

Critical Synthetic Realism: An Introduction to the Philosophy of Januarius Asongu

Leonard Ekene *

Department of Philosophy, Saint Monica University,
Buea, Cameroon

*Corresponding Author

Leonard Ekene, MA, Department of Philosophy, Saint Monica University, Buea, Cameroon.

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Abstract

*Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) is the comprehensive philosophical framework developed by Januarius Asongu to address the epistemic, ethical, educational, and institutional crises of contemporary global society. This article offers the first systematic, journal-length exposition of CSR as an integrated philosophy encompassing metaphysics, epistemology, ethics, philosophy of science, philosophy of education, political philosophy, and philosophy of religion. Against the twin failures of epistemic absolutism and relativism, CSR affirms ontological realism, epistemic fallibilism, and moral realism while incorporating critical awareness of historical, social, and institutional mediation. Drawing primarily on *The Splendor of Truth: A Critical Philosophy of Knowledge and Global Agency*, this study reconstructs CSR as a truth-oriented yet corrigible philosophical system [1]. It argues that CSR represents a distinctive contribution to contemporary realism by grounding scientific inquiry, educational formation, ethical responsibility, and legitimate authority in a unified account of reality, knowledge, and human dignity.*

Keywords: Critical Synthetic Realism, Realism, Fallibilism, Philosophy of Science, Philosophy of Education, Moral Realism, Epistemology, Januarius Asongu

Part I: Origins, Intellectual Lineage, and Philosophical Motivation

1. Introduction

The early twenty-first century is marked by a paradoxical coexistence of unprecedented knowledge production and profound epistemic disorientation. Scientific capacity has expanded dramatically, educational institutions have multiplied, and access to information has become nearly universal. Yet public trust in science, education, and institutional authority has eroded. Truth is routinely relativized, expertise politicized, and moral norms reduced either to private preference or technocratic calculation.

Philosophical responses to this condition have tended toward two extremes. On one side, renewed forms of epistemic absolutism seek refuge in infallible authorities—scientific, ideological, or religious—often insulated from critique. On the other, postmodern and constructivist approaches dissolve truth into discourse, identity, or power, thereby undermining the very possibility of rational critique. Both responses, despite their opposition, share

a common failure: neither can sustain a robust account of truth, moral responsibility, and human agency simultaneously.

Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR), developed by the philosopher Januarius Asongu, arises as a systematic attempt to overcome this impasse. CSR does not merely propose a compromise between realism and critique; it reconstructs realism itself under conditions of epistemic fallibility, social mediation, and moral accountability. It affirms that reality exists independently of belief, that truth remains the regulative aim of inquiry, and that moral norms are objectively binding—while insisting that all human knowledge is provisional, corrigible, and institutionally mediated [1].

What distinguishes CSR from many contemporary realist positions is its **explicitly integrative scope**. CSR is not limited to metaphysics or epistemology alone, nor does it treat ethics, science, or education as secondary applications. Instead, it advances a unified philosophical architecture in which:

- **Metaphysics** grounds the reality to which inquiry is accountable;
- **Epistemology** explains how fallible agents can know that reality;
- **Ethics** articulates objective moral responsibility grounded in dignity;
- **Philosophy of science** defends empirical inquiry without scientism;
- **Philosophy of education** specifies how epistemic agency is formed;
- **Political philosophy** accounts for authority, legitimacy, and justice.

This breadth is not accidental. CSR begins from the diagnosis that many contemporary crises—scientific denialism, educational fragmentation, institutional corruption, and political illegitimacy—are symptoms of a deeper **epistemic fracture**, understood as the breakdown of truth-oriented, self-correcting systems of knowledge [1]. Repairing this fracture requires not isolated theories, but a coherent philosophical system capable of guiding inquiry, formation, and action.

2. Methodology and Sources

2.1. Methodological Approach

This article employs a **systematic reconstructive methodology**. Rather than treating Asongu's writings as discrete interventions across unrelated domains, the study interprets them as the progressive articulation of a single philosophical framework. The method combines:

- Textual reconstruction**, identifying core concepts across monographs, curricula, and articles;
- Conceptual synthesis**, clarifying underlying metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical commitments;
- Comparative analysis**, situating CSR within contemporary realist, critical, and normative traditions.

This approach aligns with CSR's own philosophical orientation, which rejects both purely exegetical scholarship and speculative abstraction in favor of truth-oriented synthesis grounded in real social and institutional problems.

2.2. Primary Sources

The principal source for CSR's metaphysical, epistemological, and ethical foundations is Asongu's monograph *The Splendor of Truth: A Critical Philosophy of Knowledge and Global Agency* [1]. This work articulates the diagnosis of epistemic fracture and introduces CSR as a response grounded in realism, fallibilism, and moral responsibility.

CSR's **philosophy of education** is most fully articulated in *Interdisciplinary Knowledge for Development and Dignity: A General Education and Capstone Core for the 21st-Century University*, which presents education as a process of epistemic reconstruction and human formation rather than mere skills training [2]. This text is treated here not as a curricular manual, but

as a philosophically substantive account of educational formation grounded in CSR.

Business ethics and corporate social responsibility are further developed in *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility in Practice* [3].

2.3. Scope and Limits

The present article is normative and philosophical rather than empirical. It does not test CSR through quantitative case studies, but evaluates it in terms of conceptual coherence, explanatory power, and philosophical plausibility. Educational, scientific, and institutional examples are used illustratively to demonstrate internal consistency rather than to provide policy prescriptions.

3. Intellectual Influences and Orientation

3.1. Introduction: Philosophy After Certainty and After Relativism

The philosophical condition of the early twenty-first century is marked by exhaustion. The grand certainties of classical metaphysics have fractured under the weight of scientific revolutions, while the radical skepticism of postmodernism has eroded confidence in truth itself. Between **dogmatic realism** and **epistemic relativism**, contemporary thought oscillates without stable ground. It is within this impasse that **Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR)** emerges as a deliberate attempt to recover realism without absolutism, critique without nihilism, and normativity without authoritarianism.

The philosophy of Januarius Jingwa (JJ) Asongu does not arise from abstract speculation alone. It is forged at the intersection of intellectual traditions and existential urgency: African postcolonial realities, theological struggles over truth and authority, psychological encounters with human suffering, and scientific debates over the nature of reality itself. CSR is therefore best understood not as a single disciplinary contribution but as a **synthetic philosophy of knowledge and agency**, oriented toward human flourishing under conditions of contingency.

This first part of the article reconstructs the **intellectual genealogy** of CSR. Rather than treating influences as mere citations, it demonstrates how diverse traditions are critically appropriated, transformed, and integrated into a coherent philosophical architecture.

3.2. African Philosophy and the Primacy of Relational Reality

One of the most foundational influences on Asongu's philosophy is **African relational ontology**. Unlike Western metaphysical individualism, many African philosophical traditions understand being as fundamentally **relational**, communal, and processual. Personhood is not an isolated substance but an achievement constituted through relationships, responsibility, and moral participation.

This worldview profoundly shapes CSR's rejection of atomistic metaphysics. Reality, in CSR, is never encountered in isolation but

always under conditions—historical, social, epistemic, and moral. This insight resonates with African communitarian philosophy while avoiding romantic essentialism. CSR does not idealize tradition; it subjects it to critical scrutiny.

Importantly, African philosophy also contributes to CSR's ethical orientation. Knowledge is not value-neutral; it carries moral consequences for the community. False beliefs are not merely intellectual errors but **social harms**, sustaining injustice, superstition, and fatalism. This conviction becomes central to CSR's later critique of epistemic underdevelopment and institutional corruption.

3.3. Classical Realism: Aristotle, Aquinas, and the Adequation of Intellect and Reality

CSR stands firmly within the **realist tradition**, particularly the Aristotelian-Thomistic claim that truth consists in the *adequation of intellect and reality*. From Aristotle, Asongu inherits the conviction that the world is intelligible and that reason, though finite, is ordered toward truth. From Aquinas, he inherits the integration of metaphysics, epistemology, and ethics into a single vision of rational life.

However, CSR departs from classical realism at a crucial point: **certainty**. While affirming that reality exists independently of belief, CSR rejects the idea that the human intellect can ever possess reality exhaustively or infallibly. Classical realism is thus **critically transformed** into a fallibilist realism.

This transformation allows CSR to preserve metaphysical objectivity while remaining open to scientific revision, cultural plurality, and historical contingency. Reality is stable, but our access to it is provisional.

3.4. Karl Popper and Critical Rationalism: Fallibility as Virtue

Among modern philosophers, **Karl Popper** exerts perhaps the most decisive influence on CSR. Popper's critical rationalism—especially his emphasis on **falsifiability**, conjecture, and error-correction—provides CSR with its epistemic engine.

For Asongu, Popper's insight that knowledge grows through the elimination of error rather than accumulation of certainty is revolutionary. It reframes ignorance not as shame but as opportunity, and doubt not as weakness but as intellectual integrity. CSR adopts this stance fully: all knowledge claims are **tentative**, open to revision, and morally accountable.

Yet CSR goes beyond Popper by integrating ethics. While Popper focused primarily on scientific method and open society, CSR insists that epistemic irresponsibility is also a **moral failure**. To propagate falsehood knowingly—or to refuse critical testing—is to participate in oppression.

3.5. Liberation Theology: Truth as a Moral Imperative

Another decisive influence on CSR is **liberation theology**, particularly its insistence that truth is inseparable from justice.

From this tradition, Asongu inherits the conviction that ideas are never neutral: they either liberate or enslave.

However, CSR also emerges as a **critical response** to liberation theology's epistemic limitations. While morally powerful, liberation theology sometimes relied on ideological certainty or unexamined metaphysical assumptions. CSR seeks to preserve liberation theology's ethical urgency while subjecting its claims to rigorous epistemic discipline.

This synthesis yields one of CSR's core theses: **epistemic error is a form of injustice**. Superstition, fatalism, and conspiracy thinking are not merely cultural phenomena; they are mechanisms of domination that disable agency and excuse exploitation.

3.6. Counseling Psychology and the Therapeutic Dimension of Truth

Asongu's training and practice in **counseling psychology** add a distinctive dimension to CSR: an understanding of truth as **therapeutic**. In clinical contexts, distorted beliefs generate anxiety, paralysis, and suffering. Healing occurs not through comfort alone but through insight—often painful, always liberating.

This experience reinforces CSR's rejection of pragmatic relativism. A belief's usefulness or emotional appeal does not make it true. On the contrary, false but comforting beliefs often prolong harm. CSR therefore introduces what Asongu terms the **axiological distinction**: truth must never be evaluated solely by its psychological or political utility.

At the same time, psychology contributes to CSR's compassion. Error is often rooted in fear, trauma, and social conditioning. Critical inquiry must therefore be paired with empathy. Philosophy becomes, in this sense, a **therapy of civilization**.

3.7. Science, Quantum Reality, and Conditional Ontology

CSR's metaphysical originality becomes especially visible in Asongu's engagement with **quantum mechanics** [4]. Classical realism struggled with quantum phenomena that resist simple object-property models. Instrumentalism, by contrast, abandoned ontology altogether.

CSR offers a third path: **conditional realism**. Entities are real, but their properties manifest under specific structural and observational conditions. Reality is neither created by the observer nor fully independent of epistemic context.

This insight becomes a general metaphysical principle within CSR: across physical, social, and moral domains, reality is **stratified and conditional**, not illusory. This allows CSR to integrate scientific realism with social constructivist insights without collapsing into relativism.

3.8. Lived Experience: Postcolonialism, Diaspora, and Institutional Failure

Finally, CSR is deeply shaped by **lived experience**—particularly

within postcolonial African societies and diasporic contexts. Asongu's philosophy is animated by direct encounters with epistemic dependency, educational collapse, political corruption, and religious authoritarianism.

These realities reveal that the greatest obstacles to development are often not material but **epistemic**. When societies cannot distinguish truth from myth, evidence from rumor, or responsibility from fate, no amount of resources suffices.

CSR thus emerges as a philosophy of **global agency**. Its ultimate concern is not abstract knowledge but the conditions under which individuals and societies can think, choose, and act responsibly.

4. Conclusion to Part I: Philosophy as Moral Vocation

Critical Synthetic Realism is best understood as the convergence of multiple traditions disciplined by a single question: *How can truth remain possible—and morally binding—in a fragmented world?* Part I has shown that CSR is neither derivative nor eclectic. It is a principled synthesis forged through critique, experience, and ethical commitment.

In **Part II**, the article will turn to the **core metaphysical architecture of CSR**, developing its theory of conditional reality, stratified ontology, and causation in detail.

CSR emerges from a convergence of multiple philosophical traditions rather than a single lineage. It draws on classical realism for its ontology of truth, critical rationalism for its epistemic fallibilism, liberation thought for its concern with epistemic injustice, and contemporary philosophy of science for its rejection of reductionism and scientism. However, CSR's originality lies not in borrowing these elements independently, but in **synthesizing them into a unified framework** capable of addressing knowledge, education, ethics, and power simultaneously.

Part II: Metaphysics of Critical Synthetic Realism

5. The Necessity of Metaphysics in a Post-Critical Age

Metaphysics has often been declared obsolete in modern philosophy, either dismissed as speculative excess or reduced to linguistic analysis. Yet Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) begins from the conviction that **metaphysical commitments are unavoidable**. Every epistemology presupposes an account of what exists; every ethics presupposes an account of what matters; every political theory presupposes an account of persons, power, and reality. The question is therefore not whether metaphysics is present, but whether it is **explicit, coherent, and accountable**.

CSR argues that many contemporary crises—scientific denialism, educational fragmentation, ethical relativism, and political illegitimacy—are rooted in **unexamined or incoherent metaphysical assumptions** [1]. When reality is treated as either transparently given or entirely constructed, philosophy oscillates between dogmatism and nihilism. CSR seeks to recover metaphysics without returning to pre-critical certainty, by articulating a realist ontology compatible with fallibilism, mediation, and critique.

6. Ontological Realism: Reality as Mind-Independent but Knowable

6.1. The Core Realist Commitment

At its foundation, CSR affirms **ontological realism**: reality exists independently of human belief, language, or social agreement. This claim is minimal but decisive. Without it, the distinction between truth and error collapses, and inquiry loses its normative orientation.

However, CSR carefully distinguishes realism from naïve realism. Reality is not immediately or exhaustively accessible to human cognition. The independence of reality does not imply epistemic transparency. Instead, reality constrains inquiry indirectly, through resistance, consequence, and correction [1].

This realist commitment grounds CSR's rejection of both radical constructivism and epistemic absolutism. Constructivism errs by collapsing reality into discourse; absolutism errs by denying the mediated and provisional character of knowledge. CSR affirms reality **without denying mediation**.

6.2. Reality as Normative Constraint

A distinctive feature of CSR's realism is its emphasis on **constraint**. Reality matters not merely because it exists, but because it **imposes limits** on belief, action, and institution-building. False beliefs eventually fail—technologically, morally, or politically—because they misalign with how things are.

This notion of constraint underlies CSR's critique of ideologies, scientism, and institutional self-legitimation. Power can override reality temporarily, but it cannot abolish it. In the long run, misalignment produces breakdown.

7. Conditional Reality: Against Naïve Objectivism

7.1. The Meaning of "Conditional"

CSR introduces the concept of **conditional reality** to avoid two metaphysical errors: the assumption that reality is unconditioned in its appearance, and the claim that it is merely constructed. To say that reality is conditional is not to say that it is dependent for its existence, but that its **manifestation and intelligibility depend on conditions**.

Conditions include biological capacities, conceptual frameworks, technological instruments, social institutions, and historical contexts. These conditions shape how reality is encountered and understood, without creating reality *ex nihilo* [1].

7.2. Conditionality Without Relativism

CSR's account of conditionality resists relativism by preserving a distinction between *conditions of access* and *conditions of existence*. While knowledge is conditioned, reality is not reducible to those conditions. This distinction allows CSR to acknowledge diversity of perspectives without dissolving truth into plurality.

For example, scientific theories, moral traditions, and educational paradigms may differ, yet they remain accountable to the same

reality insofar as their claims succeed or fail in practice.

8. Stratified Ontology and Levels of Reality

8.1. The Rejection of Reductionism

CSR advances a **stratified ontology**, according to which reality is composed of multiple irreducible levels. Reductionist metaphysics—whether materialist, economic, or linguistic—fail by collapsing higher-order phenomena into lower-level explanations.

CSR identifies at least five analytically distinct strata:

- i. **Physical reality** (natural processes and causal laws)
- ii. **Biological reality** (life, emergence, adaptation)
- iii. **Psychological reality** (consciousness, intention, meaning)
- iv. **Social-institutional reality** (norms, roles, power structures)
- v. **Moral reality** (obligation, dignity, responsibility)

Each level depends on the lower ones but cannot be fully explained by them. Moral obligation, for example, presupposes biological life but is not reducible to it.

8.2. Emergence and Causal Pluralism

CSR endorses **emergence** as a metaphysical principle: higher-level properties arise from lower-level conditions yet possess genuine causal efficacy. This allows CSR to affirm both natural causality and human agency without contradiction.

Causal explanation is therefore plural rather than monolithic. Physical causation does not exhaust explanation, nor does it eliminate moral responsibility. This pluralism undergirds CSR's rejection of deterministic accounts of human behavior.

9. Human Persons as Ontologically Significant Agents

9.1. Agency as a Real Feature of the World

CSR treats human agency as a **real ontological feature**, not an epiphenomenon. Persons are not merely nodes in causal chains but agents capable of understanding reasons, evaluating norms, and acting intentionally.

This claim has far-reaching implications. If agency is real, then responsibility is meaningful; if responsibility is meaningful, ethics cannot be reduced to preference or utility.

9.2. Relational Ontology of Personhood

CSR further affirms a **relational ontology of the person**. Persons are constituted through relationships—social, linguistic, moral—without losing individual dignity or agency. This position avoids both atomistic individualism and collectivist absorption.

Relational ontology supports CSR's later emphasis on epistemic justice, educational formation, and relational accountability in institutions.

10. Moral Reality as Ontologically Grounded

10.1. Moral Facts Without Moral Dogmatism

CSR affirms the existence of **moral facts**: some actions are

wrong regardless of belief or convention. Torture, deception, and systematic dehumanization are not wrong because societies disapprove of them; societies disapprove of them because they violate moral reality.

However, CSR sharply distinguishes moral realism from moral infallibilism. Moral knowledge is fallible and historically mediated, yet moral truth remains objective [1].

10.2. Dignity as a Metaphysical Property

Human dignity functions in CSR as a **boundary condition** of moral reality. It constrains permissible action and institutional design. Dignity is not conferred by law or performance; it is recognized through ethical insight.

This metaphysical grounding of dignity prepares the way for CSR's ethical and political theory.

11. Institutions as Real but Fragile Entities

11.1. Institutional Ontology

CSR treats institutions—schools, states, churches, corporations—as **real social entities** with causal power. They are not reducible to individual intentions, yet they depend on collective recognition and epistemic legitimacy.

Institutions shape reality by shaping incentives, norms, and access to knowledge. Their metaphysical status is therefore intermediate: real but fragile.

11.2. Epistemic Dependence of Institutions

A key metaphysical insight of CSR is that institutions depend for their stability on **epistemic credibility**. When institutions lose alignment with reality—by denying evidence, suppressing inquiry, or instrumentalizing truth—they enter a process of decay.

This insight links metaphysics directly to politics and education.

12. Freedom, Determination, and Moral Responsibility

CSR rejects the false dichotomy between determinism and freedom. Conditions constrain action, but they do not eliminate agency. Freedom, in CSR, is **conditioned but real**.

This account allows CSR to affirm moral responsibility without denying structural constraint. Persons act within limits, yet remain accountable for how they navigate those limits.

13. Metaphysics as Moral Responsibility

CSR ultimately reconceives metaphysics as a **moral enterprise**. To affirm what is real is to accept responsibility for aligning belief, action, and institution with that reality. Denial of reality—through superstition, ideology, or technocracy—is therefore not metaphysically neutral but ethically culpable.

Metaphysics, in CSR, is not abstract speculation but the ground of accountability.

14. Conclusion to Part II

This section has articulated the metaphysical foundations of Critical Synthetic Realism: ontological realism, conditional manifestation, stratified reality, emergent agency, and objective moral constraint. These commitments provide the necessary ground for CSR's epistemology, philosophy of science, and philosophy of education.

Part III will develop CSR's **epistemology and philosophy of science**, including its critique of scientism and its account of truth, fallibilism, and the conditions of trustworthy inquiry.

Part III: Epistemology and Philosophy of Science

15. Epistemology After Certainty and After Relativism

Epistemology in the late modern period is marked by a profound instability. Classical foundationalism, with its search for indubitable starting points, has been widely discredited, while postmodern critiques have eroded confidence in truth as a regulative ideal. The result is an intellectual climate in which knowledge oscillates between technocratic assertion and skeptical resignation. Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) arises as a direct response to this condition.

CSR rejects the assumption—shared by both absolutism and relativism—that knowledge must either be infallible or illusory. Instead, it advances a **fallibilist realist epistemology**, according to which truth exists independently of belief, but human access to truth is always provisional, mediated, and corrigible [1]. This position allows CSR to affirm both the normativity of truth and the necessity of critique.

The epistemological task of CSR is therefore twofold: first, to explain how knowledge can be truth-oriented under conditions of fallibility; and second, to show how scientific inquiry can be defended without collapsing into scientism or epistemic authoritarianism.

16. Fallibilist Realism and the Nature of Truth

16.1. Truth as Correspondence Without Transparency

CSR affirms a correspondence theory of truth: beliefs are true insofar as they correspond to reality. However, correspondence is not understood as direct mirroring or transparent access. Rather, correspondence is **indirectly established** through patterns of success, resistance, prediction, and correction over time [1].

Truth, on this account, functions as a **regulative ideal** rather than a possession. Inquiry aims at truth even though it never fully secures it. This preserves the meaningfulness of error, learning, and improvement.

16.2. Fallibilism as Epistemic Virtue

Fallibilism in CSR is not merely a descriptive claim about human limitation; it is an **epistemic virtue**. To acknowledge fallibility is to remain open to correction, evidence, and dialogue. By contrast, claims to infallibility—whether scientific, ideological, or religious—signal epistemic closure.

CSR therefore treats epistemic humility as a condition of rationality rather than its negation. Knowledge advances not by eliminating doubt but by disciplining it.

17. The Synthetic Model of Justification

17.1. Against Monistic Criteria of Knowledge

CSR rejects epistemological models that privilege a single criterion of justification, such as empirical verification, logical coherence, consensus, or pragmatic success. Each criterion captures an important dimension of rationality, yet none is sufficient on its own.

Empiricism without coherence produces fragmented data. Coherence without correspondence yields internally consistent fictions. Consensus without truth legitimizes collective error. Pragmatism without normativity collapses truth into utility.

17.2. Synthetic Justification

CSR advances a **synthetic model of justification**, according to which warranted belief emerges from the interaction of multiple criteria:

- **Empirical engagement** with reality
- **Conceptual coherence** within a broader explanatory framework
- **Practical consequence** in action and application
- **Critical revisability** in light of counterevidence

Justification is therefore dynamic rather than static. Beliefs remain warranted only so long as they survive this ongoing process of synthesis and correction [1].

18. Knowledge as a Moral Practice

18.1. Epistemic Responsibility

A distinctive feature of CSR is its insistence that epistemology cannot be morally neutral. Knowing is an activity with consequences, and therefore with ethical significance. To hold false beliefs innocently is human; to persist in falsehood in the face of evidence is culpable.

CSR thus introduces the concept of **epistemic responsibility**: the obligation to seek truth, to resist distortion, and to correct error when possible. This responsibility applies not only to individuals but also to institutions that shape knowledge production and dissemination.

18.2. Epistemic Injustice

When social structures systematically deny individuals or communities access to reliable knowledge, CSR identifies this as **epistemic injustice**. Such injustice undermines agency by depriving persons of the informational conditions necessary for rational choice [1].

Educational deprivation, misinformation, censorship, and ideological manipulation are therefore not merely social problems but ethical failures grounded in epistemology.

19. Science as Truth-Oriented Inquiry

19.1. Defending Scientific Realism

CSR affirms **scientific realism**: well-supported scientific theories aim to describe real structures and processes of the world, even when their descriptions remain incomplete or revisable. Scientific success would be unintelligible if theories did not correspond, at least approximately, to reality.

This position rejects both instrumentalism, which treats theories as mere predictive tools, and radical skepticism, which denies that science yields genuine knowledge.

19.2. The Social Mediation of Science

At the same time, CSR rejects the myth of science as a purely neutral or context-free enterprise. Scientific inquiry is socially embedded, institutionally funded, and historically situated. These conditions shape research agendas, methodologies, and interpretations.

Acknowledging social mediation does not undermine realism; rather, it clarifies the conditions under which realism must be defended critically rather than naively.

20. The Critique of Scientism

20.1. Scientism Defined

CSR distinguishes sharply between **science** and **scientism**. Science is a disciplined mode of inquiry oriented toward empirical truth. Scientism is the ideological claim that scientific methods exhaust all legitimate knowledge and that non-scientific forms of understanding are inherently irrational or meaningless [2].

Scientism is not an extension of science but a philosophical stance masquerading as scientific necessity.

20.2. Epistemic and Ethical Limits of Scientism

CSR argues that scientism commits a category error by applying methods suited to empirical investigation to domains governed by normativity, meaning, and value. Moral obligation, educational purpose, political legitimacy, and religious meaning cannot be reduced to empirical description without distortion.

Moreover, scientism undermines its own epistemic foundations by denying the normative commitments—truthfulness, responsibility, openness—that scientific practice presupposes.

21. Trust, Authority, and Science

21.1. Trust as Epistemic Achievement

Public trust in science cannot be commanded or engineered; it must be **earned** through transparency, accountability, and truthfulness. CSR treats trust as an epistemic achievement rather than a public relations outcome.

When scientific institutions suppress dissent, exaggerate certainty, or align too closely with political or economic power, they undermine their own credibility.

21.2. Scientific Authority and Fallibilism

CSR redefines scientific authority as **provisional and corrigible**. Authority derives not from infallibility but from disciplined openness to correction. This model resists both anti-scientific populism and technocratic authoritarianism.

22. Knowledge, Power, and Institutional Mediation

CSR emphasizes that knowledge and power are intertwined but not identical. Power can distort knowledge, but it cannot create truth. Conversely, truth without institutional support is fragile.

Institutions such as universities, research bodies, and educational systems therefore bear a dual responsibility: to protect inquiry from distortion and to remain accountable to reality rather than ideology.

23. Epistemology and the Conditions of Education

CSR's epistemology has direct implications for education. If knowledge is fallible, mediated, and morally significant, then education cannot be reduced to information transfer or skills acquisition. It must instead cultivate **epistemic agency**—the capacity to inquire, evaluate evidence, recognize error, and revise belief.

This insight prepares the way for CSR's philosophy of education, developed in the next section.

24. Conclusion to Part III

This section has articulated the epistemological and scientific foundations of Critical Synthetic Realism: fallibilist realism, synthetic justification, epistemic responsibility, scientific realism without scientism, and institutional accountability. Knowledge, in CSR, is neither absolute nor arbitrary; it is a truth-oriented, morally significant practice embedded in social structures.

Part IV will develop CSR's **philosophy of education**, showing how epistemic agency, moral formation, and interdisciplinary integration are cultivated through educational institutions.

Part IV: Philosophy of Education — Epistemic Agency, Formation, and Dignity

25. Education as a Philosophical Problem

Education is often treated as a technical or administrative enterprise rather than a philosophical one. Curriculum design, assessment metrics, and employability outcomes dominate contemporary discourse, while foundational questions about the purpose of education are marginalized. Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) challenges this reduction by insisting that education is fundamentally an **epistemic and moral project**.

CSR begins from the premise that societies reproduce not only skills but also **ways of knowing, standards of truth, and modes of agency**. When educational systems fail, they do not merely produce under-skilled graduates; they generate epistemic dependency, moral disorientation, and institutional fragility. Education, therefore, becomes a decisive site for addressing the

epistemic fracture diagnosed earlier in this article [1].

From a CSR perspective, education must be understood as the **formation of epistemic agents** capable of truth-oriented inquiry, ethical judgment, and responsible participation in social institutions.

26. The Ontological and Epistemological Foundations of Education

26.1. Education and Ontological Realism

CSR's philosophy of education is grounded in ontological realism. If reality exists independently of belief, then education cannot be reduced to socialization into prevailing narratives or competencies alone. Learners must be formed to engage with **a reality that resists distortion**, rather than merely to navigate symbolic systems.

This realist commitment differentiates CSR sharply from constructivist pedagogies that treat knowledge as entirely socially produced. While CSR acknowledges the social mediation of knowledge, it insists that education must orient learners toward truth, not merely toward consensus.

26.2. Fallibilism and the Pedagogy of Inquiry

CSR's epistemic fallibilism entails that education should not aim at indoctrination or final certainty. Instead, it should cultivate **disciplined openness**, intellectual humility, and the capacity for self-correction. Teaching is therefore not the transmission of unquestionable content but the initiation of learners into practices of inquiry, critique, and revision.

This pedagogical stance aligns with CSR's broader rejection of epistemic authoritarianism across institutions.

27. Epistemic Agency as the Central Educational Aim

27.1. Defining Epistemic Agency

CSR defines **epistemic agency** as the capacity to:

- i. Ask meaningful questions about reality
- ii. Evaluate evidence and arguments
- iii. Recognize error and revise belief
- iv. Act responsibly on the basis of warranted knowledge

Education that fails to cultivate these capacities produces epistemic dependency rather than empowerment.

27.2. Education and Human Dignity

Epistemic agency is inseparable from human dignity. To deny individuals access to the tools of inquiry is to treat them as passive recipients rather than responsible agents. CSR therefore frames education as a **dignity-preserving practice**, not merely an economic investment.

This insight underlies Asongu's critique of educational systems that prioritize credentialism, rote learning, or narrow technical training at the expense of critical understanding [2].

28. Interdisciplinarity as Epistemic Necessity

28.1. The Limits of Disciplinary Silos

CSR rejects the fragmentation of knowledge into isolated disciplines as epistemically and socially damaging. While specialization is necessary, siloed education prevents learners from grasping the complex, multi-layered nature of real-world problems.

Economic inequality, climate change, technological governance, and public health crises cannot be understood within a single disciplinary framework. Education that remains disciplinary-bound fosters intellectual myopia.

28.2. Interdisciplinary Synthesis and Reality

The *Interdisciplinary Knowledge for Development and Dignity* framework articulates interdisciplinarity not as curricular eclecticism but as **synthetic reasoning oriented toward reality** [2]. Disciplines provide partial perspectives; synthesis aims at coherence and correspondence across them.

This approach mirrors CSR's epistemological commitment to synthetic justification and prepares learners for responsible decision-making in complex contexts.

29. General Education and the Formation of Judgment

29.1. Beyond Skills and Employability

CSR strongly criticizes the reduction of higher education to workforce preparation. While employability is a legitimate concern, it cannot define the purpose of education without undermining democratic agency and ethical responsibility.

General education, in CSR, serves to cultivate **judgment**—the capacity to evaluate claims, weigh evidence, and act under conditions of uncertainty.

29.2. Core Domains of Formation

The general education core proposed by includes:

- Logical and quantitative reasoning
- Scientific literacy and critical evaluation of evidence
- Ethical reasoning and moral philosophy
- Historical consciousness and civic responsibility
- Digital literacy and epistemic responsibility

These domains are not value-neutral competencies; they are **conditions of responsible agency** [2].

30. Education, Development, and Epistemic Justice

30.1. Education as Development of Agency

CSR reconceptualizes development as the expansion of epistemic and moral agency rather than mere economic growth. Educational deprivation is therefore a primary driver of underdevelopment, even where material resources are present.

This perspective challenges development models that prioritize infrastructure without addressing epistemic capacity.

30.2. Epistemic Justice in Postcolonial Contexts

CSR's philosophy of education is especially attentive to postcolonial realities, where educational systems often reproduce epistemic dependency on external authorities. CSR does not reject global knowledge, but insists on **critical appropriation rather than passive consumption**.

Education becomes a site of epistemic justice when learners are empowered to evaluate, adapt, and extend knowledge rather than merely import it.

31. Technology, Digital Learning, and Epistemic Risk

31.1. Technology as Pedagogical Amplifier

CSR treats educational technology as an amplifier rather than a substitute for pedagogy. Digital tools can enhance access and efficiency, but they can also magnify epistemic risks—misinformation, superficial learning, and algorithmic bias.

31.2. Critical Digital Literacy

CSR therefore emphasizes **critical digital literacy**: the ability to assess sources, understand algorithmic mediation, and resist epistemic manipulation. This literacy is a moral as well as cognitive requirement in an information-saturated environment.

32. Assessment, Evaluation, and the Limits of Measurement

CSR is skeptical of over-reliance on standardized assessment as a proxy for learning. Measurement can support accountability, but it cannot capture the full development of epistemic agency, judgment, or moral reasoning.

Education that equates learning with measurable outputs risks distorting its own aims.

33. The University as an Epistemic Institution

33.1. The University's Moral Role

CSR treats the university as an **epistemic institution** with moral obligations. Its legitimacy depends on its commitment to truth, intellectual freedom, and responsible formation.

When universities subordinate inquiry to ideology, market pressures, or political loyalty, they undermine their own foundation.

33.2. Academic Freedom and Responsibility

Academic freedom is indispensable, but it is not license. CSR frames freedom as inseparable from responsibility: scholars must remain accountable to evidence, reason, and moral consequence.

34. Education and Democratic Life

CSR links education directly to democratic viability. Citizens incapable of critical inquiry are vulnerable to manipulation, populism, and technocratic domination. Education that cultivates epistemic agency therefore serves as a **precondition of democratic legitimacy**.

35. Conclusion to Part IV

This section has reconstructed Critical Synthetic Realism as a

coherent philosophy of education grounded in ontological realism, epistemic fallibilism, interdisciplinarity, and human dignity. Education, in CSR, is not a peripheral application of philosophy but a central mechanism through which epistemic agency and moral responsibility are formed.

Part V will develop CSR's **ethical theory**, articulating its account of dignity, moral realism, and responsibility across individual and institutional contexts.

Part V: Ethics — Moral Realism, Dignity, and Responsibility

36. Why Ethics Must Be Grounded in Reality

Ethics in contemporary philosophy is frequently treated as either a matter of subjective preference or a tool for managing outcomes. Utilitarian calculations, procedural compliance, and risk-based frameworks dominate ethical discourse in public policy, corporate governance, and technology regulation. While these approaches offer practical guidance, they often lack **ontological grounding**, rendering moral obligation contingent and negotiable.

Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) rejects this thin conception of ethics. It begins from the premise that if reality is mind-independent and if human beings are genuine agents embedded in moral relations, then ethics must be **truth-oriented** rather than preference-based. Moral claims are not merely expressive; they purport to describe what *ought* to be the case in light of what is [1].

CSR therefore advances a form of **critical moral realism**: moral truths exist independently of belief or convention, yet moral knowledge remains fallible, historically mediated, and subject to correction.

37. Moral Realism Without Moral Infallibilism

37.1. The Case for Moral Realism

CSR affirms that some actions are objectively wrong regardless of cultural approval or institutional endorsement. Practices such as torture, systematic deception, and dehumanization violate moral reality even when normalized. Without moral realism, concepts such as injustice, abuse, or responsibility lose their normative force.

This position is not an appeal to intuition alone but a consequence of CSR's metaphysics. If human persons are real agents with dignity, then moral constraints are not optional constructs but **features of reality**.

37.2. Fallibility and Moral Knowledge

CSR simultaneously rejects moral infallibilism. Moral understanding develops historically, often through error, struggle, and critique. Moral realism does not imply that any tradition or institution possesses final moral certainty.

This distinction allows CSR to sustain strong moral critique while resisting authoritarian closure. Moral truth constrains inquiry; it does not terminate it.

38. Human Dignity as a Metaphysical Constraint

38.1. Dignity as Ontologically Grounded

At the core of CSR's ethics lies the concept of **human dignity**. Dignity is not conferred by law, performance, or social status. It is grounded in the ontological reality of persons as agents capable of understanding reasons, bearing responsibility, and participating in moral life.

Because dignity is ontologically grounded, it functions as a **boundary condition** on permissible action. No amount of utility, efficiency, or consensus can justify its violation.

38.2. Instrumentalization and Moral Failure

CSR identifies instrumentalization—the treatment of persons as mere means—as a fundamental moral failure. Instrumentalization occurs not only in overt coercion but also in bureaucratic systems, technological mediation, and institutional practices that subordinate persons to abstract goals.

Ethical evaluation in CSR therefore extends beyond intentions to examine **structural conditions** that enable or normalize dignity violations.

39. Ethics as Truth-Oriented Practice

39.1. Against Pure Consequentialism

CSR rejects the reduction of ethics to outcome optimization. While consequences matter, they cannot exhaust moral evaluation. Some actions are wrong because they misalign with moral reality, not merely because they produce undesirable outcomes.

This critique is especially important in contexts such as technological governance, where harmful practices are often justified through probabilistic risk-benefit analysis.

39.2. Moral Correspondence

Just as beliefs can correspond or fail to correspond to reality, actions and institutions can correspond or fail to correspond to moral reality. Ethical reasoning, in CSR, asks whether practices align with dignity, responsibility, and agency.

Ethics is therefore not merely prescriptive but **descriptive-normative**: it describes the moral structure of reality and prescribes action accordingly.

40. Individual Responsibility Under Conditions of Constraint

40.1. Conditioned Freedom

CSR affirms that human freedom is **conditioned but real**. Social structures, economic pressures, and cultural norms constrain action, but they do not eliminate agency. Individuals remain responsible for how they navigate constraints.

This position avoids both moral voluntarism and moral fatalism. Responsibility is real without being absolute.

40.2. Moral Courage and Accountability

CSR emphasizes **moral courage** as an ethical virtue: the

willingness to act in accordance with moral truth despite social or institutional pressure. Moral responsibility increases, rather than diminishes, under conditions of uncertainty and risk.

41. Institutional Ethics and Structural Responsibility

41.1. Institutions as Moral Agents

CSR treats institutions as morally significant entities. While institutions are not persons, they possess structured agency: they shape incentives, distribute power, and produce large-scale consequences. Ethical evaluation must therefore extend beyond individual actors to institutional design and practice.

41.2. Responsibility Beyond Compliance

CSR sharply distinguishes ethical responsibility from regulatory compliance. An institution may comply with rules while perpetuating injustice. Ethical legitimacy depends on **moral correspondence**, not merely procedural adherence.

This insight underlies CSR's critique of ethics-washing in corporate, scientific, and technological contexts [3].

42. Corporate Responsibility and Moral Reality

CSR provides a philosophical foundation for corporate responsibility grounded in moral realism rather than strategic calculation. Corporations exercise real power and therefore bear real moral obligations. Responsibility arises from impact, not intent.

Instrumental approaches that treat ethics as reputation management invert moral priority. In CSR, legitimacy flows from ethical alignment, not vice versa.

43. Ethics, Knowledge, and Epistemic Responsibility

CSR extends ethics into epistemology. There is a moral obligation to seek truth, correct error, and resist distortion—especially when decisions affect others. Willful ignorance and misinformation are therefore ethical failures, not neutral epistemic states.

Educational institutions, media organizations, and scientific bodies bear heightened epistemic responsibility because they shape collective understanding.

44. Technology, Ethics, and Moral Scale

44.1. Scale and Responsibility

Technological systems amplify the scale of moral action. Decisions embedded in algorithms or infrastructures can affect millions simultaneously. CSR insists that increased scale increases moral responsibility rather than diffusing it.

44.2. Relational Harm

Many technological harms are relational rather than physical: erosion of trust, loss of agency, stigmatization, and exclusion. CSR's dignity-centered ethics captures these harms more adequately than purely technical risk frameworks [1].

45. Moral Thresholds and Non-Negotiables

CSR introduces the concept of **moral thresholds**: limits beyond which trade-offs are impermissible. Practices that systematically violate dignity cannot be justified by efficiency, security, or innovation.

This principle functions as a safeguard against technocratic rationalization of harm.

46. Ethics, Religion, and Moral Reason

CSR's moral realism allows for religious moral reasoning without collapsing ethics into theology. Moral truth is accessible through reason, experience, and critique, even as religious traditions may articulate and deepen moral insight.

At the same time, CSR subjects religious ethics to fallibilist scrutiny. Doctrinal authority does not exempt moral claims from accountability to dignity and moral reality (Asongu, forthcoming).

47. Ethics as the Spine of CSR

Across individual action, institutional design, education, science, and politics, ethics functions in CSR as the **structural spine** that connects truth to responsibility. Without ethical grounding, realism degenerates into technocracy; without realism, ethics dissolves into sentiment.

CSR holds these together by insisting that moral responsibility is an unavoidable consequence of living in a real world as accountable agents.

48. Conclusion to Part V

This section has articulated the ethical theory of Critical Synthetic Realism as a form of critical moral realism grounded in dignity, responsibility, and truth. Ethics, in CSR, is neither optional nor external to philosophy; it is the normative articulation of reality itself.

Part VI will develop CSR's **social and political philosophy**, examining authority, legitimacy, democracy, and global justice under conditions of epistemic fragmentation and power asymmetry.

Part VI: Social and Political Philosophy — Authority, Legitimacy, and Global Responsibility

49. The Political Crisis as an Epistemic and Moral Crisis

Contemporary political instability is often described in terms of polarization, institutional decay, or democratic backsliding. Critical Synthetic Realism (CSR) diagnoses a deeper cause: the erosion of **epistemic legitimacy** and **moral credibility**. Political institutions increasingly exercise power without sustained accountability to truth, while citizens are deprived of the epistemic conditions necessary for meaningful self-government.

CSR rejects the view that political dysfunction is merely a technical or procedural failure. Instead, it interprets political crises as consequences of severing authority from truth and power from moral responsibility [1]. Political philosophy, therefore, cannot be

separated from epistemology and ethics without distortion.

50. Power and Authority: A Normative Distinction

50.1. Power as Capacity

CSR defines **power** as the capacity to influence outcomes, allocate resources, and constrain behavior. Power is morally neutral in itself; it becomes ethically significant through its exercise.

50.2. Authority as Justification

Authority, by contrast, is a normative status. It refers to the *right* to exercise power. CSR insists that authority cannot be reduced to coercion, legality, or popularity alone. Authority requires **justification grounded in truth and moral correspondence**.

A regime may possess power without authority. Authority exists only where power remains accountable to reality, evidence, and human dignity.

51. Legitimacy as Ethical Correspondence

51.1. Beyond Procedural Legitimacy

CSR rejects purely procedural accounts of legitimacy that equate legality or electoral success with moral rightness. Procedures can be followed while injustice persists. Legitimacy, in CSR, is not exhausted by form.

51.2. Legitimacy and Moral Alignment

Legitimacy arises when institutions align their practices with moral reality—respecting dignity, remaining corrigible, and justifying power through reasons rather than force. Because knowledge is fallible, legitimacy is **provisional and revisable**, not absolute.

Institutions that suppress inquiry, manipulate information, or instrumentalize persons undermine their own legitimacy regardless of procedural compliance.

52. Democracy and Epistemic Agency

52.1. Democracy Beyond Preference Aggregation

CSR critiques minimalist conceptions of democracy that reduce it to preference aggregation. Voting alone does not secure legitimacy if citizens lack access to truthful information or the capacity for critical judgment.

Democracy presupposes **epistemic agency**—the ability of citizens to evaluate claims, recognize deception, and revise beliefs.

52.2. Truth as a Democratic Condition

Contrary to claims that democracy thrives on competing “truths,” CSR argues that democratic deliberation requires shared commitment to truth-seeking norms. Without such commitment, disagreement collapses into manipulation or identity conflict.

Post-truth politics, therefore, represents democratic failure rather than pluralistic vitality.

53. Ideology, Populism, and Technocracy

53.1. Ideology as Epistemic Closure

CSR defines ideology as a system of belief that resists correction by insulating itself from reality. Ideological politics replaces justification with loyalty, thereby eroding agency and accountability.

53.2. Technocracy and the Illusion of Neutrality

CSR is equally critical of technocracy. While expertise is indispensable, technocratic governance often disguises normative decisions as technical necessities, thereby evading democratic scrutiny.

CSR insists that expertise must remain **ethically transparent and publicly justifiable**.

54. Institutions, Trust, and Moral Credibility

54.1. Trust as Earned Legitimacy

CSR treats trust as an outcome of ethical alignment rather than a managerial objective. Institutions cannot manufacture trust through messaging; trust emerges when institutions consistently align action with truth.

54.2. Institutional Integrity

Institutional integrity requires coherence between declared values and actual practices. CSR emphasizes that credibility collapses when institutions demand moral compliance while exempting themselves from accountability.

55. Epistemic Justice and Social Inclusion

55.1. Knowledge as a Condition of Agency

CSR identifies **epistemic justice** as a core political concern. Individuals are unjustly treated when they are deprived of access to reliable knowledge or excluded from meaning-making processes.

Education, media, and scientific institutions thus play decisive political roles by shaping the epistemic conditions of agency.

55.2. Inclusion Without Relativism

CSR affirms the importance of marginalized perspectives not because all perspectives are equally true, but because exclusion often distorts collective understanding of reality. Inclusion is epistemically valuable when it enhances correspondence with reality and moral insight.

56. Global Justice and Moral Universality

56.1. Universality Without Imperialism

CSR navigates between moral relativism and moral imperialism. It affirms universal moral constraints grounded in dignity while insisting that their application must be context-sensitive and dialogical.

Universality, in CSR, refers to **shared moral limits**, not uniform cultural expression.

56.2. Power Asymmetry and Global Responsibility

Global institutions—states, corporations, and multilateral bodies—exercise power across borders. CSR insists that moral responsibility scales with power. Global justice therefore requires truth-oriented accountability rather than mere legal compliance.

57. Religion, Public Reason, and Political Ethics

CSR rejects the exclusion of religious moral reasoning from public discourse on the grounds of irrationality. Religious claims are not immune from critique, but neither are they disqualified a priori. Public reason, in CSR, is defined by **accountability to truth**, not by secular restriction.

Religious institutions retain political legitimacy when they function as moral witnesses rather than instruments of domination.

58. Political Responsibility and Moral Courage

CSR emphasizes **moral courage** as a political virtue. Leaders and institutions often face incentives to sacrifice truth for stability or popularity. CSR insists that such sacrifice corrodes legitimacy rather than securing it.

Political responsibility, therefore, involves the willingness to remain accountable to reality even under pressure.

59. Global Agency in a Fragmented World

CSR introduces the concept of **global agency**: the capacity of individuals and institutions to act responsibly within interconnected systems under conditions of uncertainty. Global agency requires epistemic competence, ethical commitment, and institutional structures that sustain accountability across borders.

60. Conclusion to Part VI

This section has articulated Critical Synthetic Realism's social and political philosophy as a realism-centered account of authority, legitimacy, democracy, and global justice. Politics, in CSR, is not the management of power but the **moral exercise of authority under truth-conditions**.

Part VII (Final Part) will situate CSR in comparative philosophical perspective, address major objections, and present its overall significance as a unified philosophical system.

Part VII: Comparative Analysis, Objections, and Conclusion

61. Situating Critical Synthetic Realism in Contemporary Philosophy

61.1. CSR and Classical Realism

Critical Synthetic Realism stands in substantive continuity with classical realist traditions, particularly Aristotelian and Thomistic metaphysics, in affirming the intelligibility of being and truth as correspondence between intellect and reality [5,6]. However, CSR departs from classical realism by fully integrating **epistemic fallibilism**, historical consciousness, and institutional mediation into its account of knowledge.

Where classical realism often presupposed relatively stable epistemic access to essences, CSR insists that access to reality is always mediated by conceptual, technological, and social conditions [1]. In this respect, CSR may be understood as a **post-critical retrieval of realism**—one that preserves ontological commitment without epistemic triumphalism.

61.2. CSR and Kantian / Post-Kantian Philosophy

CSR rejects the Kantian restriction of knowledge to phenomena alone. While acknowledging that cognition is structured and mediated, CSR denies that mediation severs contact with reality itself. The world constrains belief, even when it is not directly apprehended.

Unlike Kantian constructivism, CSR affirms that moral obligation is not merely self-legislated, but discovered through engagement with moral reality. Normativity, in CSR, is not generated solely by rational autonomy, but grounded in the dignity and agency of persons as real beings [1].

61.3. CSR and Analytic Philosophy

CSR shares with analytic philosophy a commitment to conceptual clarity, argumentative rigor, and logical coherence. Its epistemology resonates with Popperian fallibilism and anti-foundationalist realism [7]. However, CSR resists analytic philosophy's frequent bracketing of metaphysical and ethical questions as peripheral or optional.

CSR insists that epistemology without ethics and philosophy of science without ontology are **philosophically incomplete**. Its integrative ambition therefore exceeds the scope of many analytic projects while remaining compatible with analytic standards of rigor.

61.4. CSR, Critical Theory, and Postmodernism

CSR incorporates critical theory's insight that knowledge is socially situated and that power shapes discourse. However, it rejects the postmodern collapse of truth into narrative or power relations. For CSR, critique presupposes realism: domination can be criticized only if it is understood as a **distortion of reality**, not merely an alternative interpretation.

In this sense, CSR may be seen as rescuing critique from self-defeat by grounding it in ontological and moral realism.

61.5. CSR, Liberation Thought, and Decolonial Philosophy

CSR shares liberation and decolonial philosophy's concern with epistemic injustice, marginalization, and structural domination. Yet it diverges by grounding liberation in **truth rather than ideology**. Liberation is not achieved by replacing one dominant narrative with another, but by aligning belief, institution, and action with reality and dignity.

This grounding allows CSR to affirm moral universality without collapsing into cultural imperialism, and to support contextual critique without relativism.

62. Major Objections and CSR's Responses

62.1. Objection 1: CSR is Merely a Variant of Critical Realism Response.

While CSR shares affinities with critical realism, it extends beyond it in three decisive respects:

- it explicitly integrates moral realism rather than treating normativity as derivative;
- it develops a full philosophy of education as epistemic formation; and
- it offers a systematic account of institutional legitimacy and political authority.

CSR is therefore not a regional ontology but a general philosophical framework.

62.2. Objection 2: CSR Smuggles Metaphysics into Ethics and Politics Response.

CSR openly affirms this move and argues that all ethical and political theories already presuppose metaphysics, whether acknowledged or not. The philosophical question is not whether metaphysics is present, but whether it is **explicit, coherent, and accountable** [1].

62.3 Objection 3: CSR Risks Moral Authoritarianism Response.

CSR explicitly rejects infallibility. Moral realism does not entail moral certainty. On the contrary, CSR's commitment to fallibilism, corrigibility, and dialogical accountability functions precisely to prevent authoritarian closure. Authoritarianism arises not from belief in truth, but from refusal of correction.

62.4. Objection 4: CSR is Too Demanding for Real Institutions Response.

CSR does not require institutional perfection. It requires **truth-orientation and corrigibility**. Institutions inevitably fall short; legitimacy depends on whether they remain open to evidence, critique, and reform. Lowering ethical standards to match institutional convenience does not make institutions realistic—it renders them unaccountable.

62.5 Objection 5: CSR is Not Culturally Neutral Response.

CSR is culturally situated but not culturally relativist. All philosophies emerge from contexts; CSR's distinctiveness lies in its capacity to critique its own context by appeal to reality rather than identity. Universality in CSR refers to shared moral constraints grounded in dignity, not uniform cultural expression.

63. CSR as a Unified Philosophy of Responsibility

Across its domains—metaphysics, epistemology, science, education, ethics, and politics—CSR converges on a single unifying theme: **responsibility under conditions of uncertainty**.

- Epistemic responsibility: to seek truth and correct error
- Educational responsibility: to form epistemic agents

- Moral responsibility: to respect dignity and moral thresholds
- Institutional responsibility: to justify power and remain corrigible
- Political responsibility: to govern in correspondence with reality
- Global responsibility: to act justly across asymmetries of power

CSR rejects both epistemic arrogance and ethical resignation. It affirms that **fallibility increases responsibility rather than diminishing it.**

64. Conclusion: The Philosophical Significance of Critical Synthetic Realism

Critical Synthetic Realism represents a rare systematic achievement in contemporary philosophy. It restores realism without dogmatism, critique without nihilism, ethics without sentimentality, and politics without cynicism. By integrating truth, dignity, and responsibility into a coherent framework, CSR offers a philosophically robust response to the fragmentation, technocracy, and relativism of late modernity.

CSR's central claim is demanding but clear:

Reality is real. Truth matters. Knowledge is fallible. Dignity is

non-negotiable. Power must answer to moral reality.

In an age tempted by either absolutism or relativism, Critical Synthetic Realism insists on the more difficult path: **responsible truth-seeking in a conditioned world.**

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