancipatory potential it cannot avoid engaging with normative thinking about the world' (157). This is because: 'any social science claiming to be critical must have a standpoint from which its critique is made' (2000:172); the evaluative nature of a critical social science means the development of these standpoints include, as an

essential component, ‘ethical issues concerning the nature of the good and how people should treat one another’ (2000:186); and so in acknowledging and justifying these standpoints any moral values that are used need to be scrutinised and justified. This argument, and the considerations of the previous chapters are the background to his own engagement with normative thinking.

Sayer defines morality as ‘the matter of what kinds of behaviour are good’ and the ways that we treat each other’ (2004:3). He recognises that there is a level of incoherence in the use of morality. Suggesting that some of this incoherence is due to the rationales concerning ‘what is of value, how to live, what is worth striving for and what is not’ intertwining with ‘habitual action and the pursuit of power’. And some is because these rationales merge into philosophical ‘conceptions of ‘the good’; which are ‘ideas or senses of how one should live’. These ideas are, according to Sayer, ‘generally less coherent and explicit than philosophers assume’ (4). He is also critical of the approach of much of social science. Arguing that when sociology approaches moral behaviour, it often conceptualises morality ‘as a set of external regulative norms or conventions, and often reactionary ones at that, which govern or attempt to govern behaviour’ (5). His criticism is that sociology often doesn’t recognise that the behaviour is regarding something and that this leads to an alienated and misguided view of the moral behaviour, that can be observed in society.

Sayer’s argument is that morality relates to emotions, which are ‘evaluative judgements of independent or objective situations which have or are imagined to have a serious bearing on our well-being and that of others’ (2). On this approach morality cannot be ‘the internalisation of external formal moral scripts and rules’ (19) but rather that it is through the process of ‘everyday social interaction’ that we acquire and develop ‘ethical dispositions’ or ‘moral sentiments’ through the ‘regulative effect of the approval or disapproval of others’ (8).

These evaluative judgements are ‘assessments of what constitutes flourishing and suffering’ (4). This suffering is real, whether or not it is recognised as occurring. This means that, the central concerns of morality must be a set of objective facts. This is a moral realist position. Sayer argues that ‘if different values are in contention with one another then that assumes some common referent or principle’ (2000:176), and subsequently that this referent is human flourishing. The qualification he adds to this understanding - that ‘the influence of social and

cultural factors' includes a recognition that 'some needs are socially constructed' (Cruickshank 2006:114) - doesn't lead to the adoption of 'a sociological imperialist position, which would hold that all needs are socially constructed' (Sayer 2005:219-2 in Cruickshank 2006:115). As such, while some ethical judgements may be socially relative, the vast majority are not.

The recognition of this enables the development of an understanding of lay morality; through 'an analysis of moral emotions or sentiments and their development through an analysis of social interaction, moral psychology and education' (2004:19). What can be seen here is that central to this understanding is a conception of the motivation of morality being our care for ourselves and others and that evaluation is an emotional response. This aligns with Collier's understanding of moral agency, in that 'emotions can be rational' (6). But in addition to this, Sayer's, account of lay morality also covers the process of socialisation that is missing from Collier's theory. This is through his understanding that agency works within - but is not fully determined by - the context of existing rules, cultural norms and considerations of the opinions of others. As such Sayer's account of lay morality is aligned in its account of socialisation with the understanding of social reality as captured by the TMSA.

In developing his account of lay morality Sayer draws on the 'concepts from moral philosophy' that he suggests 'can help illuminate the (un)ethical qualities of social relations and practices which sociology has tended to overlook' (2004:2). He uses these due to his understanding of the need for a post disciplinary approach to the questions of the good and the good society; that in its theoretical underpinning includes aspects of moral philosophy. He dismisses philosophical approaches such as Rawl's 'veil of ignorance' (1999) – which is a speculative contractual approach to morality - as being 'to idealised and reductive for the purpose of understanding the ethical dimension of social life as it is rather than as one might hope it would be' (2011:253). He suggests the 'most helpful ideas come from neo-Aristotelian, critical realist and ethic of care theorists and from Adam Smith' (254). Sayer consider that these theories provide a rejection of 'the treatment of emotions as opposed to reason.' What this shows is that, in arguing for his position, Sayer draws on a wider range of theories than just Collier and other critical realists.

The two he discusses at length are Smith and Nussbaum. Sayer holds that Adam Smith, in his *Theory of Moral Sentiments* (1976), takes 'human imperfections - our

capacity for immoral sentiments and acts - more seriously than do many philosophers' (2004:7). As Smith's account of morality includes 'a social psychology'; where our 'moral sentiments' and actions on the basis of those sentiments are shaped through our interaction with, approval seeking from, and concern with others. This interaction is understood as 'an ongoing process of moral education and regulation' (7). This is an understanding of moral agency that differs from Collier in its recognition that the sentiments are shaped in part by a relationship with others.

From Nussbaum, Sayer draws support for the recognition that emotions are 'about something'; that they 'provide unarticulated commentaries on our situation' and are "highly discriminating evaluative responses, very closely connected to beliefs about what is valuable and what is not" (Nussbaum,1993:239 in 2004:6). Nussbaum's conclusion is that 'we will have to consider emotions as part and parcel of the system of ethical reasoning' (Nussbaum, 2001:1 in 2004:6), which aligns with Collier's conception of moral agency.

In arguing for his own conception of lay morality, Sayer recognises that it is not enough to argue for one conception; it is also necessary to demonstrate why it is better than other accounts. To achieve this, Sayer introduces an example of someone who is guilty of grievous bodily harm. He argues that we:

> would not say to someone guilty of grievous bodily harm 'look, that's just not what we do round here' (conventionalism), or 'you shouldn't do that because it is socially constructed as evil' (strong social constructionism), nor would we say 'you shouldn't do that because it upsets me' (subjectivism); nor would we say 'you shouldn't do that because it breaks a rule' (rationalism). All of these would be distinctly feeble responses and easily brushed aside. Rather we would point to the harm and suffering they have caused to others (ethical naturalism). In other words, moral judgements of actions are related to well-being, both in terms of the actions themselves and their effects (2004,18).

Sayer considers that the persistent appeal of the positions he dismisses is because they all allow a sociologist to avoid the issues of 'justification for moral views or actions' this allows the sociologist to claim neutrality in respect to questions of 'what is moral' (18). Whereas, the use of lay morality provides, a

standpoint that enables the evaluations of social life by working from the facts of suffering and flourishing to an ethical judgement.

That is not to say lay morality is not fallible and that this fallibility creates difficulties for its use. Sayer considers two reasons for the fallibility that he recognises. The first is that ethical considerations are not the only motivations for action and so ‘moral sentiments and considerations are mixed with ones of self-interest and expedience’ (4). The second is that our assessments of the suffering of others are subjective assessments of objective effects. To ensure that this is not taken to mean that morality is only subjective, Sayer qualifies this statement; as if this was the case it ‘would make survival and flourishing incomprehensible’ (14). His recognition of fallibility is also supported by his reading of Smith, who considers that our concern for the welfare of others creates an emotional response, but ‘that just as a representational discourse is a different kind of thing from what it represents, so the emotions that we experience when we observe others' experience are not, and indeed cannot ever be, identical to theirs’ (7). This understanding of fallibility aligns Sayer’s conception of lay morality with epistemological relativism and judgemental rationality.

To summarise, Sayer provides a description of existing lay morality as: concerned with the real flourishing and suffering of human beings, which occurs separate to its recognition; driven by our emotional responses of caring; influenced through the process of socialisation; and fallible. Where part of that fallibility is due to the difficulties of understanding the emotions of others and part of that difficulty is that morality competes with power relationships and self-interest. This appears to be a comprehensive descriptive account of morality. However, moral theories have two roles, they do not just account for why moral values exist but they are also intended to act as a guide for the application of morality to specific problems. The question this raises is if Sayer’s account of lay morality is sufficiently developed to be applied to the resolution of moral issues.

Sayer recognises that the concept of human flourishing needs to be developed further. He acknowledges that: (i.) some conceptions of the good ‘are flawed or deeply ideological in various respects’; (ii.) while social science can be used to examine these concepts just what constitutes well-being or flourishing is complex and sometimes elusive, especially at the social level’; (iii.) ‘it is not a matter of acknowledging something that is already well-established, but rather something

that has only partly established, and also still to be discovered [as] […] there are no doubt many forms of flourishing we have yet to discover and create' (2004:15); and (iv.) 'because there are many forms of flourishing . . . social science faces a more difficult task than that of the physician' (2011:251). Together these difficulties show that in discussing human flourishing it is not a simple as saying that humans either flourish or they don't - as an ontological statement. This is because the recognition that there are many forms of flourishing is also a recognition that there are degrees of flourishing.

The recognition of these difficulties is supported by Morgan's argument, in *A Note on the Contingent Necessity of a Morphogenic Society and Human Flourishing* (2017), that being and becoming are two different aspects of flourishing. His point, is that 'one should not conflate the agreed constituents of the society over which deliberation continues to occur with the capacity to deliberate as a eudemonistic trait, which must continue to be enacted for the person to be flourishing' (2017:261-262). While this indicates that that a capacity to deliberate about courses of action is one of many aspects of flourishing, it also highlights that flourishing doesn't refer to a specific state. For this reason, any definition of flourishing that refers to a particular circumstance will need to be defended against other definitions or arguments that it is possible to flourish more.

These difficulties with the concept of flourishing can be illustrated by considering practical situations where human flourishing is the primary concern. One example is the research of Hadjimatheou *et al* (2016 in Bales *et al,* 2017) into human trafficking. This looks at the actions of border officers who have a 'subculture' that is characterized by a 'sense of moral purpose' (2017:21). Their research examines 'the difficulties in obtaining consent from potential victims of people trafficking to refer them on for assistance', explores 'the reasons behind this, and describes the border officer's frustration with the consent constraints' (2017:56-57). This is the issue of ensuring that the consent of any potential adult victim of human trafficking is obtained prior to instigating any protective measure. The difficulties of which include persuading the potential victim that their interests - and sometimes their family's interest as well - are best served by trusting the word of a uniformed government official over someone who has promised them a better life – or who may harm their family at home. For this reason, the border officers can view this 'as unnecessarily limiting their ability to protect victims.' The difficulties of the

consent constraint can be understood as the due to the reason for consent being required - a respect for the personal autonomy of the potential victim at the point of interview – and this running against the concerns of the border official, for what the refusal of that consent may mean for the future flourishing and suffering of the potential victim. What does not assist in resolving this is the concept of human flourishing; as present autonomy, the hope for a better future, the knowledge that you are keeping your family safe and freedom from unforced labour can all be described as components of human flourishing. As such, while on the overall conception of human flourishing it is possible to say slavery is wrong; at a practical level of informing the actions of moral agents it can be concluded that the conception is too abstract and all-encompassing.

While Sayer recognises these difficulties, there are also aspects of morality as a feature of social reality that this concept of human flourishing doesn't address. This is because moral values are applied to concerns other than those of just humanity. Such as our valuing of animals or the environment. Singer (1975), argues that this can be understood through the extension of consequentialism so that it becomes non-anthropocentric. He does this by taking the argument for flourishing, that is found in utilitarianism, and extending the concept of flourishing – and the requirement to promote it - to animals, due to their capacity to experience suffering. This extension of the use of the concept of flourishing should be supported by Sayer. For although, in his writings on lay morality, he argues that lay morality is concerned with human flourishing; he does, in earlier work on social science, recognize that moral concerns are wider than just the flourishing of our own species. Arguing that harm can be:

> done to humans and other species not only by direct injury to their causal powers but by preventing the use of those powers whose exercise is necessary for flourishing, as in the case of sensory deprivation or factory farming.' (2000:98–99)

This recognition of the moral dimension of harm to other species raises concerns regarding the comprehensiveness of Sayer's theory of lay morality; it also raises issues for its use. For in considering the practical application of morality to issues, such as economic development that threatens the habitat of endangered species (Schmidtz and Willott,2002), it will be necessary to consider the harms and flourishing of different species. As Sayer's lay morality, focuses on human

flourishing, it does not capture this aspect of morality and so it cannot assist in the application of morality to these questions.

Although it may be possible to overcome these problems, and Sayer considers that the role of social science is to do just that, the other issue that was identified with moral theories was their justification. What Sayer provides is a justification for moral views and actions by reference to the objective facts of suffering and flourishing as a common referent. But what has been seen is that it may be both too abstract and too narrow, in its reference to human flourishing, to provide the justification that is required to promote one conception of morality against others. This question of justification moves the consideration of Sayer's theory into the territory of philosophy where not only different conceptions of human flourishing but wider questions about if morality can be justified by reference to just human flourishing are an aspect of the debate.

For example, Williams in *Ethics and the Limits of Philosophy* argues that the position that morality is concerned with human flourishing can be attributed to the influence of Aristotle; who took Socrates moral question of 'how one should live' (1993:1) and changed the focus to be 'what is the good for man?' (1976:73). It can be seen that the way that Aristotle has phrased this question means that it is not possible to answer it without providing some definition of human flourishing. The influence of Aristotle is significant. Collier, in discussing the objectivity of everyday knowledge, argues that Aristotle's thought has so pervaded culture in the Islamic, Jewish, Christian and Marxist world that it has become 'common sense' (2003:214). As such, the various conceptions of human flourishing can all be seen to be attempts to answer Aristotle's question while other versions of moral theories attempt to provide a non-anthropocentric definition of good. Therefore, to critically assess Sayer's theory this question of justification must be explored further.

To summarise, Sayer's approach to morality as an aspect of social reality is to provide a comprehensive account of lay morality. This is intended to facilitate evaluative judgements by considering that moral values share a common referent of human flourishing - and that we act morally because our relationship to the word is one of care. However, to be able to draw firm conclusions on the strength of his approach the question of how a moral theory can be justified needs to be explored further. To do this, in the next section, I take the same approach to these questions of justification as I have with the other issues that have been raised from

the consideration of specific moral theories. That is to consider it from the perspective of the metatheory and then, with that clarity, return to the question of the justification of Sayer's specific theory of what moral values refer to.

4.3 The Metatheory and The Justification of Moral Theories

Williams (1993) considers the question of what a justification is meant to achieve. He argues that we should put to any proposed justification three questions: 'to whom is it addressed? From where? And against what? Against what, he considers is the alternative to an ethical life. This he feels is not something that can, and therefore should be, actually be addressed by any justification; as someone who is sceptical about morality, in that they believe that moral claims are not capable of justification, will not be convinced by any justification that is formulated. Similarly, someone who is amoral will not be inclined to change their behaviour due to the postulation of a justification for morality. This leads him to consider 'to whom is the justification aimed'? He considers that any justification that is formulated has the intended audience of an already moralised community. Its aim is 'by giving reason to people already disposed to hear it, to help in continually creating a community held together by the same disposition' (1993:27). That means it is not the existence of morality as an aspect of reality that is in need of justification, rather it is specific versions of moral theories that need to be justified against other versions of moral theories. On this basis, the question of justification can be narrowed down to the question of from where is a justification for a moral theory made?

Jamison's discussion of *Method and Moral Theory* (1991) examines the approaches to justifying moral theories. He argues that in the history of moral philosophy this question of justification tends to be approached in one of three ways. These are justification by reference to either foundations, coherence or derivationism. Foundationalism is the view that moral theories are justified by reference to the relations between the 'beliefs that require justification' and other beliefs that 'are in no need of justification' (1991:480), such as grounding morality in 'human nature'. The second approach is that it is the coherence of morality with other beliefs that makes it justifiable. While derivationism, holds that moral theories are justified in that they are derived from 'more fundamental considerations concerning rationality.' In addition to this, regardless of whether an attempt is

made to justify a moral theory on either or all approaches, moral theories must also meet other standards. They must be consistent, otherwise they 'imply anything and therefore fail to fulfil whatever role we want theories to play' and they must be 'complete enough to provide a moral perspective' (1991:493); in that they account for all the features that they need to account for.

The metatheory of critical realism, with its understanding of the nature of reality, indicates that there is a fourth approach to the justification of an ethical theory; that of explanation. This is an approach which moves moral theories from the realm of philosophy into the realm of social science. Explanation encompasses coherence, derivationism, consistency and completeness. This approach to justification is dependent on both the understanding of reality and causation that is found in the metatheory and the argument for the universality of morality that was discussed in section 2.2.1. This is the argument that the metatheory indicates transitive theories are theories regarding an aspect of reality that is separate to its identification. Aspects of reality with causal power are mechanisms that have necessarily emerged from, but are not reducible to, relatively enduring contingent structures. Therefore, a moral theory is justified against other moral theories by its greater explanatory power with respect to morality as an aspect of social reality.

This means that for a moral theory to be justifiable it should provide an understanding of both the mechanisms that generate the events relevant to morality and the structures from which they emerge. The philosophical moral theories that have been considered and the TMSA both indicate that these facts are not just the moral values and norms that exist in society. Any comprehensive theory must also account for moral agency and the ends, or causal effects, of morality. This is a different approach to justifying a moral theory than the foundationalist approach. It is not the production of a justification in the form 'moral theory *x* is correct because it is justified by *y*, and *y* has already been accepted' but instead takes the form 'morality exists, this is best explained by moral theory *x*'.

On this approach to justification, coherence and derivation must be understood to be attempts to develop an understanding of morality that ensures that a theory is potentially justifiable. This is by ensuring it is coherent within the metatheory and considering if it can be derived from this ontological understanding. This means that the different theories can be considered on a spectrum of explanation, with

coherence, derivation and identification of relevant mechanisms all providing a greater level of explanatory knowledge and therefore a greater level of confidence in any specific moral theory.

The distinction between mechanisms and structures means that explanation itself can be further demarcated. This is due to the distinction that is drawn, within the metatheory, between a concrete and an abstract reasoning process. Figure 8 shows the theoretical relationship between structures, mechanisms and events and where concrete and abstract reasoning processes can be used.

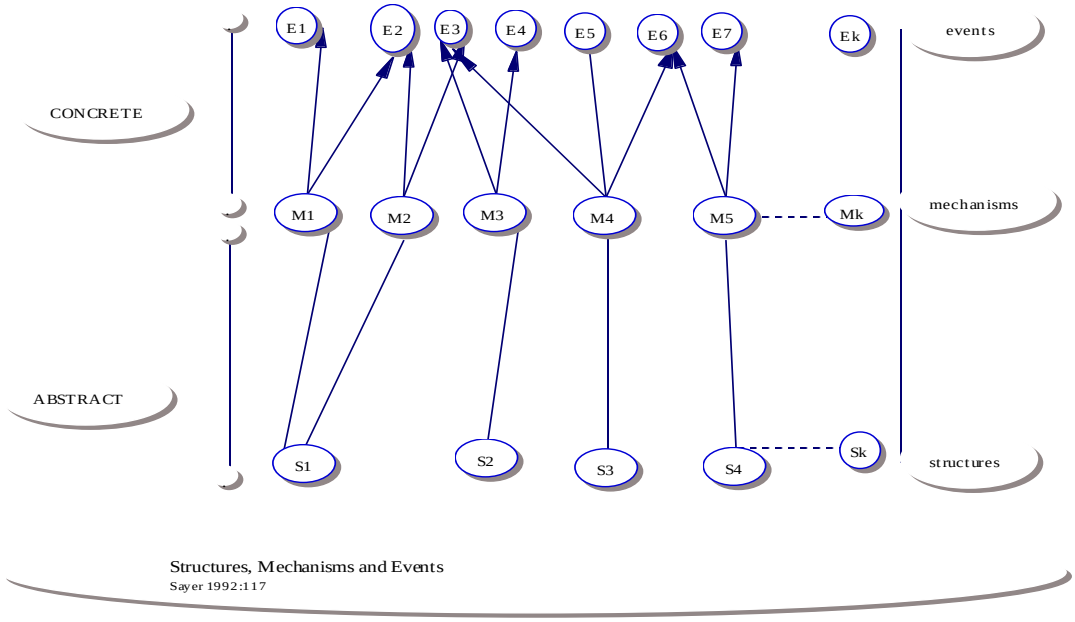

Figure 8. Structures Mechanisms and Events (Sayer 1992:117 in Danemark *et al* 1997:58)

What this diagram illustrates is that a concrete explanation is the explanation of an event by reference to mechanisms. If these mechanisms are explained by reference to other mechanisms then that explanation remains within the concrete; whereas to discuss the emergence of mechanisms as opposed to the identification of mechanisms is to produce an abstract explanation of the mechanism. This means that a causal or concrete explanation can always be developed further thorough the understanding of the structures that the mechanisms emerged from. The consequences of this for the justification of moral theories is that it is possible to provide a concrete explanation or a deeper explanation that contains both concrete and abstract elements.

The point that the abstract element of this explanation can only be developed on the basis of an existing concrete analysis is of significant importance to moral theorising. This point and its consequences is explored by Collier in *In Defence of Objectivity.* Collier determines how our everyday practice derived objective knowledge is related to scientific knowledge. He states that in the former practice precedes knowledge, whereas in the latter knowledge precedes practice; in that we take scientific knowledge and apply it to reality. On this basis, he argues that it should be clear that our reflections on our experience can lead to a depth analysis of concrete beings and inform concrete analysis. Knowledge can then be gained in the abstract. With respect to social science, he argues that while the study of society is concrete bound 'there are abstract parts to good social science' and these consist of 'speculative explanations of concrete particulars'; which are tested by their ability to explain those concrete particulars' (2003:43). Where good abstraction from the concrete 'consists in specifying the many interrelated aspects of something' and bad abstraction 'consists of ignoring the specifics of something to subsume it under some more general heading' (2003:42). Collier's view is that 'until it has issued in a concrete analysis of a concrete conjecture' (2003:3), scientific knowledge must be classed as unfinished and unsuitable for practice. The consequence of this is that the abstract parts of human sciences should never be allowed to influence practice directly. What this means is that a direct reference to a structure can never provide an explanation for an aspect of reality. For example, by answering the question of why slavery was prevalent in Ancient Greece by stating that it was due to the structure of Ancient Greek society. This answer doesn't provide an explanation as it lacks the specific detail of how that society worked. To ignore this point, when trying to use explanations, is to attempt to apply an abstraction to a concrete situation, without the intermediary of a concrete explanation.

The consequence of this for morality is that a justification of a moral theory must, contain a concrete explanation. A complete justification also contains an abstraction; in that it is an explanation of the necessary emergence of the identified mechanisms from a relatively enduring contingent structure. But if the suggested justification only contains an abstraction, with no concrete component - in that it is a reference to structures with no understanding of mechanisms - it cannot be accepted as a justification without the explanation being developed in

the concrete. Furthermore, a wholly abstract moral theory is not just unjustified it is not suitable for application to real life moral considerations in the concrete; as an attempt to do this is to attempt to apply an abstraction directly to a concrete situation.

This consideration of the metatheory means that there are two questions that can be put to any specific moral theory from this perspective. Is it justifiable and is it justified? The question of if it is justified is the most difficult question but a positive answer to this is dependent on the other question having already been addressed. It is possible to answer the question of justifiableness through wholly theoretical enquiries. As all that is being done is looking at the components of the explanation and comparing one theoretical position with another wider metatheoretical position. If any specific theory doesn't meet at least the criteria of coherence, it is difficult to consider that it could subsequently be found, through further enquiry, to provide an explanatory account of morality and be justified on this approach.

4.4 Justification and Sayer's Moral Theory

Applying this understanding to the question of the justifiableness of Sayer's theory of lay morality means considering if his theory does, or potentially can provide, an explanatory account of morality as an aspect of social reality that is both comprehensive and coherent with the metatheory . This aspect of social reality includes the moral rules and norms that exist in society, and the ends, or causal effects, of morality.

In considering rules and norms, Sayer seeks to provide an explanatory account of how these rules have effects. He argues that this occurs through 'the regulative effect of the approval or disapproval of others.' As such, he can be understood to be suggesting that these rules and norms are generated and reproduced by the existence of agents who are committed to flourishing. This means his conception of rules cannot be separated from the account he gives of moral agency.

Sayer's account of moral agency is that it consists of our emotional response to the suffering and flourishing of ourselves and others. This leads to him arguing for a cluster of moral virtues. These are 'fellow feeling', 'the emotional aspects of responses to others' and' 'reflexivity' (2011:255). Moral agency was discussed in the last chapter; where it was seen that the concept of moral virtues is consistent

with the metatheory. This is because the understanding of specific character traits, which when exercised are an aspect of morality, can be understood, within the generative notion of causality, as tendencies. In this way they form part of a consistent understanding of morality, that doesn't expect actions or inclinations to always lead to the same result.

Together this means that Sayer's account of rules and norms sits within a conception of society that understands morality as including more than just these aspects. Such an approach is in itself compatible with the metatheory. This is because of its understanding of the nature of social reality and the difficulty of producing law-like statements leads to the rejection of the approach of trying to reduce an understanding of morality to only a set of law-like statements which is what rule-based theories must be understood to be. Sayer recognises this implication of the metatheory. He argues that 'it is as absurd to expect that ethics can be reduced to a single motive or principle as to expect physics to be reduced to a single law' (James,1891 in 2011:253).

While he understands rules and norms as one aspect of morality, his understanding of how they work can also be seen to be compatible with generative causality. This is because the rejection of rule-based theories is not the rejection of the reality of moral rules, as part of morality. Moral rules exist and have causal power. To be compatible they must be understood to be - like the findings of explanatory critiques - subject to a ceteris paribus clause. This is different to a search for conditionals. As on this understanding, moral rules are recognized as existing mechanisms with causal power that can be formulated as tendency statements. Sayer's description of rules as having causal power through a 'regulative effect' is a recognition of this. Therefore, Sayer can be seen to both provide an account of how moral rules have causal power as part of a causal configuration and potentially how they emerge. On this basis, it can be concluded that his understanding of norms and rules is compatible with the generative notion of causality.

Sayer's understanding of moral values can be captured within his discussion of ends. This is because of his argument that 'if different values are in contention with one another then that assumes some common referent or principle' (2000:176), and subsequently that this referent is human flourishing. This concept, as a

common referent or a principle, does a lot of work in Sayer's overall theory. It is a: referent for values; descriptive statement of the intentionality of morality; recognition of the evaluative aspect of morality; and a prescriptive suggestion, in that he argues it should be used as the standpoint for the evaluation of social life. It is in this aspect of his theory that Sayer may be challenged as moving from a generative to a successionist notion of causality.

Concerns about this end, of human flourishing, can be understood by considering Mill's discussion of his own common referent or principle – the greatest happiness principle. This principle - that 'actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness' - has the appearance of an ethical theory being formulated as a law-like statement. This is deliberate. Mill states, in his general remarks section of Utilitarianism:

> There ought either to be some one fundamental principle or law, at the root of all morality or if there are several there should be a determinate order of preference among them; and the one principle or the rule for deciding between the various principles when the conflict, ought to be self-evident (1861:253)

The question this raises is has Sayer, despite his rejection of such an approach, produced a moral theory that takes a different definition of eudaimonia - human flourishing as opposed to happiness - and then produced a law-like statement. That his evaluative criteria can be understood in this way can be demonstrated by following Mill's formulation and describing his standpoint as: actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote human flourishing, wrong as they tend to produce human suffering.

However, while Mill's principle deliberately takes the form of a law-like statement, the phrase that he uses is 'tend to promote.' This means that although it has a law-like formulation, it can also be understood as a tendential prediction. In that it can be understood to be stating that a moral end is more likely to occur if specific tendencies are exercised and actualised than if they are not. This is different to stating that morality is only concerned with achieved ends. For the latter leaves the morality of a situation, in the open system of social reality, as a matter of chance.

As such, in its descriptive aspect, what the formulation of this principle can be understood to be stating is that if agents are acting in a way that they consider will lead to moral outcomes, then moral outcomes are more likely to occur. This is moral intentionality as a tendency that is one aspect of a causal configuration. This is recognised by Sayer in his reference to the existence, as an aspect of lay morality, of the tendency for agents to be 'concerned with assessing ends and trying to work out what kind of life is a good one' (2011:256).

In its evaluative aspect, it must be seen as a recognition that, when discussing ends, a distinction must be drawn between the end intended, as a causal factor, and the end achieved, as the point of moral evaluation. This evaluation as an aspect of morality is understandable as the encouragement and support for the achievement of the outcome of flourishing through the use of the evaluation of existing states of affairs or post-activity judgement. Most importantly for the question of the potential law-like status of 'human flourishing', Sayer argues that 'morality cannot be reduced to a set of principles abstract from concrete situations but involves responses to those situations by situated actors with histories and geographies' (2000:157). And so, while he suggests a common referent of human flourishing, he is clear that this evaluation has no set criteria. As there are 'many forms of flourishing we have yet to discover and create' (2004:15). This means that what Sayer is not proposing is a concrete law-like principle that should be used by moral agents. He is providing a common referent that is an abstraction from existing moral rules, values, ends and theories in the concrete that can be used in studying social life.

This means that when considering the prescriptive aspect of Sayer's use of human flourishing, this concept should never be applied in the concrete. For example, when examining the issue of the border officials and suspected human trafficking, the expectation should not be that the border officials are assisted in their moral deliberations of the 'consent constraint' by using the conception of human flourishing. It is that this standpoint is used as part of the social scientific research to suggest practical criteria that can be of use in these circumstances. Criteria that is then evaluated for its effectiveness by reference to this same standpoint of human flourishing. This aligns with Sayer's own understanding, as he states that it is the standpoint that a critical social science should be using to evaluate social life. Therefore, Sayer's use of human flourishing is not the promotion of, or

reduction of morality to, a single prescriptive law and so is coherent with the metatheory.

The next aspect of Sayer's theory to consider is its comprehensiveness. His theory provides an account of morality as an aspect of society, in that it accounts for both society and agency in a way that provides an understanding of social norms, regulative ideals, emotional engagement and intentionality by reference to an abstract referent. However, his abstract referent doesn't cover all aspects of the use of morality. The concept of human flourishing cannot capture aspects of lay morality such as animal rights and environmental ethics. Of which the former is recognised by Sayer as an aspect of our moral sentiments. This means that as an abstraction from the concrete, human flourishing has failed to account for all elements of the concrete. The question here is Collier's distinction between good and bad abstraction, where the former is 'specifying the many interrelated aspects of something' and the latter is 'ignoring the specifics of something to subsume it under some more general heading. Sayer does also use the general phrase flourishing although he does not suggest this as the standpoint for evaluation. The question this raises, but which cannot be answered here, is if an abstraction that refers to just 'flourishing' can work as a more comprehensive explanation of morality; or is it, like Bhaskar's conception of morality as emerging from some aspect of the universal relationship of humans-in society-in nature, just too abstract to be able to explain concrete particulars.

To summarise, Sayer's theory considers that the morality that is used in society is concerned with human flourishing. That flourishing and suffering is real and that we are motivated to promote flourishing due to our relationship with the world being one of care. All moral theories require a justification. The question of justification is not the justification of why we should be moral but the justification of one theory regarding what morality is and how it is, and should be, used against other theoretical accounts of the same phenomena. From the perspective of the metatheory a theory is justified if it provides a better explanation of the relevant phenomena than other theories. Sayer's theory can be identified as compatible with the metatheory, in its account of moral values, but it doesn't cover all aspects of the use of moral values.

This means that, the overall conclusion that Sayer provides a justifiable theory of morality can be drawn. The strengths of Sayer's theory are where he remains in the concrete, such as in his understanding of moral sentiments, and how moral values have effects. In these aspects, it can be argued that - if the metatheory and its implications are accepted - Sayer provides a more compelling explanation of morality than any of the philosophical moral theories that were discussed in 4.1. However, it is in the abstract aspect of his explanation that his account is not so compelling. This is because there are aspects of morality that this theory is seen to not address. Sayer recognises this, as he argues for the use of a critical social science, to develop more concrete explanations of specific aspects of morality. This development, of a more concrete understanding of the complexities of real flourishing and suffering in all its forms, is required to be able to determine if his abstract referent can be comprehended to include these unexplained aspects of morality. And in this way develop his conception of lay morality from a justifiable to a justified theory.

This discussion of Sayer's theory of lay morality completes the discussion of how critical realism has been used to produce theories of what morality is. This discussion indicates that on the understanding of reality that is contained in the metatheory:

1. Morality exists due to a universal aspect(s) of reality that is/are valuable independent of being recognized as such. Therefore, moral realism can be supported and there is an intransitive object of morality.
2. The exploration of morality is the search for the relevant mechanisms that have emerged from structures.
3. Any explanation of morality must provide an account of morality that aligns with the existing models of social reality. Where the stratification of reality, means that specific mechanisms can only emerge from certain aspects of reality and not others.

4. That the justification of one moral theory over another is not separate to this explanation, it is the explanation. As such, a theory is considered justified if its explanatory power is greater than other theories.

The exploration of this chapter means that four theoretical accounts of morality have been introduced. By considering each theory from the perspective of aspects of this ontological understanding it was found that Elder-Vass's theory does not appear to be grounded in the metatheory and that Bhaskar's theory is too abstract and requires further exploration of the questions of moral agency and moral values. Collier's approach to moral agency is, due to his conception of worth, difficult to align with the metatheory and Sayer's understanding of a common referent for moral values is both abstract and incomplete in its explanation.

The question this leads to is, if these theories can be comprehended as providing, or developed to provide, an overall explanatory account of morality; where the strengths of one theory addresses the problematic aspects of others. To answer this question, it is necessary to identify where these theories are compatible, or in competition, with each other. One way of exploring this is to identify where they differ in their understanding of morality and then consider the strength and validity of the arguments that are used to support the specific positions. As it has been seen that the justification for a moral theory is its explanatory power, this means the question of how an explanatory understanding of morality can be developed must be explored first.

In this context, this is the question of what the application of the metatheory indicates about how explanatory accounts of morality can be produced. The majority of critical realists argue for the use of ethical naturalism. As such, in the next chapter I examine the specific ethical naturalist approaches that have been developed. This exploration of epistemological questions is then applied in the final two chapters to the question of if a synthesised realist theory of morality can be produced.

Chapter 5 Explaining Morality

> It is an obvious enough idea that if we are going to understand how ethical concepts work and how they change we have to have some sort of insight into the forms of social organisation within which they work […] that ethical understanding needs a dimension of social explanation. (Williams, B. 1993:131)

In this chapter I turn to the application of the epistemological aspect of the metatheory, to the question of how an enquiry into morality should progress. This is a question that is considered by Bhaskar, Collier, Sayer and Price, who all argue that the metatheory can be used to develop an explanatory account of morality through the use of ethical naturalism.

This question of how to enquire into morality can be answered in a number of different ways. For example, Spinoza's believes that moral enquiry should follow the model of geometry; by starting from a set of self-evidently true definitions and axioms as foundational statements (1963). On this basis he considers that morality can be developed into an ethical system, that has as its content, a series of propositions that are derived from these truths. A second approach is the linguistic turn in analytical philosophy (Hare,1993), which argues that moral enquiry should start from the definition of specific moral terms and concepts. Williams (1993) rejects these positions and, as seen in the quotation at the head of the chapter, suggests the starting point is an understanding of society and the acceptance of morality as a social feature.

The question this raises is how these explanations can be produced. One approach - that is used extensively - is to develop, test and challenge our understanding of morality through the use of examples. These can be understood to be functioning as 'intuition pumps' (Jamison,1991), that allow us to 'identify and assess our moral intuitions'. While these examples are often 'ostensive' examples drawn from everyday life such as Sayer's use of the example of grievous bodily harm (2004:18), they can also be drawn from 'literature' or be 'hypothetical' or

‘imaginary’ (1991:483-584); with the difference between the latter two being that hypothetical examples are thought experiments of situations that may occur, while imaginary examples ‘involve logical possibilities that could occur only in worlds very different to ours’ (1991:484).

The ethical naturalist approach, that is described in this chapter, moves beyond the use of examples and intuition. It is an approach that accepts the reality of morality and the possibility of arguing from facts to values; and attempts to produce explanations of this aspect of reality, by applying an epistemological method that is developed through the use of the metatheory. The difficulty here is that while Bhaskar, Collier, Sayer and Price all argue for a specific ethical naturalist approach, there are differences in their understanding of how such an enquiry should progress. To examine these differences, I start by describing how the metatheory can be applied to producing explanations of social reality, through the approach of critical naturalism. This is a specific approach to producing social explanations through the use of retroductive arguments and therefore it is not possible to explore ethical naturalism without contextualizing it within an understanding of the method of critical naturalism. I then examine the suggested variations to that method, that are required due to the specific subject matter of values and value. From this discussion I draw out, what I suggest is, a common ethical naturalist approach.

This discussion does not require an acceptance of the accounts, that have already been examined, that Bhaskar, Collier, Elder-Vass and Sayer have produced of morality as an aspect of reality. Rather it is this understanding of ethical naturalism that is required to be able to assess these theories, by reference to how their explanations have been produced, and on this basis determine if they should be accepted.

The argument of this chapter is that a common approach to ethical naturalism, as a version of critical naturalism, can be identified. This means that as recognized techniques can be used to develop models of the mechanisms of morality, existing moral theories can be assessed by reference to the method that was used to develop their accounts. In section one I describe the epistemological method of critical naturalism and in section two, by examining how they answer the questions of from where should such an enquiry commence and what method of reasoning should be used, a common approach, that incorporates the perspectives of

Bhaskar, Collier Sayer and Price to the question of explaining morality, is identified.

5.1 Using Critical Naturalism to Explain Aspects of Society

Critical naturalism, as an approach to social science, aligns with the logic of scientific discovery that was discussed in Chapter One. This is Bhaskar's argument that 'in science there is a kind of dialectic in which a regularity is identified, a plausible explanation for it is invented and the reality of the entities and processes postulated in the explanation is then checked' (2008:145). This can be understood as moving from the starting point of a description of a regularity to the production and subsequent checking of a theoretical explanation of what causes that regularity. In considering the method of enquiry that can be used to gain knowledge of the causes of regularities that are observed in social reality, then, because of the nature of this reality, any attempt to develop these explanations through the construction of repeatable experiments is not possible. The consequence of this is that, due to the nature of its object, social science has to use a different method of producing explanations than that which is used by the natural sciences. This is the method of critical naturalism. In this section I explore this method by summarising Danemark *et als* account (1997) and discussing how explanations of social reality can be tested in the absence of the ability to create experimental closure.

This method is described in detail by Danermark *et al* in *Explaining Society* (1997). This is a practical guide for how to use critical naturalism to explain aspects of society. On this approach 'the explanation of social phenomena by revealing the causal mechanisms that produce them is the fundamental task of research.' To achieve these explanations research should be guided by theory and use 'abduction and retroduction' (1997:1); These two approaches to inference are different to the well-known approaches of deduction and induction and will be discussed below.

Danermark *et al* describe social scientific research using a six-stage model; which provides a way from the concrete (stage 1) to the abstract (stages 2 to 5) and then back to concrete (stage 6)' where at each stage except the first there must be a 'swing between different levels of abstraction' (109). While this is a six-stage model, they stress that this should be understood as 'a guideline and not a

template'. This is because they recognise that research processes require in practice the separate stages to be intertwined and so they may not follow each other in 'strict chronological order' and it may also be necessary to switch between the different stages.

Danemark *et al* argue that the first stage of any enquiry is a description (109). This starts in the concrete and is looking at observable facts regarding what is occurring. For example, if a regularity was observed such as a difference in the services provided to victims of human trafficking, which appears to align with differences regarding the ethnic origin of the victim, then a full description of this social phenomena would include not just a statistical analysis of outcomes for victims, aligned with their ethnic origin but may also include case studies and interviews with individuals who had been assisted and their own conceptions of their experiences. Their interpretations, and the everyday concepts that are used by the persons involved, are part of the description. This indicates one of the difficulties encountered in undertaking social scientific research. For 'in the social sciences conceptualization is part of the research process and the research object' while 'in the natural sciences it is only part of the former'.

The next stage of the research process is analytical resolution. This is where the complex is resolved into its 'various components, aspects and dimensions'. For example, if considering a potential bias in the outcomes of victims of human trafficking this may include breaking down the description into the various interactions and different formal processes and/or the characteristics of the potential victims. The need to consider multiple factors is because in attempting to identify the emergent properties these are not just occurring at different levels but 'they are entwined in the double morphogenesis; where agency undergoes transformation, acquiring new emergent powers in the very process of seeking to reproduce and transform structures' (Archer,1995:190-191). This means that in considering analytical separation, it has to be recognised that while there are emergent properties of collectives and individuals which differ from the emergent properties of institutions, they have causal power with regard to each other as well as with respect to events.

This is followed by abduction/theoretical redescription. This is a powerful tool in social science. Abduction is 'an inference where redescription or

recontextualization is the central element'. By means of abduction 'we recontextualise and reinterpret something as something else, understanding it with the frame of a totally different context' (1997:96). The importance of this recontextualization is that 'what is discovered is connections and relations not directly observable, by which we can understand and explain already known occurrences in a novel way' (91). The redescription of the caste relationships that can be found within northern Mauritania as modern-day slavery (Sage and Kasten, 2008) can be seen as an example of this. However, while abduction provides the 'theories and frames of interpretation' required 'to gain a deeper knowledge of social meanings, structures and mechanisms; conclusions that are drawn from abduction are 'seldom of the nature that we can ultimately decide whether they are true or false' (1997:92). Therefore, to be able to draw conclusions it is necessary to move onto the next steps.

The process of abduction is followed by retroduction. This is 'a mode of inference which' uses 'transcendental arguments' to 'clarify the basic prerequisites or conditions for social relationships, people's actions, reasoning or knowledge where the term 'conditions' here means 'the circumstances without which something can't exist' (96). Transcendental arguments work backwards from what we can directly observe (*x*) to the underlying properties, that without which the existence of *x* would not be possible. This is the consideration of the causal mechanisms that lead to *x* and the relatively enduring structures from which these mechanisms necessarily emerge. An example of a transcendental argument is Bhaskar's argument for the nature of reality (2008); where his ontological theory is the answer to the transcendental question of what must be the case for scientific experiments to be able to tell us things about the world that we would not otherwise know. While this is a high level of abstraction, this mode of inference can also be used to analyse 'more specific conditions for social processes' (1997:98). And as there can be different levels of abstraction, 'there is no sharp dividing line between philosophy and social science' (97); as regardless of the level of abstraction the mode of inference is the same. The answer that is produced through this retroduction is a theoretical explanatory model of an aspect of reality. The abstract part of good social science is the production of these theoretical models, which can then be used to guide practical research in the concrete, and which will subsequently be retheorised in the light of the findings of that practical research.

In producing these models of social reality, the conceptualisation that is part of the research process may include the use of metaphors. These ‘build on analogies, conveying meaning from one thing to another’ (122) and can be part of this research process as well as the research object. A problem with this is that whereas it is important ‘to be able to modify and develop scientific concepts’, a metaphor must either be kept or abandoned completely. For ‘it is hardly possible to modify a metaphor’ (123). A second problem is that while metaphors can assist in understanding, confusing a metaphor for an aspect of reality can lead to errors in social science. Danemark *et al* supply several examples of metaphors; such as the use of the concept of ‘the market’ as a metaphor for social actions that don’t actually take place within a physical marketplace with all that entails for transparency and competition.

The use of the plural in discussing theorising shows the importance of the next stage, the ‘comparison between different theories and abstractions’. A retroductive argument that is attempting to theorise about mechanisms and structures should aim to develop a number of different theories or abstractions which all attempt to explain the same aspect of reality and do so in different ways. The question that is then put to these theories is that of their explanatory power. In this way, prior to undertaking practical research, it should be possible to eliminate some of the possible models and in doing so, determine that one of the possible explanations is theoretically better than the others; in that it accounts for more of the relevant facts.

The final stage is concretization and contextualisation. This is the return to the concrete and ‘examining how the different’, at this point speculative, ‘structures and mechanisms manifest themselves in different situations’ (1997:110). What is observed at this point is guided by the outcome of the previous stages; as it is the specifics of the theoretical model of the mechanisms that are held to be an explanation of the events of interest that will guide the practical research. This means that the process of research both starts and finishes in observable facts but that at the starting point regularities are observed while at the final stage the model is tested by its explanatory power. However, in considering what practical activity is required to test the model, as the experimental method cannot be used to create the closure that is required to enable the manipulation and the more definite identification of these mechanisms two issues are raised. How

does such practical research take place, and how certain can we be of the conclusions of this research; these are explored in the rest of this section.

An aspect of social science, that assists in concrete analysis, is that unlike natural science it can enquire into the subjects' own conceptions of a situation being examined. This is considered to be a compensator for the absence of experiments (Collier,1994:247). The benefit of this is that the subject can articulate and express their own thoughts and perceptions regarding a situation. The analogy for this would be if in the natural sciences we could actually ask a water molecule why it turns to steam. If it answered by complaining about the heat, or by giving a description of steam as its immaterial soul, we could then test which answer most accords with the independent empirical grounds and has the greatest explanatory power of the process. However, the problematic aspect of this method is that what is people's stated reasons for acting may not be the true reasons for action; as such their beliefs may not be factually correct. This means that we cannot 'identify structures by interviewing people about them' (Archer, 1995:177).

Although social science cannot undertake experiments, a partial analogue for experiments has been identified (1979:49). This is the use of the methodological primacy of the pathological. The premise of this method is that an investigation into what happened when things went wrong can be informative beyond that particular instance. That:

> It might be conjectured that in periods of transition or crisis generative structures, previously opaque, become more visible to agents and that this, though it never yields quite the epistemic possibilities of closure (even when agents are self-consciously seeking to transform the social conditions of their existence), does provide a partial analogue to the role played by experimentation in natural science. (1979:48 in Collier,1994:165)

A typical example of this would be the use of coroner's investigations to prevent future deaths; where a situation that led to a fatality is investigated and recommendations made on the basis of that investigation to prevent a reoccurrence of the outcome in the future. This can be understood as using a retroductive investigation which is asking the question 'what must have been the

case given that *x* died?' to identify and subsequently remove or control one of the many generative mechanisms operating in an open system.

While it can be seen from this that it is possible to produce explanations of aspects of social reality, there are limits on the knowledge that can be gained and the level of certainty that can be expressed regarding that explanation. These are not just limits due to the impossibility of 'obtaining decisive test situations for their theories' (1979:45). But also limits due to the nature of social reality. In that social structures change over space and time and 'do not exist independently of the activities that they govern' or the agents 'conception of what they are doing in that activity' (38). And limits due to the relational character of social life. In that the object of human sciences are humans, who can reason and respond to theories and that this results in a causal interdependency between human sciences and their subject matters. It is because of the recognition of these limits that Bhaskar describes his approach as a critical naturalism.

The question that is raised by the identification of these limits is, if they limit the ability to gain knowledge so much that there is no possibility of a naturalistic social science? Collier in *Critical Realism* argues that the presence of limits to social science means that social science can only ever be, what he calls, an *epistemoid.* This is a recognition of the concrete bound nature of the human sciences; and the subsequent rejection of the possibility of abstract human sciences and the possibility of social scientists ever reaching 'the sort of consensus that well-established natural scientific communities enjoy'. Nonetheless, although Collier argues that critical naturalism doesn't reach the standard of a full-blown science, he supports Bhaskar's approach as the correct one to gaining explanatory knowledge of the experiences, events and mechanisms that occur in the social world and in this way provide 'essential contributions to human emancipation' (1994:259-260). It is from this conclusion that Collier's develops his own understanding of how the metatheory can assist in discovering more about morality through the approach of ethical naturalism.

5.2 Ethical Naturalism

The approach of ethical naturalism is based on the acceptance of the ontology of transcendental realism. This acceptance has two consequences, that are separate to any specific enquiry. The first is that a realist position, as opposed to an idealist

metatheory, legitimises being as an area of study. This is supported by the second point that, on this understanding of social reality, reality is not a closed system that was triggered at some point in the past and which runs on the basis of some highly deterministic principle. This means that it is an ontology that recognises that human agents have the ability to make choices and these choices are often made on the basis of concerns that would be described as moral concerns. This means that, in critical realism, morality is a legitimate subject as it is concerned with a recognisable aspect of genuine human conduct, that has causal power.

As morality exists in social reality then the method of critical naturalism should be compatible with developing a greater knowledge of morality. In considering how this approach can be used to create this knowledge of morality, it has to be recognised that the aspect of reality that an explanation is being sought of involves value and values. As was seen in the last chapter, these are particularly problematic concepts. Bhaskar's argument for explanatory critique (1986) - that an explanation of an aspect of social reality can also act as a criticism of an aspect of that reality - allows for the possibility of the value statements that are found in morality being supported through an analysis of the relevant facts. This creates 'the possibility of extending realism into the realms of values and morality' (1998:389). But this doesn't automatically lead to the position that the format of an ethical naturalist enquiry will be that of an explanatory critique; as a full explanation of morality cannot be assumed, in advance of any enquiry, to be necessarily critical.

To explore how it is possible to move from critical naturalism to ethical naturalism the questions of what description is taken as the starting point and method of reasoning must be considered in a way that takes account of the complexities that are created by considering values. In speculating what actual steps need to be followed to be able to discover more about morality then - as this is a question that has been approached by Bhaskar, Collier, Price and Sayer – it is necessary to examine each of their approaches individually and then identify what can be understood to be a synthesised approach to this specific question.

5.2.1 Bhaskar's Ethical Naturalism

Bhaskar fully develops his ethical naturalism in *Dialectic*. Where he distinguishes between 'descriptive, redescriptive and explanatory critical morality' in the

transitive dimension and ‘the actually existing morality in the intransitive dimension’ (1993:259). His discussion provides both a starting point for an enquiry and an understanding of how he considers ethical naturalism should progress; with the aim of producing genuine emancipatory values and practice that are aligned with the intransitive object of morality.

Bhaskar’s ethical naturalism has an ontological and an epistemological starting point. His ontological starting point is the recognition of the nature of reality, as described by transcendental realism and the primacy of absence. This produces an epistemological starting point that consists of the identification of and description of an unfulfilled need - as the focus of existing morality; and a description of existing morality – which includes an already existing commitment to moral values and truthfulness linked to an understanding of the ‘*constitutive morality* of a society as *false*’ (259). Therefore, while absence may, according to Bhaskar, have ontological primacy, this doesn’t lead to it having epistemological primacy, as both presence and absence form aspects of this epistemological starting point.

Bhaskar’s ethical naturalism can be understood as the dialecticisation of explanatory critique. A difficulty in identifying his specific views on how to discover more about morality is that his discussions of his own moral theory and his discussions of the practice of discovering more about morality are entwined. For example, his prefigurative principle is embedded into his discussion that ‘moral reasoning is a species of practical reasoning’, which he describes in similar terms to the discussion of critical naturalism in section one but linked with the ‘metaethical virtue of phronesis or practical wisdom’(260-261). By distinguishing between the moral theory that is produced from his formal criteria of freedom, as consisting of universal human flourishing, and his conception of ethical naturalism, Bhaskar’s ethical naturalism can be comprehended as moving from a conception of ‘social science as explanatory critique’ to the idea of ‘social science as emancipatory axiology’ and through to a notion of ‘social science as dialectic’ (259). This dialectic of morality is sketched out as:

> Descriptive morality-> immanent critiques […] redescriptive morality-> hermeneutic and material counter-hegemonic struggle ->metacritique->explanatory critical morality […]-> totalising depth praxis […]-> emancipatory axiology (265)

What can be concluded here, is that the dialectical process includes not just the explanation of morality but also how that theoretical work combines with action to both gain a greater understanding of morality and to create a moralised society. The questions of emancipatory action are outside of the concerns of this thesis but it should be noted that again Bhaskar embeds into his consideration of method his own understanding of what that method will reveal.

5.2.2 Collier's Ethical Naturalism

Collier argues for an approach to ethical naturalism which is predominantly that of explanatory critique. As these argue from facts to values, then Collier's view is that the starting point for ethical naturalism is a series of factual statements. In this respect, he considers that a moral theory which is developed through explanatory critique would end up looking much like Spinoza's (1994:261); in that it takes the form of an assertoric imperative - which are hypotheticals but the conditional can be asserted. By this he means that, a fact to value argument to support a moral value should take the form 'Since *x* is the case, then *y* should be accepted'.

This means Collier's starting point must be a set of relevant facts. To consider where these facts can be found, Collier considers three issues. The first - as discussed in Chapter One - is the extension of explanatory critique from false beliefs to unfulfilled need. The second - as seen in Chapter Three - is the consideration of the intransitive object, the recognition that value exists independent of its recognition by human beings. This consideration extends the relevant facts to include facts about non-human aspects of reality and the impact of humans on these aspects of reality. This leads to the third issue, the existing meanings that are attached to moral activity. This third issue arises from his consideration of the ontological and relational limits to the knowledge that can be gained through naturalism (243-254) and his subsequent argument – that was considered in the last chapter - that 'the concrete boundness of the human sciences' (255) means that 'the concrete analysis of the concrete conjuncture' should 'be the heart of all good practices in the human sciences'. This consideration of the meanings of activity, is joined with his recognition that not all knowledge is scientific knowledge and so there can be transcendental arguments from 'work and play' mutual aid, love and strife 'and aesthetic contemplation' (260), to provide an argument for a hermeneutic starting point for moral enquiry.

The central principle of hermeneutics is that it is only possible to grasp the meaning of an action or statement by relating it to the whole discourse or world-view from which it originates. In discussing explanatory critiques Collier argues that:

> there is an irreducible but corrigible, hermeneutic moment in social science; that one cannot get started without understanding the *meaning* that actions had for their agents, that institutions have for their participants etc. But these meanings may be systematic delusions' (179)

This means that it is practical experience not contemplative experience that Collier is considering as the starting point - because 'a reality that is independent of our ideas is intrinsic to practice in a way that it is not intrinsic to contemplation' (2003:146). From these three points it can be concluded that, for Collier, the starting point for any objective enquiry into morality, is one in which, there is not just an unsatisfied - but not necessarily human - need but that there is also an agent who is using moral concepts as part of an activity that is related to that need within a recognized specific geo-historical situation. To summarise, for Collier, the starting point is the events where morality is used.

This consideration of having to start from the use of morality, leads to two ways in which Collier expands on the simple acceptance of the method of needs based explanatory critique to develop a method of discovering more about morality. These are the use of the cognitive paradigm of morality in undertaking any process of moral discovery and the need to make the observed facts as objective as possible prior to commencing any analysis.

In the previous chapter, Collier's distinction between lay and scientific knowledge was discussed. He argues that it is lay knowledge not scientific knowledge that is acquired by and implicit in our practical interaction with our environment' (2003:210) and that 'most of our perceptual knowledge is generated by caring not staring' (212). These are both references to the concept of the cognitive paradigm of morality – the use of rationally directed emotions - and is a recognition of the need to use empathy and self-reflection in the process of discovering more about morality. A consequence of this is that the process of moral discovery is also a process of the moral development of the enquirer. From this it can be concluded that Collier considers that you cannot gain greater knowledge about morality if you do not actually care about others and their needs.

The way Collier deals with emotions means that this is not a rejection of objectivity. In fact, Collier stresses the need of objectivity at the descriptive stage. This is apparent from the discussion of lay morality in the last chapter and the identified need to make our hearsay knowledge more objective by logic, experience and suspicion (216); From this Collier can be seen to suggest how to produce more objective descriptions prior to using explanatory critique to develop any explanatory accounts.

Therefore, Collier's approach can be comprehended as one that contains three distinct steps. This is to start from the practical use of morality with its 'hearsay status tested by reference to logic, suspicion and experience'; this must include the meaning that is given to this usage by the participants in them and the wider culture in which this usage is taking place. To work from this description through the use of concrete social science, that considers the social and historical context of the moral reasoning and uses the format of a needs based explanatory critique; and to produce from this a theoretical abstraction regarding the intransitive object of morality. The benefit of such an approach is that it will ensure that the theoretical abstraction, which is the model building in the logic of scientific discovery, is drawn from an analysis of the socio-historical circumstances in which the social practice of morality actually exists.

5.2.3 Price's Ethical Naturalism

Another approach to the question of ethical naturalism is that of Price, whose version is found in her *Revindication of Moral Realism* (2017). In this paper she sets out her 'alternative axiology' following her rejection of Elder-Vass and the approach to moral realism that Elder-Vass argues against. She considers that the way Elder-Vass describes moral realism is not Bhaskar's approach but a distorted, morally conservative, version of moral realism. This is a version that is seen by Price in some critical realists who use moral realism to promote socially conservative or religious world views; by using moral realism to argue for a specific set of values as opposed to enquiring into values. She considers that this misuse is possible through the poor definition of such terms as 'pluralism, empirical investigation and rationality' (2017:11) by those authors which leaves the door open for 'problematic interpretations'. While sharing with Elder-Vass a rejection of this version of moral realism she disagrees with his conclusion that

‘discourse ethics provides a consistent and coherent way for democratic egalitarian scientific realists to ground critique’ (2010:52). Arguing that this approach will not be able to identify the deep structure of things and will work to maintain the status quo of social inequality. These considerations lead to Price suggesting an epistemological approach to deciding morality.

Price calls her version of ethical naturalism the (VFFV) discourse principle. This is a seven-stage epistemological approach that includes value to facts and fact to value transitions along with a process of critical naturalism similar to what has already been described. This is ‘based on Bhaskar’s dialectic and the assumption that: values can influence facts (epistemological relativism) and facts can influence values (ontological realism)’ (2017:18). The commonalities that this approach has with Habermas’s discourse principle is that both ‘assume community engagement, aim for consensus and have the objective of making improvements to society’ (15).

The first stage of this process is what Price holds to be the starting point for an enquiry into morality. She states that at stage one, the research should be clear about the values that are motivating the research process. For example, the objective may be to ‘ensure that society provides the structures and mechanisms to enable people to flourish.’ At this stage terms are also defined, such as ‘who counts as an involved person’ and consensus should be developed about the epistemology to be used. While at stage two ‘the current theories for why the problem exists’ should be listed. Price’s approach can therefore be understood as having a starting point of: an agent using ethical concepts as part of an activity within a recognised specific geo-historical situation; a recognition of the already existing transitive theories of morality; and the recognition that as social scientists are always motivated by values, social science cannot claim neutrality for its conclusions without being open about those values and be willing to challenge their own values.

The next three stages are not dissimilar from the process that has already been described in this chapter as the method of critical naturalism. Stage three involves ‘deciding what facts are required to guide the actions required to achieve the original goal’. While at stage four these facts are collected. Stage five consists of explaining the facts ‘in terms of the theories identified in stage two (retrodiction)’ or the production of new theories (retroduction). While deciding between the

competing theories through determining which one provides the best explanatory account of the facts. The difference between retroduction, which has already been discussed, and retrodiction is, as summarised by Psillos in the *Dictionary of Critical Realism*, that while both work from 'the observed to the unobserved' the former is an 'ampliative mode of inference' – in that 'the content of the conclusion exceeds the content of the premises'- while the latter is an inference from effects to causes (2007:256-257). Retrodiction is illustrated by Psillos by the example of a doctor deciding what is wrong with you from what symptoms you have.

At stage six and seven this process moves from a research process to a public discussion, with stage six being an informal identification by a group looking at the problem to determine 'what should be done' with at stage seven the options for action being assessed and checked 'through an open public process of rational discussion'. At this stage values are rationally decided. This may involve a vote to decide between alternatives, but this is not a vote to determine the truth of the alternatives but only to determine which one is favoured as most likely to lead to a successful outcome. While this process may enable the identification of what needs to be done regarding a specific problem 'the facts may also suggest that our initial values were based on incorrect theories' (2017:17) but most importantly in either case there will be a set of facts that would enable a rational judgement.

5.2.4 Sayer's Ethical Naturalism

Sayers position is that the role of moral enquiry is not to justify the existence of morality but to 'engage with actual ethical being' to make society more ethical (2011:188). This ethical being involves social factors and biological factors. As such, his considerations of the method of ethical naturalism, is more complex than just the application of a critical social science to normative concerns.

Sayer's starting point is existing needs, sentiments and moral theories. Need is qualified through the recognition that in a modern complex society some needs are socially determined. This is not a rejection of a factual basis for values or the category of biological need but the recognition that some needs are 'culturally specific and hence not reducible to biological properties or indeed to any universal social properties' (2000:166). The consequence of this is that while the concept of ethical naturalism is supported by Sayer - as 'a total rejection of it undermines any

criticism of oppression because it cannot say what oppression is bad *for* what it does damage *to'* – he argues that:

> the humanist doctrine of ethical naturalism -that the nature of the good can be derived from our nature as human, social beings – does not adequately deal with the conventional or 'socially constructed' character of values and the striking diversity of cultural norms. (2000:98)

This recognition that specific aspects of a society will create genuine, socially constructed, needs is a rejection of versions of ethical naturalism, that grounds morality in human nature. Instead it supports an approach that suggests a starting point for discovering more about morality of, while he doesn't use the terminology, humans-in society-in nature.

By moral sentiments, Sayer is referring to emotions and feelings such as compassion and shame. By considering these sentiments, as part of the starting point (2011:146-148), it is possible to determine that moral considerations are not just restricted to considerations of human, biological or socially determined, need. Sayer considers that moral concerns are wider than the flourishing of humans as he extends considerations of the good to all biological entities (2000:98-99). This is supported by the consideration of moral sentiments and their object.

Sayer also considers the importance of starting with theoretical clarity regarding normative theories and concepts. This requires an engagement with normative theory. However, this is not the search for a set of abstract principles that can be applied as 'we need to consider ethical issues more concretely' (157). Therefore, discussions of morality, rights and the good must 'ultimately involve what people, living in specific material contexts do with and to others, and what others can do with and to them' (182). This leads on to questions of method.

Sayer argues that in part this theoretical clarity can be achieved by making existing lay morality more objective through interpretation. This requires steering 'a course between a hermeneutics of suspicion and a hermeneutics of sympathy' by attending 'to the object'. He considers that to overdo the 'suspicion elevates the observer to a position of superiority relative to the dupes being observed but actually prevents her from seeing

what they see' whereas 'overdoing sympathy flatters and overlooks what people generally miss or prefer to ignore' (2011:187). Through this approach, Sayer considers that, a greater understanding of everyday ethical sensibilities and practice with all its limitations and flaws can be gained.

This objective understanding of lay morality can then be developed further. This is not just through the methodology of a critical social science. For Sayer recognises that an enquiry into the relevant facts - an identification of mechanisms with causal powers that can promote or restrict flourishing – may need to consider mechanisms other than just social mechanisms. That:

> to be able to understand the specificity of the social while acknowledging the validity of the realist concept of nature, we need to recognise how the social can be both dependent on and irreducible to – or emergent from – the material processes studied by the natural sciences (2000:100).

This is an approach that combines critical naturalism, with a scientific methodology that can examine biological or other natural structures and mechanisms where appropriate. Further to this, as part of the reasoning process that may be required to discover more about morality, he 'does not dismiss a 'kind of utopianism that attempts to think about the feasibility of desired alternatives in terms of how the recommended social process would work, asking counterfactual questions, conducting thought experiments and scrutinising critical standpoints' (178). Sayer clarifies that this is not a relativistic position as it is 'possible to conceive of situated universalism as a form of theory' (182). This supports his view that a 'thoroughly reworked ethics […] would also have to go beyond ethical naturalism to consider a communitive or discourse ethics in which needs would have to be the subject of democratic determination (167). This final step can be seen to be similar to that of Price, as discussed above.

5.2.5 Ethical Naturalism: A Common Approach

What is apparent from this discussion is that the question of how critical realism can be used to discover more about morality has been approached in a number of different ways. However, within all these discussions it is possible to identify a common ethical naturalist approach; that has the framework of the six stages of critical naturalism but which varies from this in some aspects due to the nature of

the object of enquiry. In the rest of this chapter, I describe this epistemological method and how the variations from this approach can be understood. While this discussion follows the six distinct stages of critical naturalism it should be recognized that due to the significant complexities with morality and therefore with moral enquiry, the point that was made by Danemark *et al* with respect to critical naturalism - that practical research requires the intertwining of the separate stages and so, if used, this is a 'guideline and not a template' - is even more pertinent for ethical naturalism.

As with all other aspects of discovery the first stage of ethical naturalism is a good descriptive understanding. Specifically a description of the phenomenon of morality and what it applies to. This descriptive understanding must be concrete bound. Its focus should be the valuing of aspects of reality, regardless of if they are naturally or socially produced, that are separate to the human agent who is undertaking the act of or expressing the importance of valuing that aspect of reality. A descriptive understanding of this will include: what is valued; who is valuing this aspect of reality and their emotional response to it; if the aspect of reality that is valued is present or absent; if it is absent then what is the perceptions of the agents involved in what is causing this absence; what social values and moral concepts are used by the agents involved in their own description of the situation; and the researchers own initial evaluative response. These motivating values of the researcher should not lead to a difference in conclusions but the researcher is themselves a moral agent and their own perceptions of a situation is of relevance to the question of morality.

By examining several actual socio-historical and geographically specific situations it will be possible to develop this descriptive account of existing morality. In selecting which situations may be the most revealing as case studies then the epistemological limit to naturalism guides the selection of examples to ones where the considerations of the methodological primacy of the pathological should assist, while the relational limit – the recognition that the relations that lead to the emergence of morality are relatively enduring - indicates that the examples that are chosen must be ones which contain relatively enduring relations.

Finally, the recognition of moral agency as including emotional response means that empathy and self-reflection is a vital aspect of the collation of a descriptive account. On this basis a comprehensive descriptive account of a moral situation

should contain an understanding of not just what happened but how it felt for the participants. This consideration of sympathy should, to ensure this descriptive account is as objective as possible, then be joined with the use of suspicion, experience and logic. The latter allows for a comprehensive description to capture contradictory thoughts and performative contradictions. While these tools facilitate objectivity at this stage, they will also facilitate objectivity at all stages and so should therefore also be used at all subsequent stages of the research process.

In moving to analytical separation then, in general terms, the concrete situations considered will need to be analytically separated into component parts. Many of these component parts may potentially have already have been separated at the descriptive stage, such as the aspect of reality that any values/value statements are applied to and socially occurring phenomena including existing values as a separate category. In addition to this, further analytical separation may be possible using the stratification of reality. Such as the identification of psychological processes, biological processes, naturally occurring processes and entities, and the relatively enduring relationships between these different aspects. In undertaking this separation what is identified as absent, or desired to be absent, is as important as what is present or desired to be present; and one aspect that will potentially be identified is if some of the identified needs can be understood as socially constructed needs.

Separation will also be assisted by considering the emergent properties that, as discussed in Chapter Three, are part of Archer's morphogenetic approach. This is because Archer's analytical dualism provides for the analytically separation between the moral theories that can be understood to exist as part of the cultural system and the use of morality as social-cultural interaction (S-C). The former category can then be analysed further at this stage by considering issues of internal logical consistency and coherence - which may possibly provide an initial indication of the truth value of a particular theory.

There are two outcomes that are required at this stage of the research process. The first is that the analytical separation should indicate in what stratum the mechanisms that we are interested in may possibly be found. This will indicate the range of methods that should be used at the next stage. For some mechanisms may be indicated as existing in stratum which can be explored using the natural sciences, such as considerations of biological need; while, other mechanisms will

be identified as potentially existing in stratum which are studied by the human sciences. The second outcome is therefore being able to ensure that, at the point of commencing a transcendental argument, there is clarity about what aspects of reality a model is expected to be able to explain; as without this clarity it will not be possible to formulate a transcendental question. A final point on analytical separation is that this is one aspect of a research process that is seeking to find the best possible explanation. To achieve this at the stage of retroduction a number of possible theories should be generated; this can be facilitated if, at the stage of separation, attempts are made to analytically separate the components of the descriptive account in more than one way.

The ethical naturalist aspect of the next stage is redescription. This is the understanding of moral theories through the use of the language of the metatheory such as the transitive/intransitive distinction and the generative notion of causality. The transitive/intransitive distinction allows for the causal interdependency of human sciences and their subject matter to be acknowledged. In this way the effects that moral theories have through the actions of agents, regardless of their truth values and the actions of agents in reproducing a social value, again regardless of its truth status, are recognised within the research process. The use of the generative notion of causality enables a redescription which recognises that the specific features of social reality that a theory of morality has to account for are the mechanisms relevant to morality and the structures - which are relatively enduring - from which these mechanisms emerge. What is occurring here is not the identification of those mechanisms and structures but ensuring that the description can be understood with reference to powers, tendencies and stratification. Terminology that is introduced in Bhaskar's dialectical turn may also be of use in undertaking this redescription, Bhaskar's concept of $Power_1$ and $Power_2$ and his understanding of there being degrees of freedom may assist in identifying potential areas of further study which can then be revisited at subsequent stages.

In undertaking redescription two issues that are specifically relevant to moral enquiry need to be recognised to ensure objectivity is maintained at this stage. The first is the recognition of metaphor. In undertaking a redescription, due regard should be paid to the metaphorical use of much of the language of morality. This is because 'It is essential to not confuse abstract concepts with empirical

categories' (1997:122) and the use of metaphors can create confusion with respect to that separation. One of the most problematic aspects of any enquiry into morality is the metaphorical aspect of many of the concepts that are used. For example, the use of the concept 'good' can be teleological, aesthetic or moral. One or more of these uses may be metaphorical but it is not clear which, if any, that would be. It is also not only in the use of the language of morality but in the language of ontology that caution around metaphor should be exercised. Redescription by using the concepts of the generative notion of causality - particularly the concept of mechanisms - can also be considered to be metaphorical. As such, 'simple everyday metaphors' should be 'employed with great care' (1997:124). And so at this stage of the research process potential metaphors need to be identified.

The second caution that is required is to ensure objectivity regarding the use of abduction. In discussing abduction Danemark *et al*, refer to Umberto Eco's distinction between three types of abduction- overcoded, undercoded, and creative. It is due to the use of overcoded abduction as a way of interpreting observations that caution should be exercised. This method of inference is 'characterised by automatism and naturalness, it is a matter of spontaneous interpretations which we make from a culturally and socially grounded prejudging' (1997:93). To genuinely enquire into morality in an objective way the researcher should be aware of their own status as a socialised moral agent and be cautious of any interpretations of the observed phenomena that spontaneously spring to mind and consequently using the research process to justify this initial interpretation.

The next stage of ethical naturalism is to formulate and then answer transcendental questions through the use of retroduction. In general terms this is the overall question of 'what is the case given that morality exists?' More specifically, the careful use of the previous three stages should enable the production of more specific concrete bound questions, with the answers to several of these concrete bound questions facilitating the subsequent formulation of a more abstract question. The need for a range of questions over two stages is because - as was seen in the discussion of the critical realist social ontology and the understanding of morality as a social process - theories of morality are both causal mechanisms and produced by causal mechanisms. This means the mechanisms of socialisation need to be understood separately to those of the use

of morality and/or its reproduction/transformation; and both of these are separate questions to the aspect of reality where the potential intransitive object may be found. As such, a comprehensive theory of morality must address both how morality causes actions and how morality is caused. This will not be achieved through the production of just an explanatory model of mechanisms that have effects that are relevant to morality - a causal analysis - but will also require this to be deepened through the production of an abstract explanation of how those mechanisms are believed to have emerged from particular structures - a structural analysis.

The explanatory models that are produced through retroduction are moral theories and so the next stage is to compare these theories and determine which one appears to have the greatest explanatory power. To determine this, there are four challenges that can be put to any theoretical model. These are: (1.) is it consistent with the social ontology which is supported on the basis of other arguments, by which I mean the metatheory of critical realism (2.) was the theory developed through an epistemological method that aligns with this understanding of reality; (3.) does it address and account for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered; and (4.) does it provide a better or fuller account than other theories, in that it accounts for more of the relevant facts. If these four questions can be answered positively then the model can be provisionally accepted.

An explanation that is produced in this way may also act as a criticism. This is because it is possible that an adequate explanation of morality may also lead to negative value judgements about some aspects of morality or aspect of society that produces false beliefs about morality. For example (and this is entirely hypothetical), if in answering the question what must be the case given that moral values exist, the explanation makes reference to the central aspect of human need, then this not only explains moral theories based on need but also acts as a criticism of institutions that generate ‘moral beliefs’ that are not based on considerations of human need. While this criticism would be seen as a call to change such institutions, and to act in this way would align with Bhaskar’s focus on the importance of theory leading to the practice of transformative agency, the application of any criticism, based on a provisional explanation, should not be considered separately to the next stage of the research process.

The next stage of the research process is contextualisation and concretisation. The model of the mechanisms of morality that is produced prior to this stage must be understood to be a transitive theory of morality which should then be tested through its use as a framework for further enquiries into morality. As discussed earlier, if some of the mechanisms identified are from strata where the techniques of the natural sciences can be applied then the testing of these aspects should not create epistemological difficulties. As regards those aspects that have been identified as falling within the human sciences then there are several approaches that can be used here.

The first is to return to observable facts by considering further socio-historical examples. These can either be pathological situations or ones where it is possible to interview those who were involved in those situations, or if possible, situations that meet both these criteria. The aim here is to apply the model to these situations and determine if the model adequality explains those situations. Positive results here will lead to gaining more certainty in the findings that have been produced, whereas negative results will enable the refinement or rejection of the model.

The second approach is to apply the model to reality and observe the consequences. This aligns with Bhaskar's conception of emancipatory action and the importance of theory leading to practice. If changes are made to reality on the basis of the understanding of the model then *ceteris paribus* there should be demonstratable impacts on reality. On this basis concretisation involves monitoring any change and considering what the outcomes of that change suggest about the validity of the model. In undertaking this it has to be recognised that an aspect of this reality is the researcher themselves and clearly, following both Collier and Bhaskar, if a researcher discovers more about morality, through their enquiries, this should lead to them changing their behaviour and becoming more moral. Therefore, self-reflection at the stage of concretisation is part of the process of ethical naturalism.

However, a difficulty of this is how does the researcher ensure that the theory does lead to transformative practice in society and not just in themselves. This is the issue that Price and Sayer address through proposing the use of discussion and debate of any findings as a stage of ethical naturalism. This can be understood as a way of both determining if the findings are accepted by already

moralised human agents and also to ensure that emancipatory values lead to emancipatory practice.

In considering this, Collier's discussion of value to facts arguments (1994) need to be recognised as relevant to the possible outcomes of debate. In this discussion Collier recognises that when Bhaskar argues for the possibility of value to facts arguments he distinguishes himself from the mistaken views of 'Scientism'. In making this distinction Bhaskar provides an understanding that 'theories can have practical consequences' but only because 'we are already valuing various things as an inevitable part of living'. The consequence of which is the dismissal of 'the idea that a theory could, so to speak, create values where none have been before' (179). On this basis, the research process must be understood as providing a possible explanation of existing values not to have produced a new set of values that can be adopted through deliberation.

That is not to say that rejection or refinement of values cannot be achieved. But, in achieving changes, the limitations of the process of deliberation must be recognised; changes to values occur through the process of transformation and socialisation, within relatively enduring structures. The activity of deliberation is only one temporal slice of this process and so cannot be held on its own to produce changes to existing values.

These points clarify that in considering the content and forum of deliberation then what is occurring in this deliberation is not the introduction of new values but an aspect of the development of existing values to become more objective values. Where the process of deliberation and debate must be understood as the seeking of challenge or the confirmation that the researcher is on the right track with their conclusions and an attempt to create an impact by sharing those conclusions more widely. This sharing of the outcomes of research and debating and refining that research through engaging with the views of others is a description of the academic process and its relationship with political debate.

However, the importance of this aspect should be contextualised by reference to a final point on concretisation. This is the importance of the recognition of the limits to the knowledge that can be produced using this method and the uses of morality. A model that has been produced at this stage can be held to be true if it has greater explanatory power than other theories, but this truth status is always

provisional. As, with any theory, it must be discarded if a theory with greater explanatory power is produced. This recognition - that any search for an intransitive ethical theory is historically and socially specific, prone to error and can only produce at best an approximation of the intransitive object of morality - means that what is being produced is not a ‘scientific morality’ but an understanding of what the intransitive object of morality may possibly be; that is epistemologically justified through the use of a recognized method of enquiry.

The importance of this point cannot be stressed enough. For, in society, whether we have a true or false theory of thermodynamics it makes no difference to the actual process of heat transfer; whereas all social scientific theories whether they are true or false have effects in the human world. Statements of absolute right and wrong lead to actions being taken for ‘moral justifications’ which may on reflection not be genuinely moral. Therefore, any social scientific moral enquiry must recognize the effects of moral theories on human actions, regardless of their truth value, and so must ensure that conclusions cannot be misunderstood or applied in a way that would lead to immoral consequences. For this reason, a researcher must be prepared to revise their conclusions; if their application begins to lead to situations that would be strongly condemned by other plausible existing moral theories. This means there has to be caution regarding concretization; with theoretical models tested for their explanatory power with respect to existing case studies and through discussion and debate before attempts are made to test for explanatory power through transformative agency.

In conclusion, this examination, of how it is possible to discover more about morality, indicates that it is possible to identify, from the range of discussions of the application of the epistemological aspect of the metatheory, a consistent approach to developing explanations of morality. This method can be summarised as a version of critical naturalism. Where the variations are predominately around the role of emotion and the deliberation of findings. The former is that enquiring into value and values requires a greater understanding of emotional responses and the use of empathy and self-reflection as part of the method of enquiry. While the latter is the recognition that the importance of the issues that moral theories are applied to and the limits on naturalism means that a significant seeking of consensus is required as an aspect of the development of these explanations.

This conclusion means that recognized techniques can be used to explore morality as an aspect of reality and consequently existing moral theories can be assessed by reference to their coherence with the metatheory, method of development and explanatory power. In the next chapter, I use this understanding of how explanations of morality can be produced to critically assess the moral theories that have applied the metatheory to ontological questions in morality. This is to determine which aspects of these theories can be supported on the basis of how they have developed their understanding of morality. And to subsequently determine if a synthesised moral theory that uses the most supportable aspects of each specific approach can provide an explanatory model of the mechanisms of morality.

Chapter 6 Combining the Realist Moral Theories

> Transcendental realist ontology requires […] as much readjustment in ethics as in epistemology. (Bhaskar, 1986:187)

In this chapter I examine if the various applications of critical realism to questions in morality can together be understood to provide a comprehensive realist explanation of morality. The aim is to determine if these theories can, if combined, produce an account that is: consistent with the metatheory; addresses and accounts for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered; and is developed through the epistemological method of ethical naturalism. Only if a combined theory can be established to meet these three criteria it is then possible to determine if, as an explanation, it provides a better or fuller account than other theories.

To assess these theories, I separate morality into the various aspects that require explanation, and then draw conclusions on the strengths of any competing accounts by determining the method of argument that has been used to arrive at those competing positions. This chapter is divided into two sections. In the first section I examine the moral theories, that have already been discussed. The conclusion of this section is that a synthesised realist moral theory can be identified and that this provides an explanatory account of the majority of the aspects of morality.

The identified weakness is that it provides no retroductively produced account of the value that is seen to exist separate to its discovery. This conclusion leads to the introduction of Bhaskar's Philosophy of Meta-reality (2002). This is an aspect of the metatheory that has not been previously discussed. The reason for this, is that the spiritual turn that is found in meta-reality is a contentious development of Bhaskar's understanding of the depth of reality. For example, Creaven (2010) argues that it is an irrealist, philosophy, while Morgan (2003) considers that alternative explanations for the phenomena that Bhaskar bases his arguments on are more plausible. The reason for its introduction here is that it is in this aspect of

the metatheory that Bhaskar develops his own argument for value existing separately to its recognition.

In the second part of this chapter I summarise the philosophy of Meta-reality and consider the implications this understanding of reality has explaining and identifying intrinsic value. The conclusion of this section is that the acceptance of the philosophy of meta-reality can provide an abstract understanding of intrinsic value. But that there is still a need to explore if intrinsic value can be explained, in the concrete, through the use of ethical naturalism.

6.1 The Existing Theories and Ethical Naturalism

In this section I examine the moral theories of Bhaskar, Elder-Vass, Collier, and Sayer to determine if the way these theories have been developed is compatible with the epistemological aspect of the metatheory. I start by analytically separating the various aspects of morality. I then identify which aspects are addressed by which theory, where they differ in their understanding of morality and which aspects of morality are comparatively undertheorized. I then consider the arguments that are used to support the specific positions. This leads to conclusions on which aspects of which specific theory can be supported, on the basis of the argument that support these aspects; and if this produces a comprehensive synthesised realist theory of morality.

The theories, that have been examined, explore various aspects of morality. Analytically separating these aspects assists in determining not just where the theories differ but if aspects of morality are not addressed by any theory. In considering how to approach this separation, the TMSA suggests the separation of morality as an aspect of society from moral agency and that both of these aspects are different to the causal power of one of these aspects on the other through either socialization or reproduction and transformation. In addition to this, the transitive/intransitive distinction suggests a separation between the transitive theories of morality - that are real and have effects - and the intransitive aspect of reality, that those theories are concerned with. These transitive theories of morality, can be considered to exist as one aspect of the cultural system which also contains the values, rules and norms which these theories are seeking to explain. All of which have causal power, not just through socialization, but

thorough their contradiction with other ideas in the cultural system, which may generate additional emergent properties.

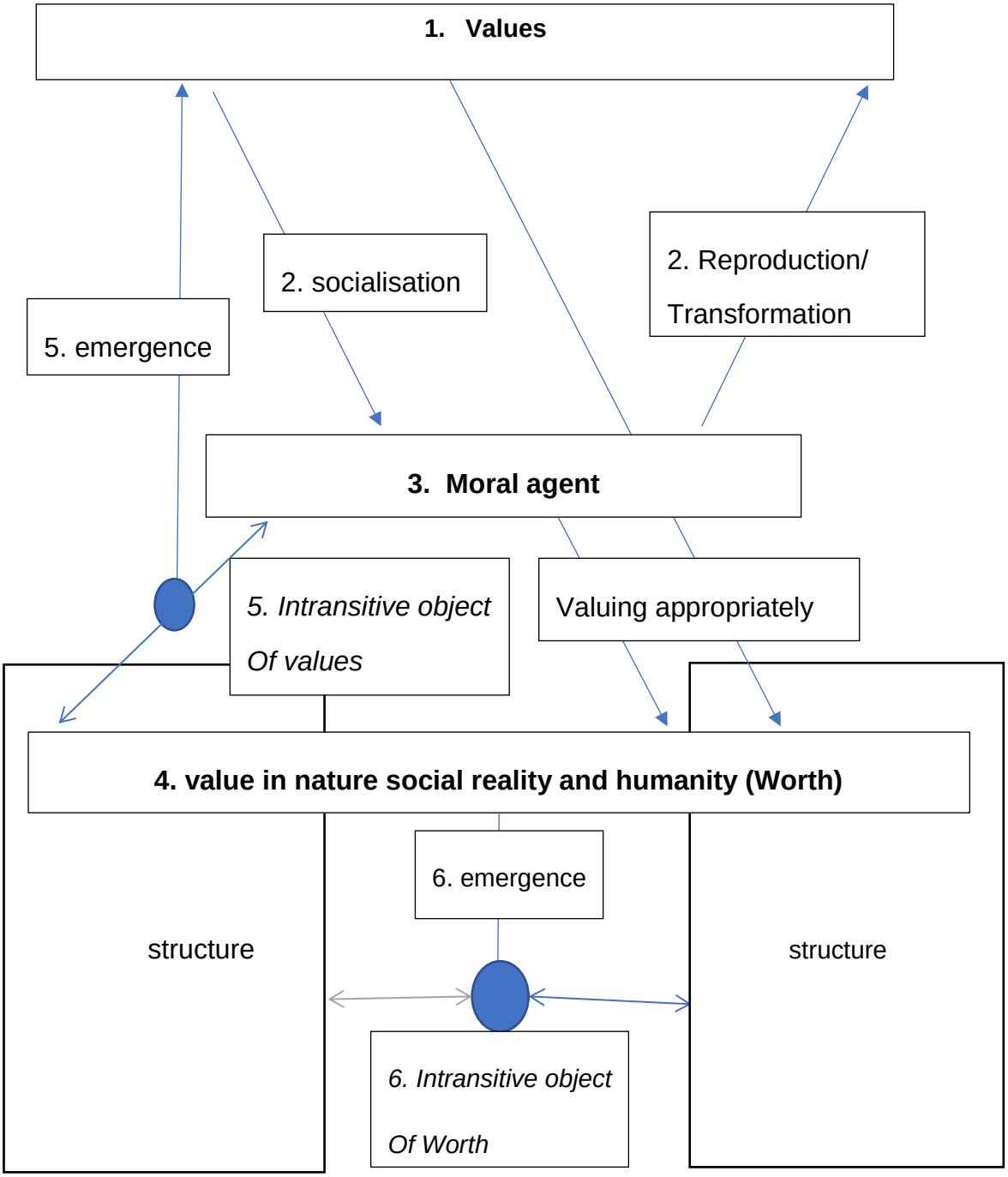

Figure 9. A Provisional Analytical Separation of the Aspects of Morality and Their Relationships

This means that four separate areas of consideration can be identified: values/theories; agents; the causal relationships between these two aspects; and the independent value that is the focus of morality. Further to this a consideration of the intransitive object means that an analytical separation can be drawn between the relatively enduring relationship that lead to the emergence of values,

which must include the aspects of reality that have intrinsic value. And the relatively enduring relationships that lead to the emergence of this value independent to its recognition - or in Collier's terminology worth. The separation of these six component parts is shown in Figure 9.

What this analytical separation enables is a recognition of which of these aspects are discussed by which theory. This is seen on Figure 10, which is the relevant aspects of Figure 9, but relabelled to indicate what aspects the existing moral theories can be understood to be concerned with.

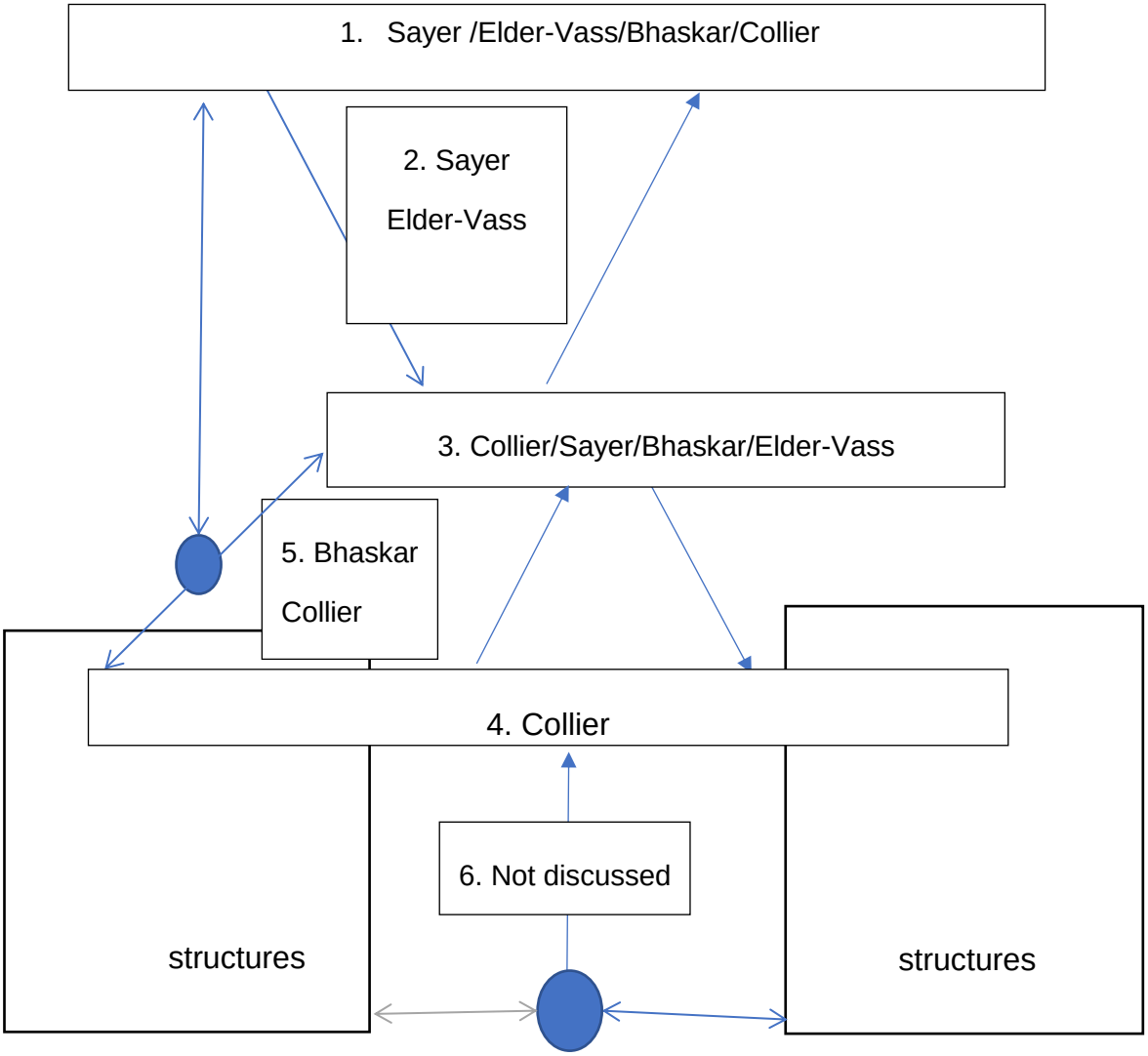

Figure 10. The Focus of the Existing Moral Theories

Moral agency is discussed by Bhaskar, Elder -Vass Collier and Sayer. Bhaskar 's account sees human beings as having desires, a commitment to truth and morality, and the potential to reason rationally, and that it is our commitment to truthfulness and morality that leads to us to enquiring into the true nature of the

world, with the focus of promoting greater freedom. Elder-Vass considers that the process of moral reasoning is a 'discursive process,' that 'allows all those who are involved in those relations to participate in reaching an agreement' (2010:50). Sayer can be understood as having a conception of moral agency that contains emotion, as moral sentiments, dictating ends and reason being used to discover the most effective means. This role that Sayer gives to emotion is strong but doesn't extend as far as Collier's; who describes moral agency as rationally directed emotions, recognizing and responding to intrinsic worth and encompassing others in ourselves. Sayer's account appears to be aligned with Collier, in his focus on emotions, and Bhaskar in its understanding of a commitment to flourishing but Collier's and Bhaskar's account appear to be unaligned with each other.

This moral agency is influenced by values. The way that values influence agency is discussed by Sayer, who provides an understanding of the influence of values through the approval or disapproval of others. Elder-Vass's account captures both the way that values influence agency and agency influences values through his conception of norm circles.

The existence of these values, is a subject that all four theories take a position on. Elder-Vass provides an explanation of values through his conception of norm circles. The other three all seek to explain values as due to the existence of an aspect of reality that leads to values and valuing. Collier considers that the existence of objective values means that there are 'entities with intrinsic worth independent of what judgments we make about them' (2003:234). This account can be understood as, a causal model of how values emerge from a relationship between worth and its recognition. Bhaskar's argument is that moralities exist in the transitive domain due to the existence, as a universal aspect of reality, of an intransitive object of values. This 'moral good' is 'grounded in conceptions of human nature, in the context of developing four-planar social being'(1993:211). While Sayer can be considered to be arguing for the existence of morality as being due to the common referent of the reality of flourishing and suffering. As such, although he doesn't use this terminology Sayer can be understood as taking the position of values emerging from the interaction of caring agents with real flourishing and suffering in the world. Therefore, while these three seek to explain the existence of values, due to the relationship of moral agents with real existing

value as a universal aspect of reality they differ in their descriptions of this aspect of reality.

On this basis, this real existing value can be understood to be the most problematic aspects of the theories discussed. Sayer's account of flourishing as real was seen to be to abstract to provide an explanation of this aspect of reality that allows for an understanding of the concrete value of non-human biological entities and eco systems which can be used when there are competing claims. Bhaskar's was seen to consider that either the relationship itself of humans-in society-in nature in its entirety has independent value or that value emerges from some aspects of this relationship. And Collier cannot account for why all beings have this value - as the 'pre-moral good' - but that it varies between beings in a way that is compatible with the metatheory.

To summarise, all four theories appear to vary in their accounts of moral agency; Elder-Vass differs from the others in his understanding of values; and all the moral realist positions require a more developed understanding of intrinsic value. As well as differing in their accounts some of the differences that can be observed may be due to the use of different terminology to describe the same thing.

This difference in terminology is in the use of what appears to be the different concepts of *caring for/desiring/valuing* and *need*/*absence*. To ensure the theories used can provide a synthesised approach to morality, I would suggest that *need* should be understandable by use of the concept *absence* and should be seen as intrinsic to an entity, *desire* is the internal recognition by an entity of an *absence* for that entity - and others that it considers as similar entities - while *caring f*or captures both the internal recognition and the external recognition of an un/fulfilled *need* or an *absence,* and if we *care* for something we *value* it. While the concept of *valuing* may be understandable through the concept of *caring* and the use of only the latter would avoid the difficulties of separating value and values from valuing it makes sense to talk about valuing something appropriately while the phrase caring appropriately seems to not provide the same conceptual clarity and *valuing appropriately* may capture both *desiring* and *caring*. Such an approach should maintain the explanatory power that is found in these theories but will enable the concepts to be used consistently. In addition to this Collier's terminology of *worth*, in the way that it is defined, can be used interchangeable with intrinsic value or value separate to its recognition.

In the rest of this section I will draw conclusions on the aspects that have been identified to have competing understandings, on the basis of how the argument has been made for the alternative positions. The question here is what is the method of reasoning that leads to these specific theories; with the point of reference being the method of ethical naturalism that was described in the last chapter. This is a method that starts from an objective description of observable facts in the concrete and then proceeds from that position through the use of abduction and retroduction to produce an explanatory model of the mechanisms of morality that can be held to be a better model than alternative theories.

The first theory to consider by reference to its method of development is Elder-Vass's; who rejects ethical naturalism and therefore develops his theory using a different approach. Where his starting point is not a description but the metaethical considerations of the status of beliefs; and his argument that moral agency is a discursive process, is developed from his understanding of Habermas. This leads him to introduce the terminology of norm circles.

Morgan in *What is Progress in Realism*, argues that theoretical developments should be considered by reference to the question of in what sense has 'the development has actually enhanced one's understanding of or capacity to undertake further explanatory investigations of reality' (2014:116)? He puts this question to Elder-Vass's theory asking 'how the cultural norm circle accounts for the origins of cultural norms, for the nature of their dissemination and for the complexity of their interrelation (2014:135)? The issue that Morgan identifies is that Elder-Vass reduces morality to 'descriptive sociology'; in that it cannot account for why the group holds the norms that it does at the level of societies. On this basis, it can be concluded that the form of Elder-Vass's argument predominantly consists of the use of redescription. A redescription is undertaken to provide a different frame of reference that allows for the discovery of relations and connections that are not directly observable. However, Elder-Vass does not proceed beyond redescription in his argument and, according to Morgan, it will not be possible to do so. As the terminology of norm circles cannot facilitate subsequent depth enquiry into morality as an aspect of society.

This is not to completely dismiss this concept. morality has a universal aspect, and as discussed in Chapter Four, is also applied in areas of activity which have defined ends and relatively enduring internal structures, rules and cultures; such

as medicine. And while as a redescription, it does not create the potential for any additional explanatory power with respect to these wider concerns of morality, than just starting from existing concrete descriptions, that is not to say that the terminology of norm circles may not be able to assist at the descriptive stage of an exploration of the reproduction and transformation of these very narrow aspects of morality.

Bhaskar, in *Dialectic*, has the aim of establishing the groundwork for a new moral theory. As such his argument operates 'at the meta-theoretical level' (Norrie, 2010:149). This means that although he argues for ethical naturalism, and develops it through the dialectical approach, he does not develop his moral theory through the use of ethical naturalism. What can be seen is that his moral theory does include a description – in his concrete understanding that agents have desires - and the use of redescription - through his use of the terminology of the metatheory but he cannot be seen to use retroduction.

This is because the argument that Bhaskar makes for his conception of moral agency is not a transcendental argument. As although it starts from agents having desires it requires the introduction of a separate 'principle of universality' as a 'criterion of truth' for its development. In the form of his argument, Bhaskar appears to be arguing that agents' desires lead to moral actions due to all agent's acceptance of an inductive argument that works from the fact of individual desires that needs satisfaction to the conclusion that this logically entails a commitment to abolishing all similar constraints.

His understanding of an independent aspect of reality that is the intransitive object of moralities consists of a redescription of existing moralities using the concept of transitivity that by definition requires an intransitive object for its coherence. This can be understood as a deductive argument for the existence of intrinsic value. In that it argues that if existing moralities are transitive theories then there must be an intransitive object that these theories are about. From this it can be concluded that Bhaskar provides a metatheory that enables an understanding of morality in a way that may lead to explanatory accounts being produced but he does not provide a moral theory that works as an explanatory model of the relevant mechanisms, and which is the conclusion of a transcendental argument.

Collier in his argument works from the acceptance that human beings are informed in their actions and intentions by moral considerations, that our views on morality change and there is a diversity of moral theories. This can be understood to be starting in the concrete. He also uses an element of redescription. In that he redescribes aspects of morality to a greater or lesser account using the terminology of the metatheory and he also introduces the redescription of intrinsic value as worth to ensure that intrinsic value is clearly separated from social values.

The production of his account of moral agency - the cognitive paradigm of morality – is undertaken through discussing theories of the relationship between reason and emotion and then developing Spinoza's moral psychology by reference to Macmurray. In examining the structure of this argument, while it could be understood to be a theoretical enquiry, who's only reference is other theories, alternatively it is possible to argue that Collier provides a transcendental argument. This is because his starting point is a recognition that it is the case that we make moral judgements and his conclusion is developed by reference to what analytically separate factors the existing transitive theories recognise which need to be accounted for; with, in his opinion, the Spinozist/Macmurrey account of this cognitive process being held as the most plausible model, in that it explains more of the relevant facts than other accounts.

Collier also provides a transcendental argument for independent value. His starting point is the recognition of the existence of a diversity of transitive theories and moral change. This leads to the conclusion that this can only be the case if there is something independent of these theories which they are trying to describe.

In arguing for the specific nature of this intransitive object of morality Collier makes two separate arguments. The argument that he uses in *Being and Worth* is an argument from authority; in this case by reference to Augustine and Spinoza. This is developed in *In Defence of Objectivity* (2003) where he argues that this independent aspect of realty must be worth by eliminating other alternatives. He considers six possible candidates for what this independent aspect of reality may be. That: (i.) values are a distinct kind of entity (234) – Hume's position; (ii.) 'what is good in itself is some sort of human experience, usually pleasure' (235) – Mill's position; (iii.) 'the repository of intrinsic worth is actions' such as the position that 'murder is intrinsically bad' (236) – a rule-based approach; (iv.) 'the locus of moral

judgment is not experience or actions but virtues' (237); (v.) 'that what has intrinsic worth or [is] unworthy is emotions', such as love (237) and (vi.) his own theory that all entities have intrinsic worth. In examining these positions, he states that each one is more plausible than the last but that 'whatever is true and plausible in each depends on its pointing towards the sixth view' (234); his position. Neither of these are retroductive arguments. Therefore, Collier provides arguments for his version of moral agency and for the existence of independent value, that could be construed to be using an ethical naturalist approach, but that his arguments for what that independent value is are of a different format and, as concluded in Chapter three, fail to provide an understanding of intrinsic but variable worth that is compatible with the metatheory.

Sayer, in producing his theory of lay morality, asks and then provides an answer to, the questions of 'What do you care most about' and 'What kinds of behaviour would you feel ashamed of or guilty about and why' (2004:2). As such, he starts from a description of the focus of our caring nature in the concrete. His answer is that these questions tend to prompt an 'emotional response' and so this demonstrates 'that morality and emotions are closely connected' (5-6) His theory of lay morality can be understood as an account of moral agency that makes sense of this connection.

His account of how values influence agency uses the redescription of existing moral rules as the regulative effect of the approval or disapproval of others. However, in providing this account he does not explore this causal process in significant detail and so he can be understood to have provided a plausible, but not fully developed, answer. Therefore, Sayer's account can be comprehended as aligned with the method of ethical naturalism that he supports and that, in producing this account, he doesn't overreach in the answers that he provides, recognizing instead that these answers can be developed through further study.

From the discussion in Chapter Three, what may assist in developing this is the understanding of decision-making as including conditioned response and recognition primed decision making as well as analytical processes. This may, in conjunction with the morphogenetic approach, provide one way for Sayer's understanding of the influence of social values through the process of socialisation to be deepened in its causal account.

The differences in the accounts that were identified are the explanations of moral agency and intrinsic value. From this analysis of the method of argument that was used to develop these specific positions, it can be argued that, where the accounts differ one account can be preferred over another on the basis of the argument that has been used to arrive at that position.

In considering moral agency, on the basis of the form of the argument that supports the specific positions it can be concluded that Collier's account is more supportable than Bhaskar's. And that Sayer's account with its recognition of the link between emotion and morality is compatible with Collier's cognitive paradigm of morality. This is not to dismiss desire as an aspect of moral agency. For as was seen from the discussion of competing terminology, desire can be understood to be an aspect of the cognitive paradigm.

Turning to the nature of this independent aspect of reality, this appears to be the problematic issues for the moral realist theories. In that this aspect is central to the argument for the emergence of values. There is a transcendental argument from these values to intrinsic value but no subsequent transcendental argument for what that value is. This lack of an account of the nature of intrinsic value does not undermine the moral realist position. This is because on the stratification of reality, that is illustrated in Figure 3, the possibility of developing deeper explanations does not undermine explanations that have already been produced. On this conception the moral realist argument can be understood to provide an explanation of the emergence of values by reference to worth, which then needs to be subsequently explained. For this reason, it is reasonable to conclude, using Morgan's criteria, that these arguments provide progress in realism. In that they identify an aspect of reality which then needs to be subsequently explained. Currently the realist theories appear to differ in their understanding of what this value/worth is, but as none of these theories are developed through retroduction, it is not possible to determine if they are talking about the same thing or to favour one account over another.

The aim, in examining these theories was to determine if these theories can, if combined, produce an account that is: consistent with the metatheory; addresses and accounts for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered; and is developed through the epistemological method of

ethical naturalism. It can be concluded here that the use of the metatheory provides a synthesized and coherent approach to morality.

This synthesized approach uses the framework that Bhaskar provides in which morality can be explored. This is a framework that holds that there is an intransitive object of morality in that the morality and moral values, that have effects through socialization, themselves emerge from all or some aspect of the universal and relatively enduring relationship of moral agents, who care, with the intrinsic value or worth that exists separate to its recognition within four planar social being. This is a position that is consistent with the ontology of the metatheory and developed through the use of a method of ethical naturalism. It does account for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered, As Collier provides an, argued for, account of moral agency and Sayer's work on lay morality uses this framework to provide an understanding of existing moralities and how it has effects. Therefore, it can be seen to provide a comprehensive theory that accounts for more of the relevant facts than Elder-Vass's approach and the existing philosophical theories of morality that were introduced in Chapter Three.

However, as Price argues, we need the existence of independent value to critique existing moralities; and while Collier provides a transcendental argument from the existence of moral diversity and change to draw the conclusion that value must exist separately to its discovery. The theories examined have not provided any concrete analysis of what that value is. This means that this explanatory account cannot be used to critique existing moralities without being developed in its explanatory account of worth.

As such this account needs to be developed further. The conclusion of the last chapter suggests that this should be through a depth enquiry using the method of ethical naturalism. In undertaking such an enquiry, the role of emotion, that is a consequence of the acceptance of Collier's account of moral agency, needs to be recognised as a significant variation from existing accounts of how a rational enquiry into morality is undertaken. That such an explanation can be facilitated through the use of the framework discussed above means that the absence of an explanation of intrinsic value should not diminish the significant implications that the use of the metatheory has for questions in morality.

In the rest of this thesis I will examine this issue of intrinsic value. In the next section I consider if Bhaskar's development of critical realism in his spiritual turn can address this missing component. This is because in the philosophy of meta-reality (2002) Bhaskar states more explicitly, than he did in *Dialectic*, that 'the world contains value, whether human beings are here or not to recognise it' (2017:114). The question, for the next section, is therefore if, Bhaskar's meta-reality may potentially provide an explanation of the concept of worth. In the final chapter I will then consider if an understanding of intrinsic value can be produced through the use of method of ethical naturalism, by asking the question what must be the case given that entities have value (worth) separate to its recognition.

6.2 Explaining Intrinsic Value: The Philosophy of Meta-reality

Bhaskar's development of critical realism in the philosophy of Meta-reality (PMR) has not been discussed up to this point in the thesis. The main reason for this is its acceptance as part of the metatheory. Basic critical realism is accepted by all those who use the metatheory. Dialectical critical realism (DCR) is also accepted by the majority of those who use the metatheory; either in its entirety or through the use of some of the concepts that are developed in DCR. However, the spiritual turn that is found in meta-reality is more contentious. By ensuring that Meta-reality is discussed separately a distinction can be drawn between the conclusion of section one, which is based only on these other aspects of the metatheory, and the exploration on this section.

It is not my purpose here to fully explore meta-reality. The complexity and contentiousness of the position of meta-reality means that to do this position and these debates justice would distract significantly from my own research question. My aim is merely to provide sufficient understanding to allow meta-reality to be considered with respect to the question of value separate to its recognition. To achieve this, in the rest of this section, I: summarise what meta-reality is and Bhaskar's argument for its existence; consider its implications for morality; briefly examine the structure of Bhaskar's argument and then, following a summary of the criticisms of Morgan, consider what meta-reality brings to the search for an explanation for intrinsic value. The conclusion that is drawn is that meta-reality provides a development of Bhaskar's abstract understanding that provides a link between his concrete account of the universality of desire, and his abstract

understanding of the emergence of morality, and thereby provides a more developed answer to the question of why morality exists but that this doesn't assist with providing a concrete explanation of worth.

Bhaskar summarises PMR in *The Order of Natural Necessity* (2017). PMR postulates the existence and ontological primacy of meta-reality. This is a development of Bhaskar's understanding of the depth of reality to include 'identity or unity-in-difference' (2007:304). This is an extension of the four level MELD system that is found in DCR and which was discussed in Chapter Two. The original four DCR levels were: 1M, non-identity (the level identified by basic critical realism); 2E, absence; 3L totality; and 4D transformative agency and human emancipation. PMR develops this further with three additional 'categorical levels' (2017:114). These are:

> 5A the fifth aspect 'which thematizes being as interior, as reflexive, and being as, in a certain sense, spiritual.'
>
> 6R the Sixth realm, in which we understand 'being as re-enchanted, we understand meanings and values as real and not just subjective impositions of human beings, so that the world contains value whether or not human beings are here to recognize it.'
>
> 7Z the seventh level 'which completes the system, understands being in terms of the primacy of identity over difference, and the primacy of unity over split' (114).

This seventh level 'reverses the standpoint of the first level' (115). In that the primacy of identity is asserted over difference. This is a reversal of the understanding of primacy that was found in DCR, in that it moves from the primacy of absence within a dualism to the primacy of nonduality. This nondualist understanding of identity is not 'identity' in the sense of the atomistic understanding of identity that is 'critiqued in transcendental realism' (116). Bhaskar clarifies how he is using this concept by giving examples of the identity one may feel with a piece of music or visual art; or the fact that when we say people are of different height, they share in common the dimension of height.

Bhaskar's argument for the existence of meta-reality, is based on 'three senses in which 'identity is prior to' and 'more important ontologically than difference' (2017:121). The first is that 'identity is 'necessary for the constitution of social life'.

The second is identity as ‘the basis of social life’ and the third is identity ‘is a deep interior of social being and indeed being itself’ (121). In making these arguments he differentiates four forms in which duality is transcended. These are: identification in consciousness, agency, holism and transcendental self.

Identification in consciousness is the transcendence that occurs when one is completely absorbed in reading a book or watching a film. Bhaskar argues that in this absorbance there is not two things, such as book and reader, but one thing. Meta-reality ’argues that a transcendental identification in consciousness is necessary for any social interaction of perception to take place’ (122). Transcendental agency is the point where your thought of an action is no longer distinct from your doing it’ (124). This can be understood by considering such practical activities as sailing or surfing; where at some point you may be no longer ‘sailing a boat’ or ‘surfing a wave’ you are just ‘sailing’ or ‘surfing’. When this occurs the interaction between yourself and your environment is one where the internal monologue has ceased and you and the environment are one; so that moving the tiller or your weight on the board requires no conscious thought. Transcendental holism is where a couple, group, team or crowd act as one, with no directing mind.

With this recognition of the existence of the phenomena of ‘transcendence’ Bhaskar argues for a transcendental self. This is a theory of the self as being more than the atomistic individualistic ego or the embodied personality, which while Bhaskar considers are real, are ‘a very relative and contextually shifting sense of the self’ (127). For Bhaskar there is’ a third sense of self’ and that is ‘our ground state’. This is ‘our transcendentally real self which is always there but which you are only in when you are your ‘higher self’. This is when the ego or the embodied personality are not ‘interfering with your ground state’ (128).

This is ‘the sense in which meta-reality posits a sense of identity, which is the basis for everything else in the social world, our ground state’ (130). Everyone is considered to have these ground states and for transcendence to be understandable these ground states must all be connected in what Bhaskar calls the ‘cosmic envelope’. By going ‘deeply into anything’, in the sense that mystics have maintained that it is possible to do, Bhaskar considers that ‘you will find something wonderful, pure bliss.’ For example, in the Christian tradition this is, ‘a wonderful sense of unconditional love’ (129). Love, for Bhaskar is therefore, ‘the

cement of the universe […] the great binding force' (159). This is a spiritual understanding of reality, where 'beings in their ground states are connected by the cosmic envelope' and this non-duality of meta-reality sustains the more superficial world 'in which differences arise' (130).

To summarise, this is an account of the nature of reality that argues that in addition to the depth of reality that can be identified through the use of transcendental realism - the domain of the real where the mechanisms that have effects exist - there is a deeper level of reality; the level of meta-reality. With the argument for the existence of this level being that without this level social life and social being cannot make sense.

Bhaskar identifies the implications of the acceptance of meta-reality for morality. These are due to what Bhaskar refers to as the mechanisms of identification. Which can progress from '*reciprocity*' and '*transcendental identification in consciousness'* to *'co-presence';* where I see you as part of me. Bhaskar considers that co-presence 'provides very strong arguments for not harming or hurting the other,' because in doing so you are actually 'hurting or harming part of yourself. At the same time, if you want to be free then you want all to be free because all are co-present within you' (131-132). This understanding is an aspect of Bhaskar's conception of intrinsic value. In that when experiencing co-presence you will understand that 'the world contains value whether or not human beings are here to recognize it.'

In considering Bhaskar's account of intrinsic value, what has to be determined, without entering the state of co-presence, is what is meant by his conception of this value. Collier's conception is that all beings have intrinsic value, but some categories of beings have more value than others. Benton's, criticism of Collier, that was discussed in Chapter three, is that 'there are difficulties in sustaining the […] attribution of intrinsic value […] short of some theological or broadly super-natural premises' (2004:241-242). What can be seen in meta-reality is that Bhaskar addresses this argument through the introduction of just these premises. However, in doing so Bhaskar's position could be understood in two different ways. That all aspects of reality have value or that some aspects of reality have value. In both of these approaches this value could be variable.

What Bhaskar means by his conception of value can be inferred from his discussion that meta-reality means that 'the free flourishing of each is a condition of the free flourishing of all' (133); the eudemonistic society. This means that the moral position of meta-reality has the same moral consequences as that of DCR ethics. Both contain a conception of wanting all to be free, and that to achieve this it is necessary to work at all four planes of social being. The difference is that the universality of desire, that is central to DCR, is a commitment to universal solidarity on the basis of a principle of logic. In meta-reality co-presence is an ontological argument; it explains why, if we understand the nature of reality, we are logically committed to universal solidarity. This is because co-presence is not something that comes from rational argument it comes from being in one's ground state. It moves morality from a recognition of my own value leading to the inference of the value of others to the recognition, through transcendence, that my value cannot be separated from the rest of reality. This implies that all of reality has value.

This interpretation is also supported by considering moral agency. Bhaskar's idea of co-presence is similar but not identical to Collier's conception of extending the self through the use of empathy, that was discussed in Chapter Three. Collier's argument is that if I understand another's feelings through empathy then those feelings become my feelings. In this way myself is not just my body but the systems my body is part of and that support my body. This argument for the virtues of empathy and self-refection as part of the cognitive paradigm of morality is reflected in Bhaskar's MELDARZ scheme. Which has the concept of self-development of the virtues of self-reflection, as part of 5A, and empathy, as part of 6R. The difference between the two is that is for Collier, while it can be extended, there is always a self. Bhaskar's understanding of *co-presence.* means that complete moral agency requires an agent to be able to access the state of no longer being separated as agent from the rest of reality. This confirms that Bhaskar must be understood as considering that all aspects of reality have value.

The concept of *co-presence* creates a specific approach to how a moral agent acts in accordance with intrinsic value. This is understood through the prerequisites for right action. According to Morgan these are 'Present-moment awareness and self-referentiality'. These must be achieved to be able to have 'access to one's ground state' as such 'internal states are as important as the external activity' (2003:128).

By being in one's ground state, one becomes 'maximally aware of the here, the now, of one's responsibility for oneself and society and of co-presence (entailing a reciprocity) and orienting right-action (131). This:

> right action has three dynamics: a reorientation of one's attitude towards self (enlightenment and happiness through ground state access); a reorientation of one's everyday activity (what one desires, values, and does) with implications for the reproduction of structures based in instrumentality, conflict, aggression etc; and a momentum towards expanding activity towards the emancipation of others (since that they are subject to social ill means that you are)' (132)

It is this respect that the practical application differs from the approach of non-meta-realist critical realism. For:

> Critical realism, insofar as it digs deep down into the structures of relative reality, can be liberating, within the bounds of relativity and duality, so therefore it is certainly a philosophy of emancipation and freedom, but the liberation it speaks of will always be limited without an understanding of its alethic, absolute, non-dual grounds and conditions of possibility (Bhaskar, 2002:185 in Morgan, 2003:129)

What this means is that it is possible to progress some way towards morality and emancipation, through the use of ethical naturalism, but full emancipation is not possible until all moral agents go beyond reciprocity and develop an understanding of the non-dual by access to the ground state.

From this it can be concluded that the answer to the question of intrinsic value that is supplied by meta-reality is an abstract answer to the overall question of the nature of reality which, in its understanding of reality, provides an answer to the question of what must be the case given that morality exists. In that morality exists because all is one and all has value. On this approach all of reality has worth.

To assess the strength of this explanation of morality, in the rest of this chapter I determine if it: has been developed through the use of a method of ethical naturalism; addresses and accounts for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered; provides a better or fuller account than other theories; and is consistent with the ontology of the metatheory.

Morgan considers meta-reality, as a whole, from the perspective of a retroductive argument. He suggests that Bhaskar is providing an answer to the question of 'What must be the case for human emancipation to be possible' (2003:124). In examining this, Morgan recognises that the answer that is provided by Bhaskar contains claims which 'reside in or draw on disciplines of mind based in spiritual practices, the asserted consequences of which are difficult to assess without engaging in the practices themselves' (119). This applies to the question of the intrinsic value as much as to a question on the possibility of emancipation. As such, considerations of the validity of the conclusion by reference to recognized forms of reasoning, including ethical naturalism, cannot be applied here.

However, that should not be interpreted to mean that Bhaskar is arguing against the use of ethical naturalism. The reason that this needs to be considered is that Bhaskar's argument for intrinsic value is that it is possible to be maximally aware of value by accessing your ground state and this could be interpreted to mean that knowledge of value is beyond reason; in that you either have knowledge of value or you do not. This would be an ostensive definition of value. This can be explored by reference to the argument that good is ostensively definable, that is found in Moore's *Principia Ethica* (1960). This is the work in moral philosophy that popularized the phrase 'naturalistic fallacy' and supports a position that values are beyond reason. Moore argues that good cannot be further defined by the use of other terms such as flourishing but is ostensively definable in the same way that colours are. So that just as we can point to something and state, 'this is called yellow' we can point at something and state 'this is called good.' That Bhaskar is not implying that value is beyond reason, in his assertion of how it can be comprehended can be ascertained by recognizing that the levels MELDARZ contains and develops on the ethical naturalism found in *Dialectic.* These additional levels to the dialectic system can be understood to, not replace but, build on the dialectical approach of using our commitment to morality and truthfulness, and ethical naturalism to produce emancipatory values; that are then applied in emancipatory practice. The development being that this only gets you so far and it is necessary to develop on that understanding and practice; by accessing your ground state, to fully comprehend intrinsic value. Therefore, while Bhaskar doesn't use ethical naturalism in arguing for intrinsic value, he can be understood to be proposing a development of, not the rejection of, the method of ethical naturalism.

The next question is that of if meta-reality accounts for all the features that are identified as relevant to the concrete situations considered. Because meta-reality is an account of all of reality this has to be answered positively. In providing that account, it considers transcendence, as a feature of society. This is an aspect of reality that is not considered by the other theories that I have discussed in this thesis and can be examined further.

The question of if, in accounting for transcendence, Bhaskar provides a better or fuller account than other theories is considered by Morgan. Who argues that Bhaskar's theory derives from his interpretation of what is occurring in transcendental states, but that there are alternative explanations that do not require the postulation of meta-reality. Morgan draws on examples, such as muscle memory in dancers, where:

> 'once the hardwiring is laid down, we are capable of a smoother less consciously controlled engagement in the given activity, where, if we try to intervene, we disrupt the smoothness or effectiveness of our activity.' (140)

He also argues that it 'is also a characteristic of team sports where repetition of patterns of play produces muscle memory and conditioned anticipation of the movement of others.'(140) Morgan considers that this shows that rather than being an argument for meta-reality the examples that Bhaskar uses are an argument for synchronic emergence. That ground states would be 'step-state emergent powers that are no more or less than socially situated biological potentials and/or psychological proclivities' (146). From the existence of these alternative explanations he concludes that 'meta-reality faces a number of challenges in terms of the judgemental rationality of holding that a basic level unity or identity is necessary to the process of identification'. For Morgan, to be accepted, PMR has to explain both 'why emergence in demi-reality is insufficient to account for processes of identifying' and: why 'spiritual experience to which everyday examples of identifying are to be related are not in themselves illusions or interpretive errors of solely emergent skills' (142).

This consideration of emergence means that there are at least three possible explanations of the transcendence that Bhaskar describes.

1. Bhaskar's philosophy of meta-reality

2. Morgan's emergent properties, where the feeling of transcendence is an emergent property with no spiritual consequences.
3. That meta-reality is understood as an emergent property in the same way as Archer describes CEPS, SEPs and PEPs as emergent properties. But where meta-reality is a singular universal property that emerges from the totality of all relationships. This is an understanding of the cosmic envelope that sits within the pantheist tradition.

The final question of if PMR, and the position it contains on morality, is consistent with the ontology of the metatheory will not be considered here. The reason for this is twofold. The first is that this is a larger debate than the question of intrinsic value. The second is that, as I will argue below, whatever position is taken in that debate there is still a need for a concrete understanding of value developed through an ethical naturalist approach.

To summarise, PMR contains the position that all of reality has value independent to its recognition. This is a development of the abstract explanation for values that is contained in *Dialectic*. This development moves Bhaskar's conception of moral agency, to be not in competition with Collier's but instead to be an advancement of Collier's own understanding; and in doing so it fills the gap between the universality of desires and universal morality, that exists in Bhaskar's dialectical theory. However, while in this respect meta-reality can be seen to be compatible with and strengthen the synthesized moral theory, the aspects that it strengthens were already robust. For the weakness that was identified in Section One was that the theory did not contain an explanatory account of intrinsic value. And the way that meta-reality has strengthened other aspects of the moral theory means that the development of a concrete account of intrinsic value is still required.

This is because the conception of value that is found in meta-reality is that all of reality has value. While this may be true, as a concept it is too abstract and all-encompassing to have the explanatory power that is required to assist in moral judgements. That the abstract nature of this explanation is a problem was recognized in Chapter Four, where justification was discussed. The conclusion there was that an explanatory account must be a concrete explanation; that allows morality to be applied, by those who are already inclined to use it, to concrete situations.

The problem of the all-encompassing nature of this explanation was recognized, in Chapter Three, where Collier was seen to need to propose a hierarchy of value to attempt to overcome this issue with universal value; and so attempt to allow considerations of worth to facilitate a practical morality. Therefore, what can be concluded is that this account of intrinsic value is both too abstract to be of use in concrete applications and needs to be developed, in its concrete understanding of if this value varies between different aspects of reality; and if it does how this can be understood.

To develop this concrete account, it has been seen that meta-reality, with its conceptions of co-presence and the ground state, does not prevent the use of ethical naturalism. What has been argued is that the PMR approach to understanding value through co-presence is a development of the dialectic, which is a development of basic critical realism. Therefore, it is not an alternative approach, it is an extension and so does not remove the possibility of using the rest of critical realism to produce explanations of phenomena that occur in the domain of the empirical by producing explanations of what is occurring in the domain of the real. This means that although - from the perspective of PMR, and the rest of the metatheory - such explanations will be limited; the possibility of producing these explanations with respect to value, through the ethical naturalist approach of Chapter Five - with its inclusion of emotion, care, empathy and self-reflection - should still be accepted.

From this it can be concluded that while PMR is an aspect of the metatheory that has something to add to the consideration of intrinsic value, no decision needs to be drawn here on the status of PMR. For if PMR is accepted then what is still required is a concrete explanation of intrinsic value and ethical naturalism can still be used to produce depth explanations. Whereas if PMR is rejected, then there is still an abstract explanation of value and the need to produce a concrete explanation of value through the use of ethical naturalism remains.

In this chapter I have analyzed the arguments that are used to support the moral theories of Bhaskar, Collier, Sayer, and Elder-Vass. From this analysis it was concluded that a synthesized realist moral theory can be identified that provides an explanatory account of the majority of the aspects of morality, but that, if accepted, this account needs to be developed further. It has also been concluded

that the philosophy of meta-reality can provide another component of this abstract understanding of intrinsic value and strengthen the account of moral agency in this theoretical model. This is because, with this development, Bhaskar can be seen to join Collier and Sayer in recognizing the roles of empathy, emotion and care as all being aspects of rational moral agency. Accepting meta-reality has also been shown to not prevent attempts to use ethical naturalism, in the way it is understood here, to develop limited understandings of morality. However, what meta-reality does not do is address the absence in this overall theory, which is a concrete account of the mechanisms of intrinsic value. Therefore, the question still remains of if this gap in the theoretical understanding of morality can be filled through an understanding of worth that refers to mechanisms emerging from structures. In the next chapter, I will examine this question.

Chapter 7 Developing the Realist Model of Morality

In the last chapter it was seen that the application of critical realism to moral questions results in a synthesised theoretical realist model of morality that has explanatory power with respect to the majority of the aspects of morality. This theory accounts for the existence of morality and moral values by arguing for the existence of value in the world that is separate to its recognition. The argument for the existence of intrinsic value or worth is supportable but the conceptions of this worth that are found in the existing theories are too abstract to provide an explanatory account of this identified aspect of reality.

In this chapter, while recognising the speculative nature of this exercise, I explore if it is possible to use the method of ethical naturalism to develop a more concrete understanding of intrinsic value. The argument I advance is that if worth is understood as a concept that refers to the specific properties that emerge from, but are not reducible to, relatively enduring structures and that have causal power with regard to the flourishing of structures then the understanding of morality that is found in the synthesised model is completed in a way that facilitates subsequent practical research.

This Chapter has four sections. The first section follows the stages of the ethical naturalism, that was the conclusion of Chapter Five, from description to retroduction. This leads to, in section two, a re-examination of the analytical separation of the concepts of facts, value and values and a redescription that is intended to reduce conceptual confusion is suggested. In section three I compare the explanatory model that is produced through this enquiry to alternative explanations and consider the issue of concretization. The final part contains the conclusions of this chapter and subsequently this thesis.

7.1 An Explanatory Model of Intrinsic Value

In this section, I seek to answer the trancendendal question of ‘what must be the case given that entities have worth.’ I start with a descriptive understanding of

several situations, with relatively enduring relationships, where it can be asserted that there is an aspect of reality which can be understood to have intrinsic worth separate to its recognition and the application of the label ‘value’ by valuing agents. I identify the analytically separate parts of these descriptions; and confirm that these are capable of being redescribed using the generative notion of causality. I then propose a theoretical answer to the transcendental question; that attempts to provide an account of what properties the concept of worth is referring to.

In attempting to understand worth it is reasonable to start by describing aspects of nature and society that may be identified as possessing worth. Up to this point I have used the example of slavery throughout. However, to use slavery here creates the risk of a circular argument. As such, it is necessary to explore worth by using other examples. While there are many aspects of reality that can be considered to potentially have worth, three of these are: safe drinking water; areas of the countryside that have been designated as sites of special scientific interest (SSSI); and honesty. The reason for this selection is that the first is a natural phenomenon, which leads to human interaction with nature to ensure its availability, the second is that it is the legal recognition of an aspect of nature as having value for other species, and so requires protection from humanity and the third is a purely social concept. What they share is that all three are examples of aspects of reality that are well recognized as valuable in themselves, and more importantly this can be understood as due to the intrinsic value (worth) that they have and which is separate to this recognition. What I am not seeking to do here is undertake a full causal and structural analysis - that would indicate if these aspects of reality do genuinely have intrinsic worth and why that is the case - I am merely trying to identify, from these examples, what it is that we may be referring to if we use the concept of worth.

Safe drinking water (SDW) is defined as water that is safe to drink, in that it creates no significant ill health effects over a lifetime of consumption. While it can be described by reference to technical specifications with regard to issues such as contaminants and taste, using nothing other than factual terminology (World Health Organisation, 2017), for the purposes here the important aspect of the description is that SDW is valued. This valuing of SDW is established by the existence of infrastructure such as sewage systems and water purification plants

and statements such as ‘access to safe drinking water is […] a basic human right’ (2017:XV). More importantly, for the consideration of worth, this valuing of SDW can be understood to be separate to its recognition. This can be seen in aspects of human history, and animal behavior, such as migration and settlement patterns and the story of the discovery of the cause of cholera. Finally, any descriptive account of SDW needs to recognize both that not all water is SDW, and there are no efforts to make all the water on the planet SDW. Microbes and other species such as fish need ‘dirty’ water’ or ‘salt’ water to create a suitable habitat for survival and so these other types of water can be understood to have value in other circumstances.

Sites of special scientific interest (SSSI) are areas of the UK countryside that have statutory protection from damage, disturbance or destruction. The natural habitats that carry this designation has features of special interest that need to be conserved from human activity, such as habitation or intensive forms of agriculture. These features can be aspects of an eco-system - that support species of wildlife, who would become extinct or endangered if this area of the countryside was not available for their use - or geological features that are not found elsewhere. This means that for an area of the countryside to become a SSSI it has to have its worth recognized. This must be a worth that exists separate to its recognition by valuing agents and the subsequent legal protection through designation. A detailed description of what that worth is can be provided for each individual SSSI, through exploring why that area has been given the designation. An example of an SSSI is the area of The Solent that has this status in part because it is the habitat for a rare colony of invertebrate species. As such, although this area is recognised as having significant human utility it has to be managed to create favourable conditions for the designated plants, birds and worms. While each SSSI has a specific reason for designation what all SSSIs share in common is that the worth they have is not due to their value to humanity; it is an intrinsic value or a value for other species.

Honesty as a social value is more difficult to provide a descriptive account of. This is because honesty is both socially produced and socially defined. The consideration of if honesty, as a value, can be understood to have worth, separate to its recognition, may be assisted by the distinction between acting honestly and acting on the assumption that honesty has value. In the former case the causal

power of the value of honesty is just one aspect of many complex interactions. In the latter case it is the recognition of the value of honesty that has causal power in society. An example of this distinction is the difference between telling the truth about what was observed, when acting as a witness in a court case, and the development of the law of perjury. Truth telling, on this basis, can be understood to be separate to the encouragement of truth telling and from this it can be inferred that it is in its social production that honesty can be understood to have worth separate to its recognition and definition. Therefore, as with the other examples, the attribution of value is separate to the worth of the phenomenon or entity itself. and this applies even when the entity is a social value.

What can be seen in these three examples, of aspects of reality that are valued, is there is a possibility to analytically separate all of them in the same way. Following Price's distinction between value and values (2017:4), this is a separation between: (a.) the causal power of an entity, which is related in some way to its worth; (b.) the causal power of the recognition of worth, that may lead to something being valued appropriately; and (c.) the causal power of that valuing that leads to the use of, preservation of, or alteration to, the entity with worth by a valuing agent. This separation doesn't prevent the possibility that in specific circumstances a. may not exist and so b. may be a misrecognition of worth but will still lead to c. - values with causal power through the actions of agents. But it is only if this distinction between a and c is maintained is it possible for the act of misrecognition to be understandable. That this is a reasonable distinction should be apparent by moving away from worth and considering the distinction between the causal power of an aspect of a naturally produced phenomenon and the causal power of any recognition of that phenomenon. Such as (a.) the hydraulic power of a flow of water that as one part of a complex interaction creates river bank erosion; (b.) the recognition of that hydraulic power that leads to the avoidance of building by the edge of a river; and (c.) the use of that recognition to dam the river and create a hydroelectric power plant. The aspect of these descriptions that is of interest to the specific question is (a.) the causal power of an entity, which is related in some way to its worth.

As discussed in the last chapter, the term worth is itself a redescription. Worth must be understood to be referring to a yet unidentified emergent property which a retroductive argument should enable us to start to understand. The use of the

metatheory should ensure that the examples described above can be redescribed in a way that facilitates the postulation of what the mechanisms of worth may be and how worth might be understood as a property that varies between entities.

In considering the process of retroduction then each example can be subject to its own transcendental question, and the conclusions of each question drawn together. The first question is ‘what must be the case, given that safe drinking water has worth separate to its recognition by valuing agents?’ If this is considered from the perspective of causal power, then the most plausible answer must be that it has worth because it is essential for the continuation of human life and the life of many other species; their very existence and continued flourishing. Such an answer, indicates that in trying to understand worth from the perspective of causation - where the metatheory considers structures not as atomistic entities but as part of a totality - then the structural relationship that is of primary interest to this question is not the internal structure of SDW but its role in greater structures; the structure of eco-systems and human society. It is within these relatively enduring external structures that SDW is referred to as having worth. On this basis it can be understood that although the existence of life forms that require SDW to flourish is contingent - for it is possible to describe a different world in which SDW exists in the same way but has no such causal power/worth, as it either forms no part of any structure or has a different effect in different structures – in the structures of humanity in society, and with mammals, in nature, SDW is necessarily an intrinsic aspect with causal power.

This overall understanding allows for subsequent questions, such as what it is about the internal structures of SDW and people that means that SDW has these causal powers to be addressed. This allows for absence to form an aspect of an analysis. For in considering how SDW has the properties that it does, they are, in part, due to the absence, within its internal structure, of the life forms that prevent drinking water from being safe. Therefore, a complete causal and structural analysis will refer to both presence or absence as part of the explanatory account.

Considered on its own this single example indicates that, it is possible that worth could be understood to be either a reference to the causal powers an individual entity has for the existence or flourishing of the structures which they are a part of or alternatively a reference to the causal powers that it has for promoting the flourishing of valuing agents. On the latter position, worth is everywhere and

always a reference to a principle of utility and so the distinction between worth and value is a false one. In either case, what is being referred to by the concept is the relevant emergent properties. To explore this further, I will consider the example of a SSSI.

In considering what must be the case given that SSSIs are areas of the countryside that contain worth separate to its recognition by valuing agents; such as an environment that supports a colony of rare worms. The most plausible answer must be that the relevant aspect has worth because it is essential for the very existence and continued flourishing of a species other than our own. Therefore, to examine worth from the perspective of causation the structural relationship that is of interest is primarily the role of the aspect of the environment that is protected within the greater structure of the colony of the worms as an eco-system. It is within this structure that the worth of the relevant aspect of the SSSI can subsequently be identified. As with SDW, although the existence of the life forms that require that specific environment to flourish is contingent; given that they do exist the relevant causal power(s) are necessary for that eco-system.

The difference between this example and that of SDW, is that while declaring an area a SSSI is a recognition of worth by valuing agents that does not mean it leads to any valuing within the colony of worms. This is because the creatures do not appear to be able to interact with their environment, and alter its constituent parts, on the basis of valuing certain parts of it. It is the separate valuing agents that recognize the worth of this environment and assign value to it; a value that is not in the interest of the valuing agent and so is a recognition of worth, that is not based on human utility. Therefore, what this example suggests is that, unlike the example of SDW, worth can only be understood to be a reference to the causal powers that entities have with respect to the existence and flourishing of the external structures they are a part of; this is not an equivalence between worth and utility. This example also suggests that a more nuanced approach to absence has to be taken, as evil cannot always be an absence. The absence of this specific environment can be seen to have consequences for the flourishing of the worms but the status of SSSI is designed to ensure the absence of humans and human development, which would impact on that environment. As such, it is not all absences that must be understood as evil it is specific absences in specific circumstances.

What the previous two examples have provided is a provisional explanation of what worth refers to. For this explanation to be accepted then the worth of specifically social concepts, such as honesty, should be capable of being understood in the same way. As such, the question of what is the worth of the social value of honesty, must be answerable by reference to the relevant relatively enduring external structure which honesty promotes the flourishing of. For honesty the relevant structure is the social structure. This means that the worth of honesty must be understandable as a reference to its causal powers with respect to the flourishing of the social structure and which must be analytically separate from both its emergence as a personal characteristic and the recognition of its value, by valuing agents. This is not an unreasonable understanding however what needs to be acknowledged is that this does not necessarily indicate that honesty emerges separate from its recognition. This is because the concept of synchronic emergence allows for the value and the worth to emerge at the same time.

What these three examples collectively indicate is that worth can be understood to be a reference to emergent properties that have causal power with respect to structures. This has to be understood as analytically separate to the causal power to generate individual events or to the causal power to generate other mechanisms -as described by the stratification of reality; while recognizing that in specific circumstances this may be the same mechanism. This means that while potentially everything has some worth the statement is never *x* has worth but always *x* has worth in *y* because of *z* (where *y* is always a reference to the external structure *x* has causal power with respect to and *z* is a reference to the explanation of that causal power(s) that may be identified through practical research). An example of this would be the proposition: SDW has worth in human society due to its necessity for the survival of humanity.

While this is a coherent account of worth that aligns with the generative notion of causality, what this appears to indicate is that worth refers to a variable property. This needs to be explored further. This is because Collier's account of the variability of worth, which was based on a hierarchy of being could not be used to produce a practical morality. The importance of exploring this variability is therefore to determine if it provides an understanding of worth in a way that facilitates practical moral judgements.

The retroductive argument indicates that only the mechanisms that have the causal power to maintain and/or promote the flourishing of structures can be understood to be the referent for worth. A world with one simple entity would be a world without worth. As this is not the case, all relatively enduring structures must include, or rely on, some mechanisms whose causal power make them relatively enduring; therefore, all beings or structures or entities must be understood to have some worth. This is the worth that exists within their own internal structure but also the worth that they may possess as parts of relatively enduring more complex structures.

Any explanation of the specifics of this worth can only be produced through concrete analysis. Theoretically in undertaking this analysis while not all mechanisms will have worth, it could also be found that the same mechanism may have different effects, and thereby different worth, depending on where that mechanism is in the overall structure. This can be understood in the same way as the importance of identical bricks in an archway varies due to where the bricks are in the arch, with the keystone being the most important, as it keeps the whole archway in place.

It might also be found that worth varies if specific mechanisms are absent from the structure; and in some circumstances, this absence could be described as generating evil. It may also be possible to discover through analysis that some mechanisms have no actual worth within a particular structure - as they may be unactualized in that particular structure – but they may be understood to generate worth in a different, or future structure. As such, it is possible to use the concepts of tendential prediction and explanatory critique to argue that some identified mechanisms may be able to have worth if other mechanisms that are constraining their actuation are removed.

A theoretical example of this approach could a depth enquiry considering if honesty has more worth in generating the flourishing of the social structure than generosity. It may be possible to produce an answer to this question by determining the overall effects of each property with respect to the flourishing of the structure; which would enable honesty and generosity to be placed in a hierarchy that is specific to that socio-historical situation. However, in doing so what still needs to be recognised is that the specifics of this aspect of a hierarchy may act as a criticism as well as an explanation of that particular society at that

particular time. This is an approach to understanding variation in worth that could provide, through concrete research, the explanatory power that is not available through the use of Collier's hierarchy of worth. For unlike the hierarchy of being, this approach may allow a hierarchy to be determined between different aspects of the same strata.

However, what is also required is the ability to made decisions based on worth when examining mechanisms from separate strata. Such as the concrete decision of weighing the economic interests of a region against the importance of an area to a specific species of worms. By considering worth as referring to the mechanisms that promote, as part of causal configurations, the flourishing of particular entities then the question here becomes one of competing entities and the impact of any activity on the relevant mechanisms that sustain those competing entities. As such, this understanding of worth does not provide an abstract model to be applied but rather directs the enquirer to the importance of addressing such a question through a concrete exploration of the totality of the situation, while providing the theoretical framework required to undertake such an enquiry. In principle there is no reason that any anthropocentric or non-anthropocentric structure and their competing claims could not be analysed in this way.

Such an understanding indicates nothing about the worth of humans. This raises the question of if the answers to these retroductive questions lead to a different conclusion than the egalitarian position found in the critical realist theories. The answer to this must be no. This is because all human beings are complex structures in their own right and so; while this model allows for a concrete enquiry to determine a hierarchy, that is specific to those circumstances, within a structure or when different types of structures have competing demands; this doesn't lead to a hierarchy between structures that are of the same type.

That this can be supported despite different people having different causal power in society can be illustrated by considering Archer's distinction between practices, positions and products. Archer states that individuals occupy positions in society that lead to them engaging in certain practices and that these practices lead to specific products. She uses the example of the difference in the wealth of nations between a society with production by skilled artisans and one that uses the division of labour to show how 'emergent properties are relational arising out of

combination (e.g. the division of labour from which high productivity emerges) where the latter is capable of acting back on the former (producing monotonous work), has its own causal powers (the differential wealth of nations), which are causally irreducible to the powers of its components (individual workers)' (1995:9). The individual workers in these circumstances can be seen to be component parts separate to the emergent properties of the social structure. And so while it can be understood that there are some roles that are important for the flourishing of a social structure, that doesn't mean that the person who is in that role are themselves more important or in any way have greater worth, as people, than others who undertake other roles.

The conclusion of this stage is an explanatory model not a complete answer to the retroductive questions that were asked in the three examples. This theoretical model appears to be able to support concrete enquiry, that would produce concrete explanations and thereby has the potential to both answer these questions in full and produce practical moral judgements. To draw this conclusion, the model needs to be explored further, through the subsequent stages of ethical naturalism. However, before comparing this model to alternative theories, it is necessary to step back to analytical separation and re-examine the separation of worth, values and facts on the basis of the substance of this model.

7.2 Value Statements and Cultural Values

The conclusion of the retroductive argument provides greater clarity regarding the nature of worth. This raises the question of if this clarity indicates anything about values. The analytical separation of the previous chapter, as shown in Figure 9 separates values as a category from both worth and valuing agents. But this category of values can be separated, on the basis of the understanding of worth contained here into value statement and cultural values. A value statement is the recognition of worth in the singular, or a specific hierarchy of worth in a specific situation, through the use of the cognitive paradigm of morality. Potentially any value statement may lead to actions being taken by a valuing agent.

Cultural values can be understood to emerge from the continuation of actions on the basis of this value statement, in that this act of valuing becomes part of a relatively enduing relationship. These emergent cultural values will form part of the cultural system and, as hearsay knowledge, have their own causal power separate

to original act of the observation of worth. This is shown in Figure 11. An example of this analytical separation is the distinction between the worth of pleasure; the value statements, '*x* is pleasurable' and 'pleasure is more important than *y*', and the cultural value 'pleasure is good'. The moral theory of Mill, that was discussed in Chapter Four, can be construed as an abstraction from the cultural value; where both the moral theory and the cultural value are then part of the cultural system.

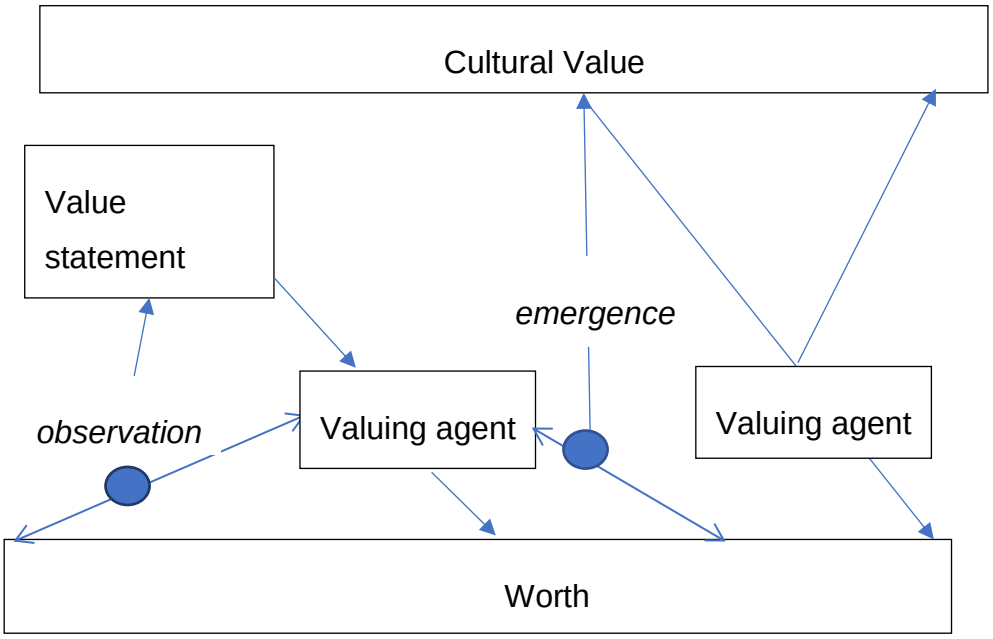

Figure 11. The Analytical Separation of Value Statement and Cultural Values

On this worth/value statement(s)/ Cultural value(s) distinction value statements, as statements about worth in the singular and the differing worth of different mechanisms, must be either true or false statements. This means that cultural values can be understood as, through reference to worth, true or false values. The recognition that a cultural value is a true value is more straightforward than trying to understand why a value is false. This is because there is more than one reason for a false cultural value to exist. The most obvious one is that false values may exist in society due to a misrecognition of worth. The limitations of naturalism make this more likely if the postulated worth is socially produced than naturally produced. A second reason is that a false cultural value may have emerged from a different relationship than the enduring application of a recognition of worth, such as economic or power relationships within a social structure. While a third reason may be that a relatively enduring cultural value may have emerged from a genuine and accurate recognition of worth in a structure, but that over time the structure

where it had worth ceases to exist in its original form, while the value system takes on a life of its own and continues to exist. A possible example of this may be dietary laws, in the form of religious imperatives, that could be traced back to a recognition of worth in an ancient subsistence society with no ability to refrigerate food but which cannot be subject to the same analysis in the current socio-historical specific circumstances.

This understanding of cultural values as true or false raises the question of the distinction between facts - verifiable statements of what is - and values - statements of what we 'ought' to do. In Chapter One it was seen how the position that no value judgements can ever have any empirical justification, so no value premises can be used in any argument was based on Hume's understanding of knowledge and causality; where all possible objects of knowledge are either matters of fact or the relation of ideas. This analytical separation of Cultural value(s)/value statement(s)/ worth -where worth is a reference to mechanisms that can be identified by their effects - draws no ontological distinction between mechanisms that maintain or promote structures and any other mechanisms. As such, on Bhaskar's understanding of knowledge and causation it can be argued that value statements are understood to be factual statements about worth and cultural values can be analysed to determine if they have empirical justification by determining if they align with worth. It should therefore be possible to use ethical naturalism to identify the factual basis for normative values.

7.3 Comparison and Concretization

The understanding of worth that is presented here must be understood in the context of the synthesized realist moral theory that was the conclusion of the last chapter. Together this provides an account of morality where morality is concerned with a universal aspect of reality that exists regardless of if we recognize that existence and attempt to explain it. This aspect of reality is all the specific properties that emerge from but are not reducible to relatively enduring structures and have causal power with regard to the flourishing of structures. As moral agents who care about the world around them, human beings are able to develop and use their cognitive facilities to identify these properties and subsequently articulate and act on the basis of this identification. Such interactions can over time subsequently lead to the production of true cultural values, which have causal

power independent of the original act of recognition – while false cultural values can also emerge over time for a variety of other reasons. These true or false cultural values have effects, through the process of socialisation, regarding making the choices and taking the actions that involve a moral component. This emergent conception of worth provides an overall model that appears to account for all the relevant considerations. However, that doesn't mean it provides a better account than other theories. As such, the next step is to compare it with other possible models to determine if these alternatives have greater explanatory power with respect to worth and its variation.

The first alternative is the position that all 'being' as being has worth. To assert this position is to consider that to discuss worth with respect to causal power is to misunderstand the nature of the worth, that it is argued, that all reality has. However, if worth is not a reference to causal power then its postulation provides no greater explanatory power than considering that value is a construct that is imposed on aspects of reality by valuing agents. As such, this approach can be argued to have less explanatory power in general as it makes no mention of the mechanisms and structures that need to be identified in any explanatory account of morality. In addition, in considering the specific examples, the equivalence of worth and being creates problems when trying to explain the worth of SDW. This is because a molecule of dirty water has more microbes and bacteria, and therefore more being than a molecule of clean water. So, either we are valuing it inappropriately or worth and being are unconnected. The worth of dirty water is not problematic for an emergent concept of worth; as SDW can be understood to have internal worth as a drop of water and external worth due to its causal power in a significantly more complex structure. If it is considered only as a drop of water, dirty water has more worth, if it is considered as a part of human society SDW has more worth.

While this suggests that the emergent account has more explanatory power, this consideration of being does suggest a refinement of the model. This is because human society doesn't depend on a single drop of SDW it is dependent on an ample supply of SDW. This recognition, in conjunction with the understanding of mechanisms working as tendencies, suggests that for a mechanism to have causal power with respect to structures, as well as with respect to events or other mechanisms, in some circumstances it is not just due to the causal power of a

single actuation of a mechanism; it is due to the quantity of entities with that causal power that results in impacts at a structural level.

A second alternative may be to argue that worth is a reference only to utility or value for humans. The problem with this approach, is that the example of the SSSI cannot be explained on such a model. While this might be due to a misrecognition of worth, in this individual example, the charge of misrecognition cannot account for all our interactions with nature.

A third alternative is to support the alignment of worth with mechanisms, but instead of considering that a hierarchy can only be determined in specific circumstances following concrete enquiry argue for a theoretical hierarchy on the basis that more complex structures have more worth than simple structures, as they contain their own worth and the worth of all the simple entities that they are made up of. This approach to a hierarchy was discussed and rejected in Chapter Three.

However, this third position does lead to the suggestion of a fourth alternative. That is to consider that a theoretical hierarchy of worth can be developed which is opposite to Collier's hierarchy of being. On this hierarchy the lower levels are understood to have more worth as they exist in themselves and as part of all the higher structures that they support. So, SDW has more worth than humanity, but within liquids it has more worth than maple syrup because of the being that it supports. Not only is this a reductive account of worth but it appears to be too simplistic an understanding; for while it could be seen that SDW has worth it cannot make sense for liquids as a category to all have more worth than biological entities. As such, both approaches to an abstract hierarchy that aligns with being has less explanatory power than the proposed model potentially has.

The other theories, discussed in this thesis, should also be considered to determine if they can offer an alternative account of worth. However, what should be clear from this analysis is that the model of worth described here, rather than being an alternative, can be understood as a component of the combined approach that was the conclusion of 6.1. As Sayer's account of flourishing as real was seen to be too abstract to provide an explanation of this aspect of reality. What this model allows is the analysis of specific situations using a conceptual understanding of mechanisms which enables the identification of which ones are

most relevant to this flourishing. While this understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic relationships and the need to consider the causal power of mechanisms as part of the totality, and not just by reference to specific events, provides an explanatory theory that is not in competition with, but sits within, Bhaskar's dialectical understanding of morality.

Consequently, this understanding can also be considered to sit within the understanding of reality that is found in the philosophy of meta-reality. It should be noted that while the explanation produced here, is compatible with the philosophy of meta-reality it is not reliant on the acceptance of meta-reality to make sense. As concrete explorations of causal power and the domain of the real can be undertaken for all aspects of reality using basic and dialectical critical realism.

From this it can be concluded that the understanding of worth as a reference to any emergent properties, that have the causal power to maintain or promote the flourishing of structures, and where this worth and its variation can be determined by concrete research appears to be a plausible explanation; that may provide a better or more comprehensive account than other theories. The next stage is to undertake the concretization and contextualization that would provide more certainty about, or lead to the revision of, this conclusion. This research should have the focus of identifying specific mechanisms that have causal power at the level of structures, and then determine if these effects maintain or promote the flourishing of those structures. The development of sufficient understanding will enable judgements to be made regarding the worth of different mechanisms that can then be compared to how those identified mechanisms are actually valued. This is research that will also test the explanatory power of this theoretical position. This practical research is beyond the scope of this thesis, However, some conclusions regarding this stage can be drawn.

The first is regarding the benefit of this theoretical enquiry. The aim of theoretical studies is to 'clear away obscurities and ambiguities impeding communication in social science' and to 'contribute to the development of concepts usable in concrete empirical analysis'. This development and refinement of 'theoretical language can lead to deeper understandings and explanations of social reality' (Danemark *et al* 1997:143). The main aim of this chapter has been to use the method of ethical naturalism to develop the interpretive framework provided by the realist theories of Bhaskar, Collier and Sayer; so that the theoretical concepts that

are used, in approaching moral questions, can be both understood in themselves and in their relationship to other concepts and so provide an explanatory account of morality that facilitates practical research. By understanding these theories in the way that I have described, practical research can be facilitated.

The second is that the difficulties of such practical research should not be underestimated. The amount of practical research that is required to produce a full and comprehensive morality, that would recognize the totality and be able to understand the flourishing of the parts within the flourishing of the whole is significant. Such concrete studies will not just identify the mechanisms of worth but may be able to refine this model so that a provisional broad hierarchy of actual existing worth could be proposed.

An issue here is that in considering worth as referring to mechanisms, this is a reference to both mechanisms in the natural and human sciences. And while in the natural sciences these mechanisms can be isolated and observed through experimental closure the same cannot be said for the human sciences where the method will be naturalism, with all its limits. These limits are even more pertinent in moral enquiry, as there are difficulties here that do not exist in other types of enquiry. This is because our emotional response to situations is part of the factual analysis and so the relational properties that Collier identifies, as sometimes making an emotion appropriate to it, are not separate aspects of enquiry. As such, the fact that we may feel angry, about human rights abuses or anxiety when considering the future of the planet is part of the concrete situation and the concrete analysis should indicate if these are rational or irrational emotions. The reason this is a difficulty is that as valuing agents it is easier for us to identify worth within systems which we are a part of, than systems where we are an observer; particularly if the worth has utility for us. This may lead to bias in our judgements. Bias that may also be masked by overcoded abduction. For this reason, while the development and use of empathy will assist with concrete enquiry, we need to be wise to emotional epistemic relativism.

While this is a theoretical model, the final question that needs to be considered is if any practical conclusions can be drawn from this model alone; both in general and specifically with respect to slavery, which has been used as an example throughout. In considering morality in general this needs to be approached within

the context of the logic of scientific discovery that was described in Chapter One; the starting point of which is the description of regularities. In morality those regularities will be a tendency for certain actions and events to produce suffering and ills. What has been shown here is that, an explanatory account can be developed, and may need to be developed, to create the genuine emancipatory change that is required. But this does not prevent the ability to make a moral judgement in many straightforward circumstances just on the basis of the observation and description of a regularity. For this reason, it can be seen that this model, within the context of the metatheory, does not prevent the ongoing use of observation and hearsay knowledge of worth to make moral judgements. In fact, rather than preventing such a course of action it explains it and promotes it.

The explanatory aspect is straightforward. The promoting aspect is because, what has been seen on this model is that, morality itself has worth. For the model provides an explanation of rationally directed emotions as a group of mechanisms that in themselves have worth. This is not just the worth of objectivity but also the worth of caring, as both of these attributes can be understood to have causal power; not just regarding events but also for the maintenance and flourishing of structures. Therefore, by enquiring into morality we can be understood to be using this caring and objectivity. On this model, exercising these causal powers both promotes the flourishing of the systems that we are part of and develops these moral attributes; and so by engaging in, and making simple moral judgements, we develop some of the skills and virtues required to undertake the more complex moral enquiries.

With regard to slavery, I have argued that on this model of worth the understanding of the worth of human beings must be based on the general capacities of agents as complex structures in their own right and not on the specific activity dependant aspects of social structures. As such, on this model the enslaving of another person is at least the denial, through the use of force and coercion, of aspects of agency to another human being for individual economic gain. It doesn’t require an in-depth explanatory account of the specific mechanisms at work here to recognise that this denial is a constraint on the flourishing of an individual and can never be anything other than wrong. Therefore, slavery, and the slave trade in all its forms, is wrong. But this conclusion is not the

in-depth understanding of the complexity of the issue of slavery that will allow the movement from a moral judgement to universal emancipation.

Other moral problems, that involve competing needs of different species or mechanisms from different stratum are significantly more complex. Concrete research is required just to create the descriptions that are required for moral judgement; either separately to or on the basis of the subsequent development of explanations. However, what should be clear from this thesis is that the metatheory of critical realism and the development of moral theorising through the use of that metatheory can provide the conceptual tools and ontological framework that allows the recognition of when an ‘ought’ statement can be made on the basis of direct observation and when specific situations require further enquiries into the depth of reality to be able to make those judgements.

7.4 Conclusion

In this thesis I have considered the theoretical application of the metatheory of critical realism to six different questions in morality. Provisional conclusions have been drawn in previous chapters. The conclusion of this chapter is that the theoretical model that is created by combining the existing approaches can be developed further. This is by postulating that worth is understood as the specific properties that emerge from, but are not reducible to, relatively enduring structures; that have causal power with regard to the flourishing of structures and that have this causal power separate to its recognition. Therefore, those provisional conclusions can be revisited from the perspective of this developed theoretical framework, that is capable of being tested for its explanatory power, and subsequently rejected or developed further, through the concretization and contextualization of practical research.

The first question was if it is possible to legitimately argue for a specific moral position or set of values. Negative answers to this question rely upon Hume’s understanding of what a fact is and how it differs from a value. Accepting the ontology of critical realism, and its understanding of causation, breaks down the logical separation of facts and values, and so provides a positive answer to this question. It is this answer that facilitates all the subsequent applications of critical realism to moral questions.

What can also be concluded is that the acceptance of this ontology facilitates enquiries into morality in other ways. This is because Bhaskar's understanding of causation, and his models of social reality, provide an analytical framework in which an enquiry into values can be undertaken. In addition, the logic of scientific discovery allows for the recognition that, while explanatory accounts can be produced through the application of the metatheory, it is, on many occasions, possible to make legitimate moral judgements on the basis of an observation of the regularity of harm. The use of this ontology can also lead, through the retroduction and analytical separation discussed in this chapter, to the conclusion that it is theoretically possible to identify emergent properties that support the flourishing of structures and that can be understood to be the factual basis for value statements and cultural values.

The second question was if moral positions can be understood to apply universally. Moral realism was found to be supportable by the transitive and intransitive distinction and so Bhaskar's account is more aligned with the metatheory than Elder-Vass's. This intransitive object of morality is postulated as value existing separate to its discovery. However, Bhaskar's account of this was seen to need further development. This is approached by the philosophy of meta-reality, where intrinsic value is clarified by the abstract statement that it is something all of reality has. Collier also provides an abstract statement of worth, separate to its discovery and refers to this pre-moral good as something that all of reality has. This was analytically separated from Bhaskar's account at the start of the last chapter and was revisited on the basis of the synthesised model in section two of this chapter. What can be concluded is that Collier's worth and Bhaskar's intrinsic value can be comprehended to be the same aspect of reality. This conception also aligns with Sayer's understanding of flourishing as the common referent for values. The conception of worth that is discussed in this chapter should be understood as a less abstract conception of this universal aspect of reality; as it considers that all relatively enduring structures have mechanisms which work as tendencies as part of causal configurations to maintain and promote their flourishing.

Bhaskar's conception of morality as emerging from the relationship of humans-in society-in nature was also seen to be underdeveloped in the aspects of moral agency and moral values. The Transformational Model of Social Activity indicated

that these had to be understood to have different causal power and needed to be addressed separately. This led to the third and fourth questions.

Collier's account of moral agency – as rationally directed emotions – was seen to be a well-developed explanation that required, for its acceptance, an understanding of worth as referring to emergent but variable properties. The model of worth developed here complements Collier's theory of moral agency in a way that facilitates his account. As part of that cognitive process, desires can be understood as the recognition of absence. But it is valuing agents making value judgements, through a cognitive process of rationally directed emotions, including care and empathy - not the adherence to a logical principle of universality - that drives valuing agents to seek to satisfy the desires or needs of others. The understanding of moral agency that is found in Bhaskar's meta-reality can viewed as an argument that we can and should develop beyond the dualism that is implicit in this approach. As such, PMR is not a rejection, but a potential development of, the moral agency that Collier describes.

The fourth question, was how can we understand morality as an aspect of society. This is predominately the moral values and concepts that we use but also includes moral theories; which, it was concluded, are justified by having greater explanatory power, with respect to the relevant phenomena, than other theories. Sayer's theory of existing moral values as being concerned with flourishing was seen to be a strong justifiable account with the potential to be developed further. The synthesised theory described here can be viewed as a restatement of Sayer's theory, using slightly different terminology, and a plausible development, in that, while it's conception of worth is still an abstract understanding, it will assist in concrete analysis. This is because it moves the enquiry from the abstract considerations of flourishing to the concrete study of what mechanisms in this causal configuration have effects at a structural level and what are those effects.

A confusion that may arise is when this search for these mechanisms examines the moral values that exist in society. This is because it can be argued that these moral values have worth. In examining these values, worth must be understood as referring to the causal power of these values at a structural level; This is analytically separate to the cause of these moral values. On this model, moral values emerge from the application of the value statements that are made on the basis of the recognition of any worth. These emergent cultural values and rules, as

part of their causal powers, react back on that relationship enhancing the relevant personal aspects of valuing agents - making them more moral - and changing social and natural reality on the basis of this valuing. This model must be understood as a transitive account of the universality of humans-in-society-in nature that recognises that different mechanisms have different worth and that this worth may vary in different socio-historical circumstances without promoting a relativistic conception of morality.

A secondary question that was raised by the discussions of these two chapters was where the boundaries lie regarding being eligible for moral consideration. A consequence of this conception of worth is that we must value the flourishing of beings other than ourselves. This justifies the extension of the boundaries of moral concern to more than just other moral agents. This is an approach to morality that is not just, like Bhaskar's meta-reality and Collier's theory, non-anthropocentric in the abstract; it also has the potential to be non-anthropocentric in its practical morality. I stress the potential here, as our dual roles of enquirer and valuing agents means that it is easier for us to recognize aspects of reality that have worth because they support the flourishing of valuing agents than worth that promotes the flourishing of other entities. As such, it has to be recognised that moral enquiry has to exercise significant caution to avoid the epistemic fallacy.

The understanding that the justification for a moral theory is its explanatory power, led to the fifth question of how an explanatory understanding of morality can be developed. By determining how Sayer, Bhaskar, Collier and Price describe ethical naturalism and considering those approaches and the overall approach of critical naturalism it was possible to identify a common ethical naturalist approach. This can be summarised as a version of critical naturalism. Where the variations are predominately around the role of emotions, empathy and the deliberation of findings.

By considering where ethical naturalism had been used in the development of the theories examined it has been possible to identify a combined realist moral theory. By then subsequently using aspects of ethical naturalism, this has been developed in its understanding of worth. This is a theoretical model that is capable of being tested for its explanatory power by practical research. On this basis, regardless of the explanatory power of this specific model, the strength of the epistemological aspect of the metatheory has to be recognized. As what has been shown is that it

is an approach that facilitates the development of explanatory accounts of morality, by reference to causal power. And it will also enable their refinement or rejection. Therefore, it can be concluded that it is possible to use the underlying metatheory of critical realism and social scientific methods to explore the concerns of morality and that such an enquiry may be assisted by a theoretical framework; that has been drawn from this examination of the application of critical realism to moral questions.

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