

Society for Animation Studies Annual Conference, 26 June - 3 July 2022, Teeside University

## **Outer Worlds: Mediated Aesthetics and Alethic Truth**

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## **‘Inner’ Worlds and ‘Exact Accounts’**

Animated documentary addresses ‘inner’, subjective worlds

Animated documentary fails to present accurate, ‘exact accounts’ of reality

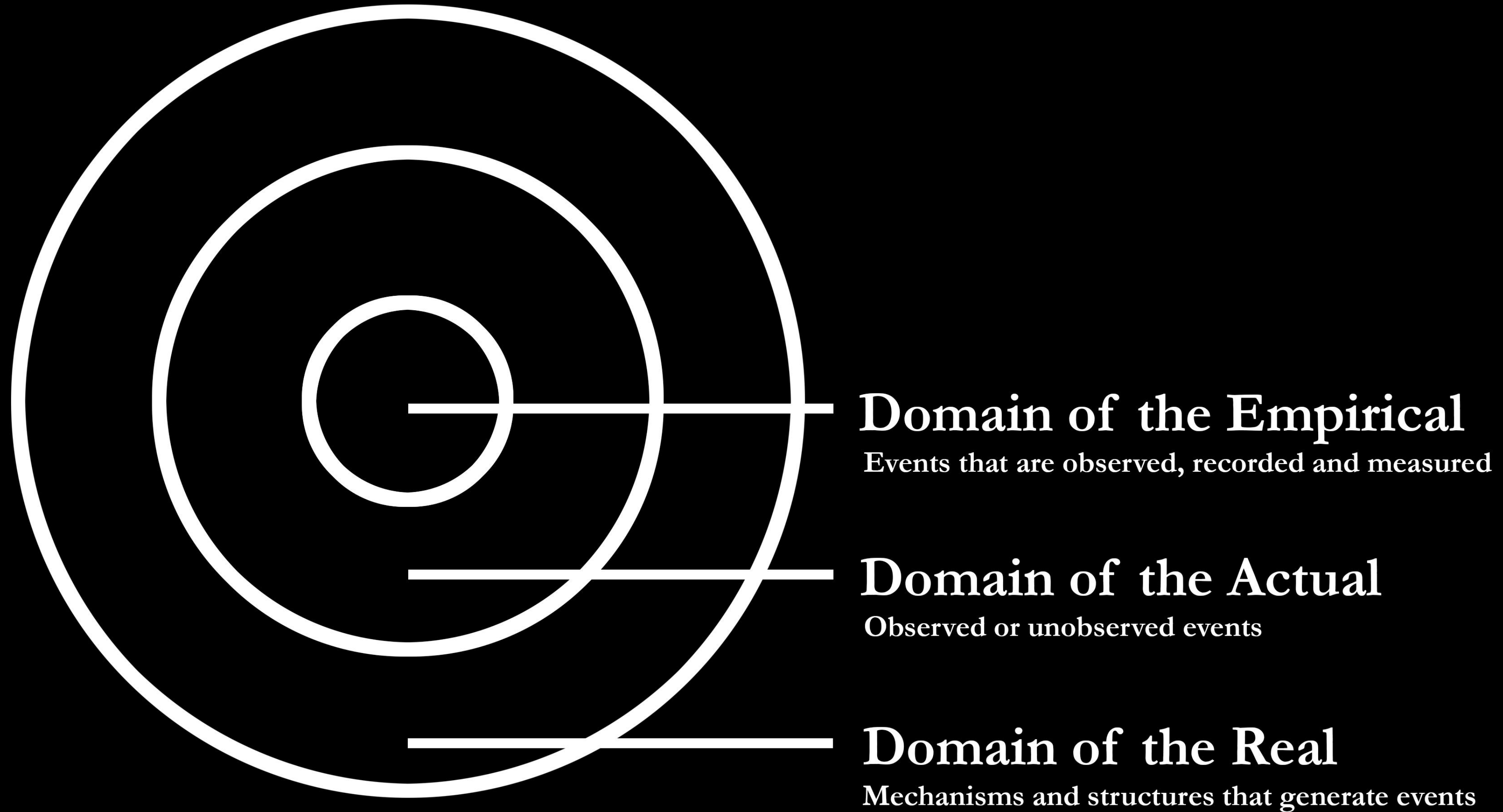
To more fully understand what’s going on in animated documentary, we need what critical realists call an ontic, or *alethic*, conception of truth

# Critical Realism

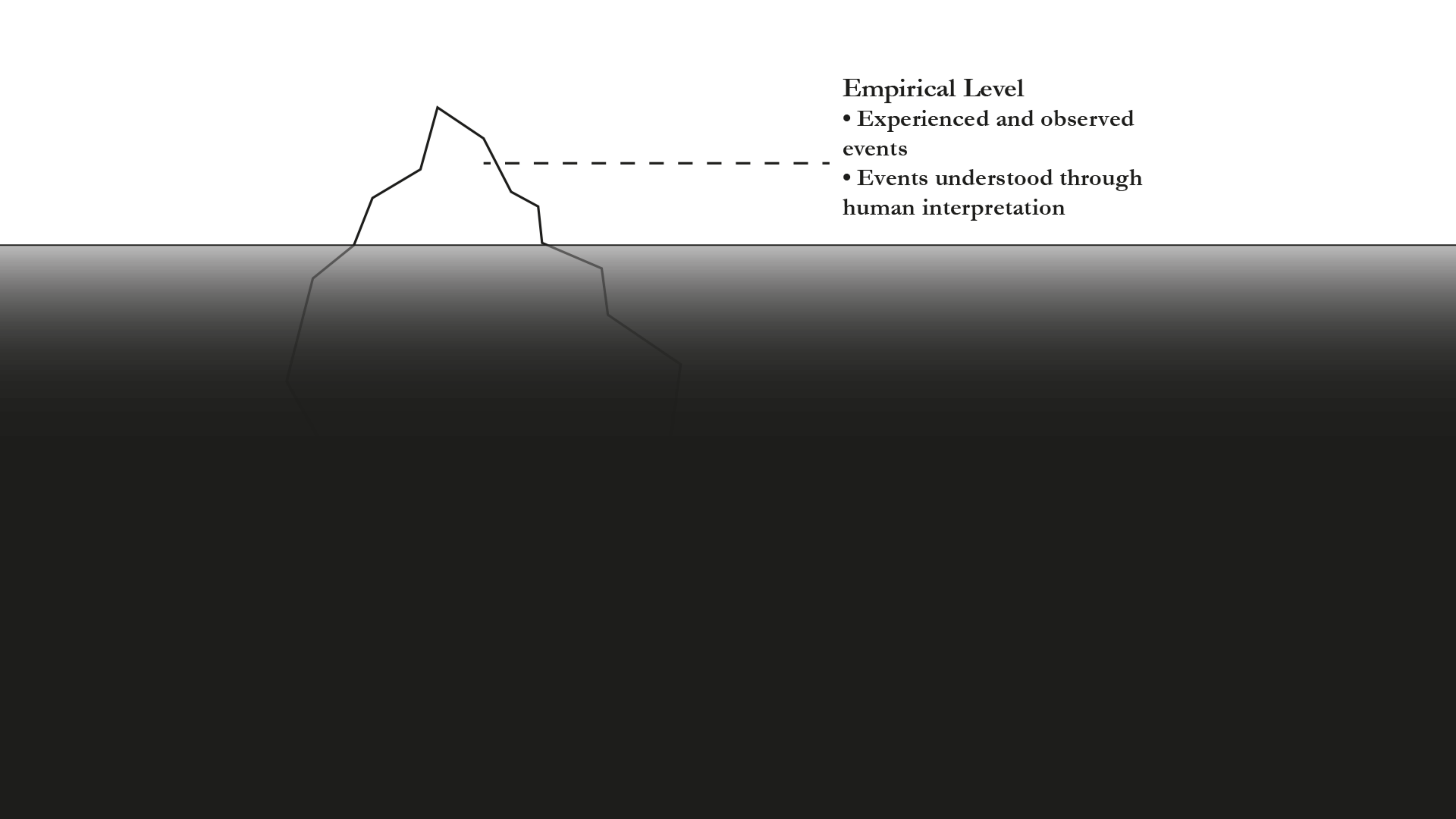


Roy Bhaskar (1944 - 2014)

# Critical Realism

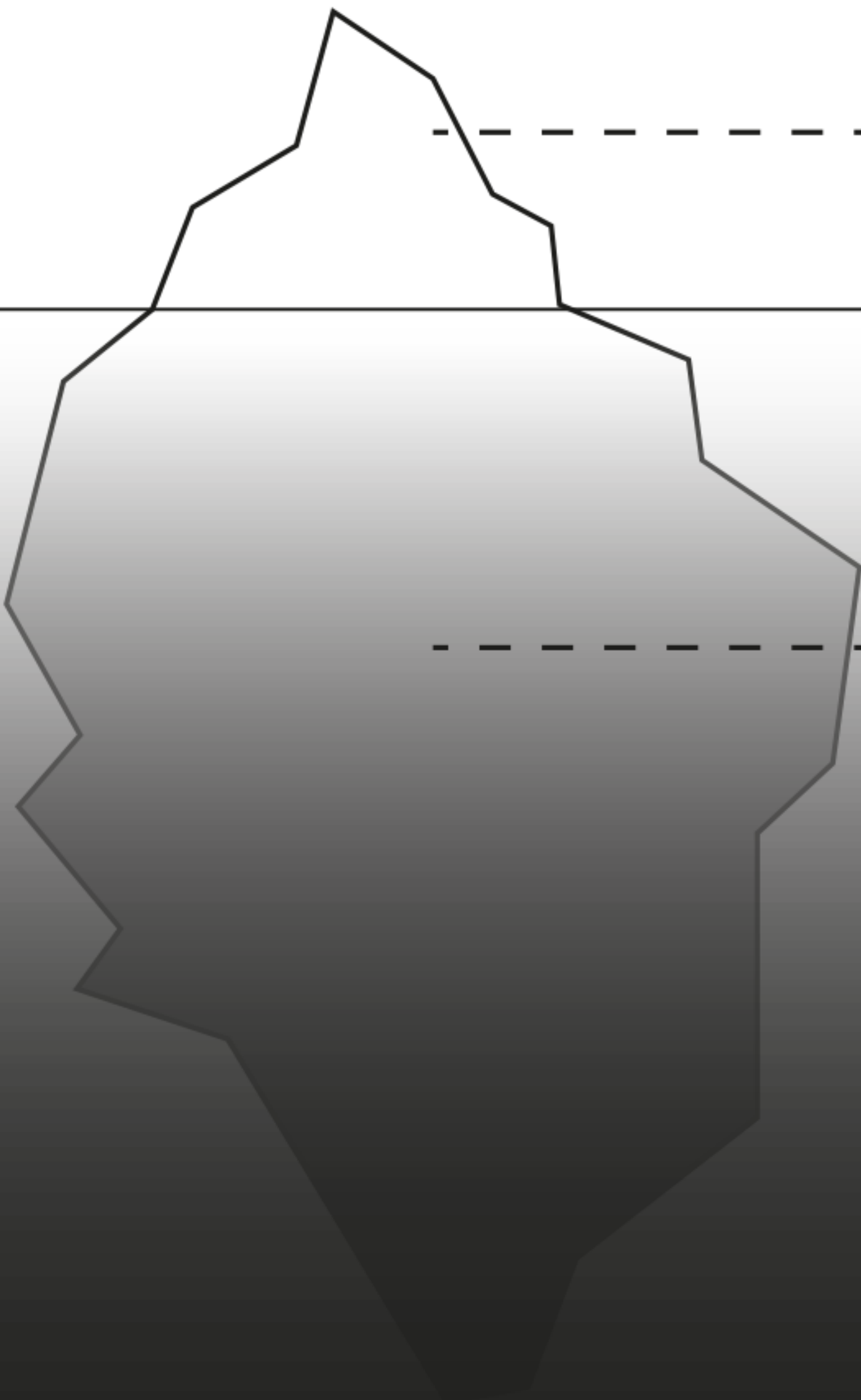


(Bhaskar, 1975)



### Empirical Level

- Experienced and observed events
- Events understood through human interpretation



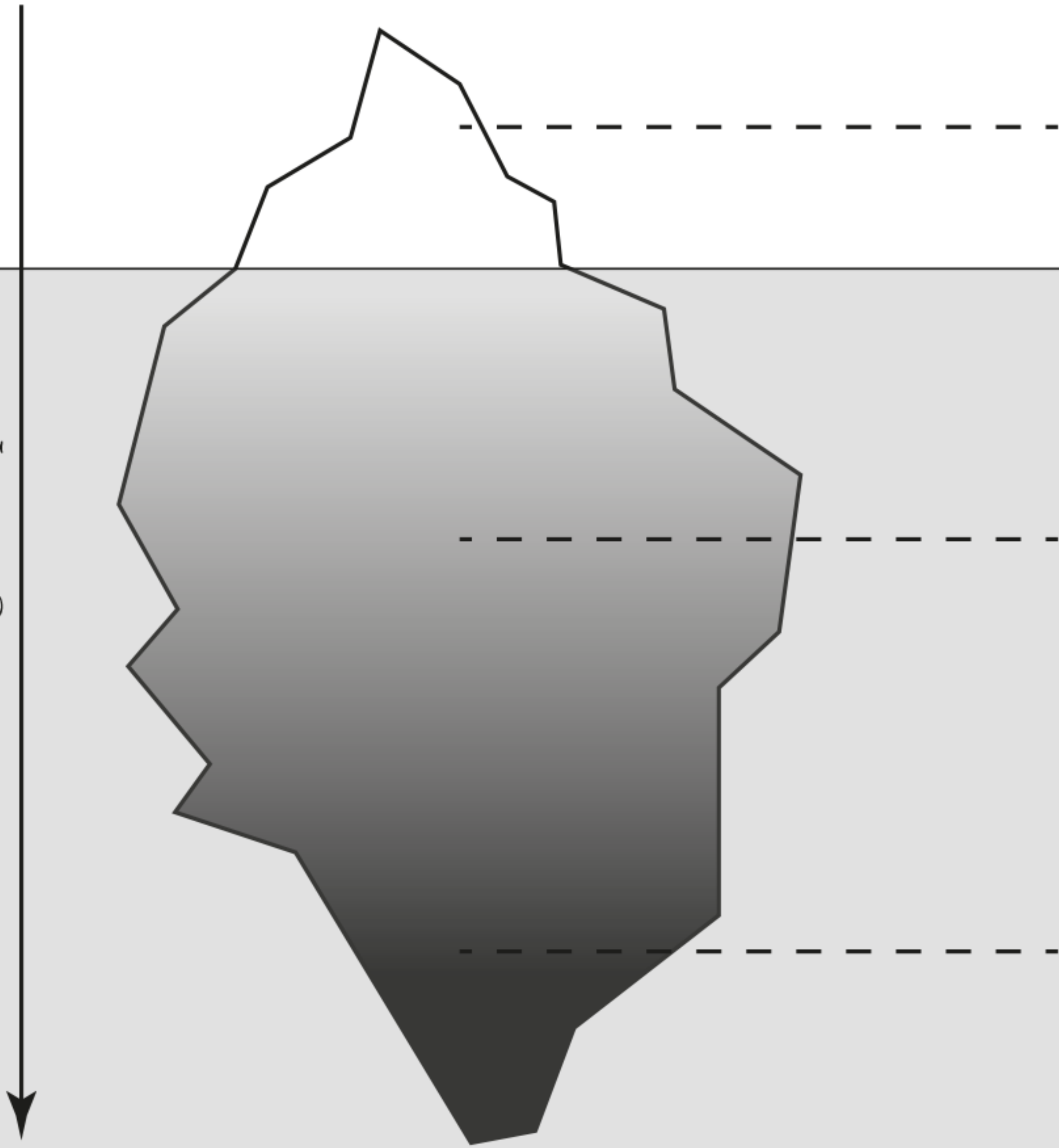
**Empirical Level**

- Experienced and observed events
- Events understood through human interpretation

**Actual Level**

- Events occur observed or unobserved

Ontological Depth



**Empirical Level**

- Experienced and observed events
- Events understood through human interpretation

**Actual Level**

- Events occur observed or unobserved

**Real or 'Deep' Level**

- Transfactual causal mechanisms within objects or structures cause events to occur

(Adapted from Fletcher, 2017)

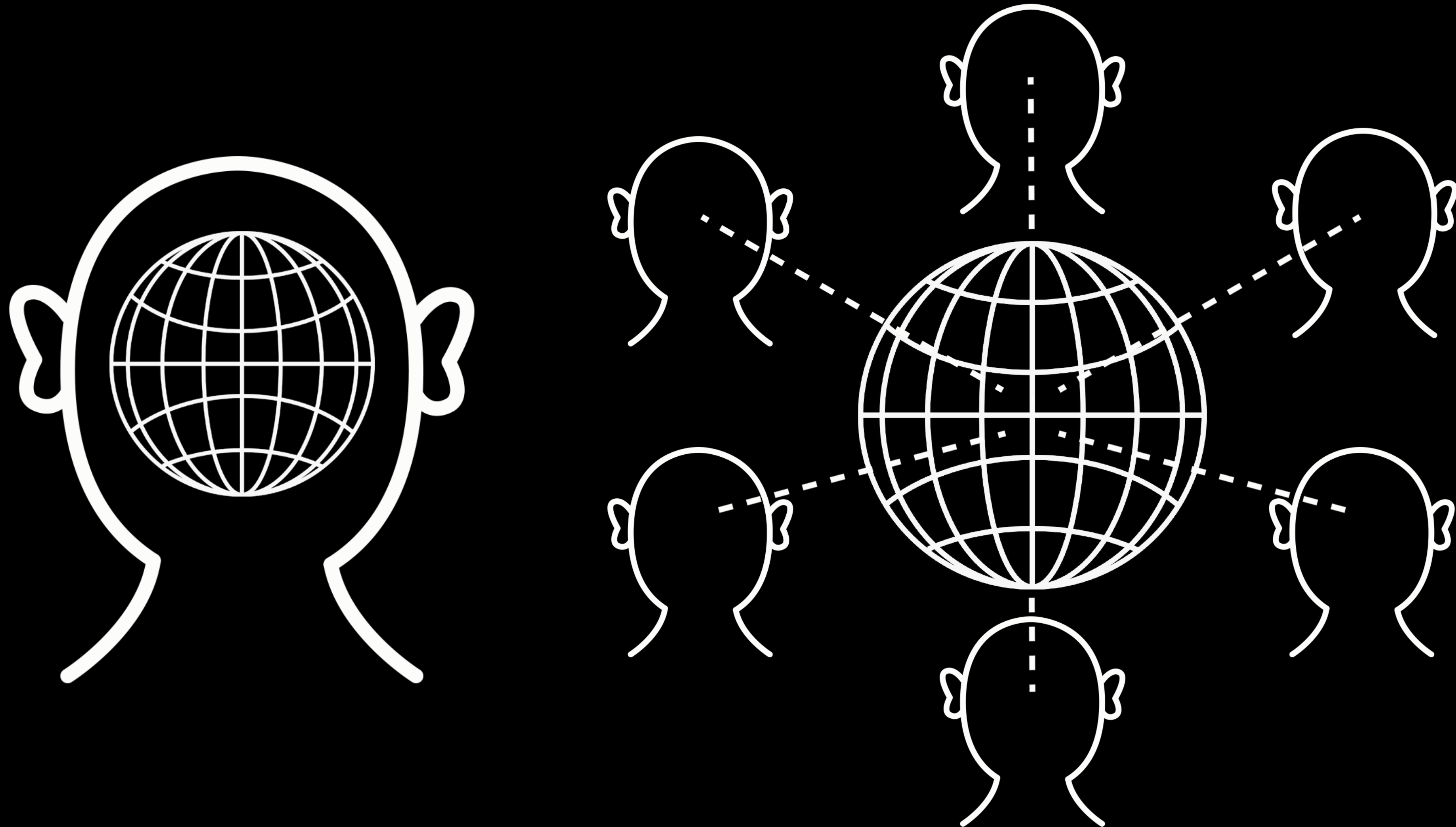


## The Imagined and Imaginary

Explanation thus involves, centrally, the substitution in our *imagination* of a real or empirical relationship for an unreal or theoretical one (Bhaskar, 1975, my emphasis)

...whereas for (...) idealism the imagined mechanism is imaginary, for realism it may be real, and come to be established as such. What is *imagined* may be real; but what is *imaginary* cannot (1975, my emphasis)

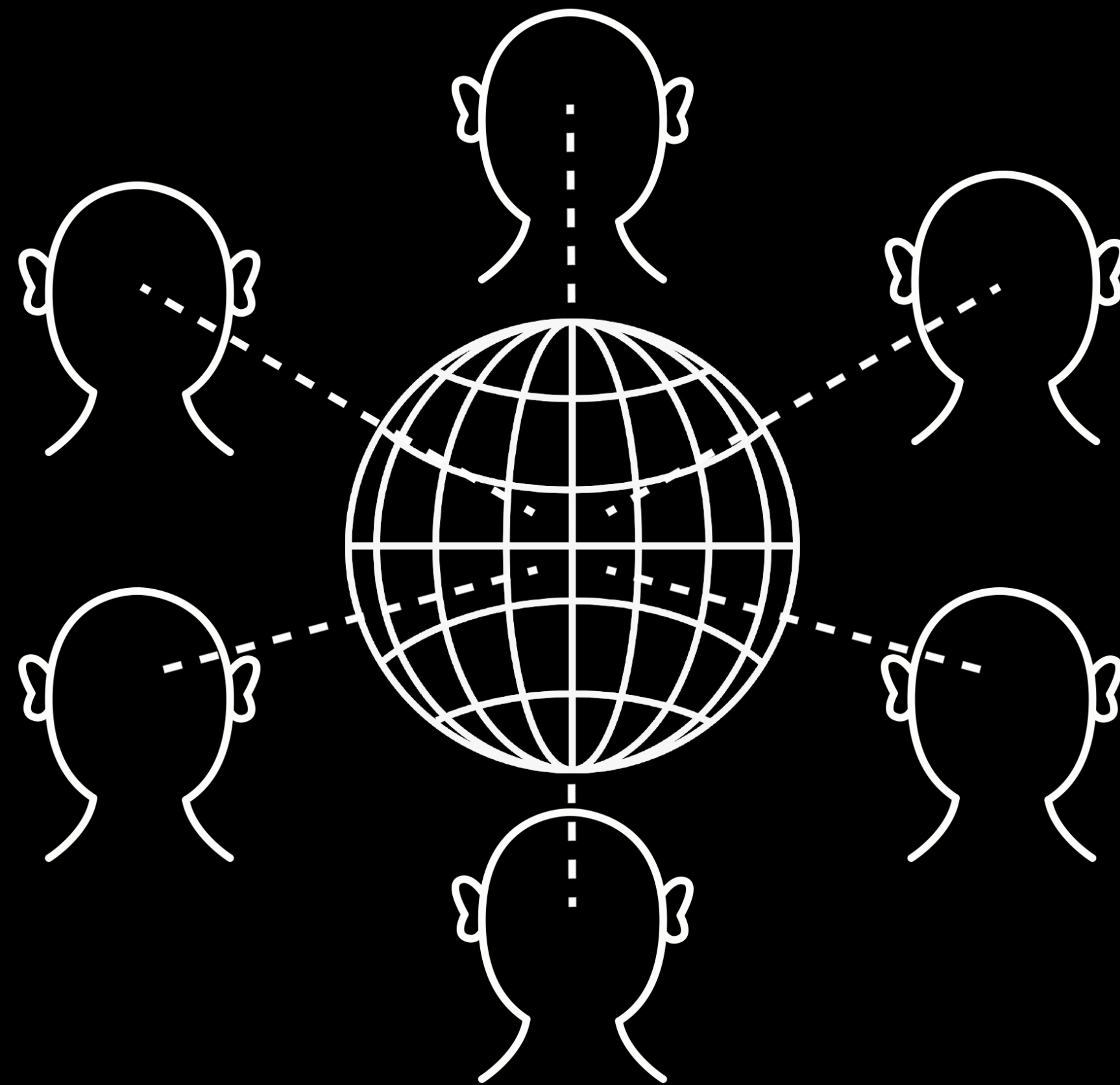
# Subjectivism, 'Inner' Worlds and the Epistemic Fallacy





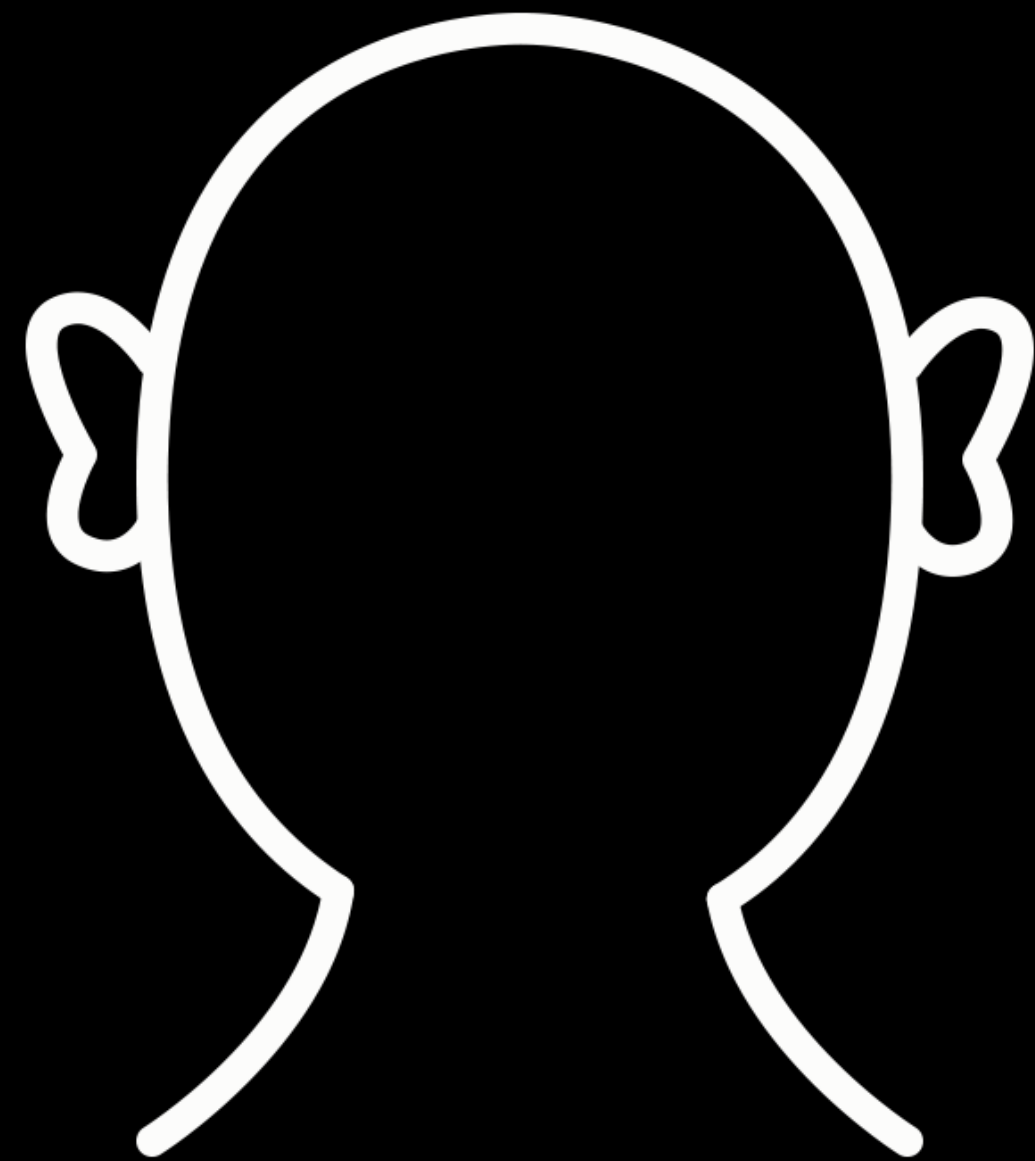
# Subjectivism, 'Inner' Worlds and the Epistemic Fallacy

The solipsistic knower is implausible in the light of human socio-biology. This suggests that people are basically collective and social beings and therefore collective knowers (Assiter, 2001)



# Subjectivism, 'Inner' Worlds and the Epistemic Fallacy

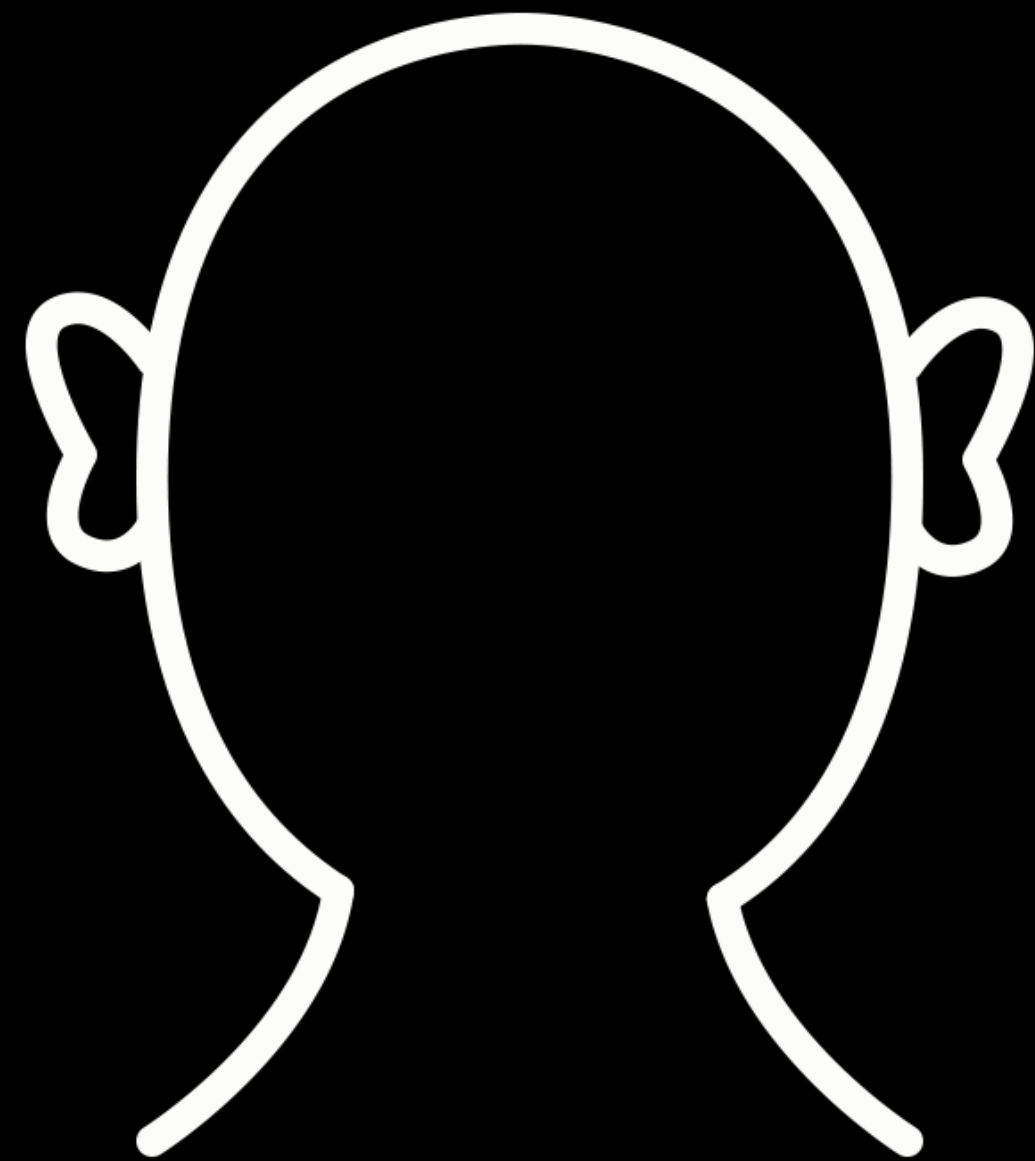
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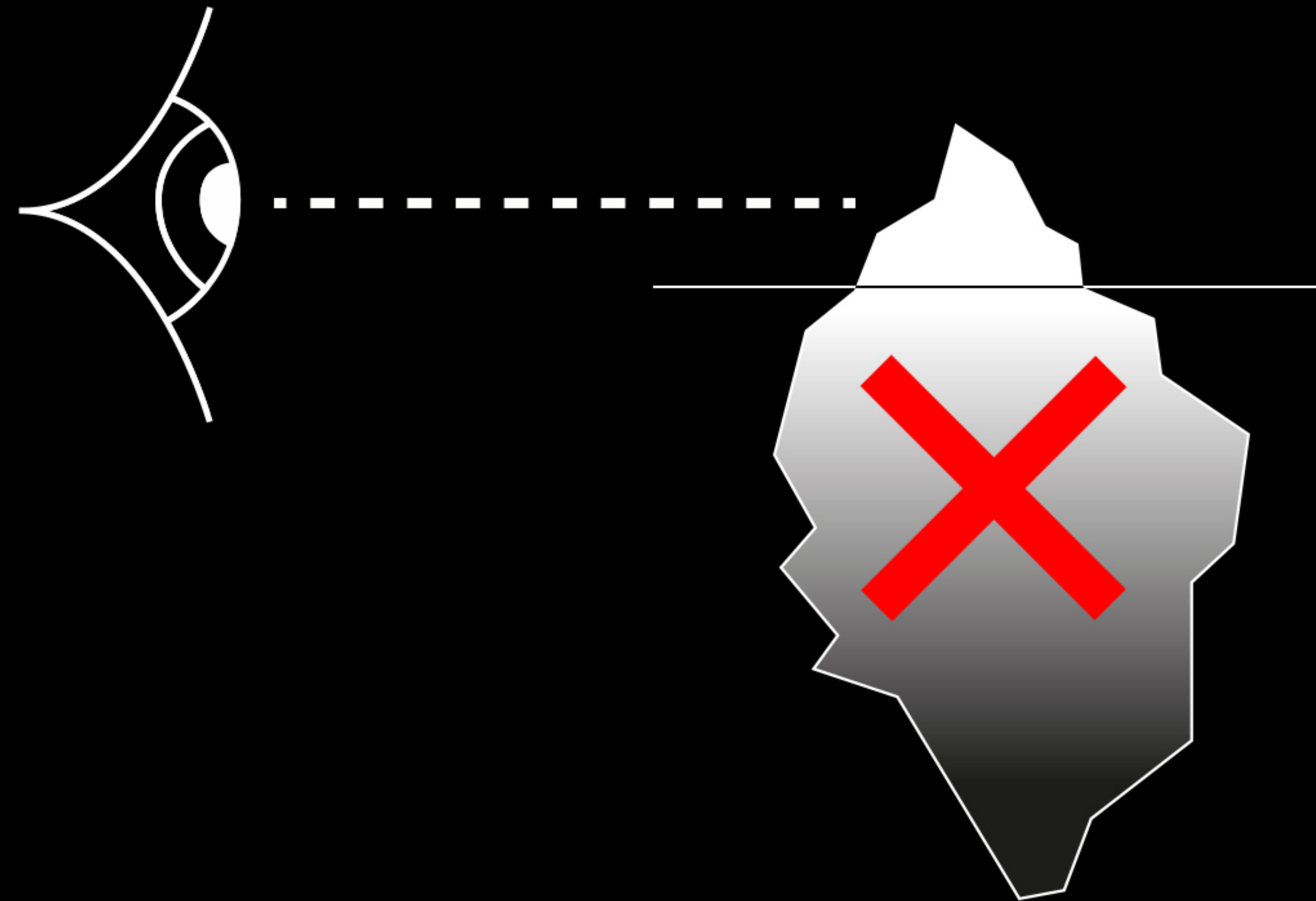
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Knowledge/Subjective = Reality

# Objectivism and The Ontic Fallacy



It says what you are experiencing is real, given, certain (Price, 2014)

Reality 'speaks for itself' and can be interpreted as an open book (Høyer, 2012)



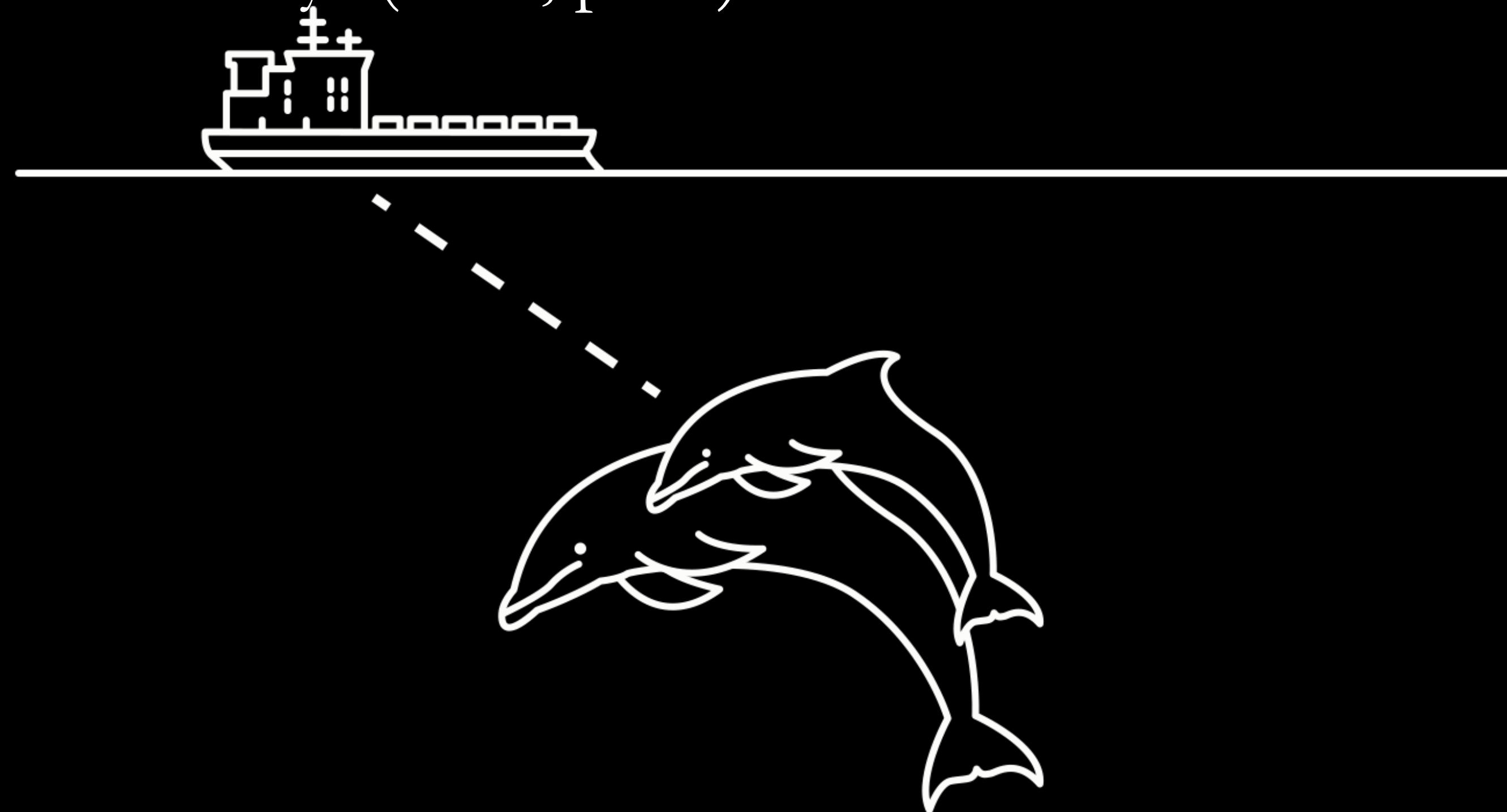
## Objectivism and The Ontic Fallacy

If 'everything that is' were in the open, if reality were transparent, there would be no need for science as we know it (Danermark et al. 2019)

The solipsistic exclusion of a nonempirical real world also generates a whole range of problems, one of the most obvious of which is that of understanding how we ever come to discover anything new (Sayer, 1981)

## Ontic/Alethic Truth

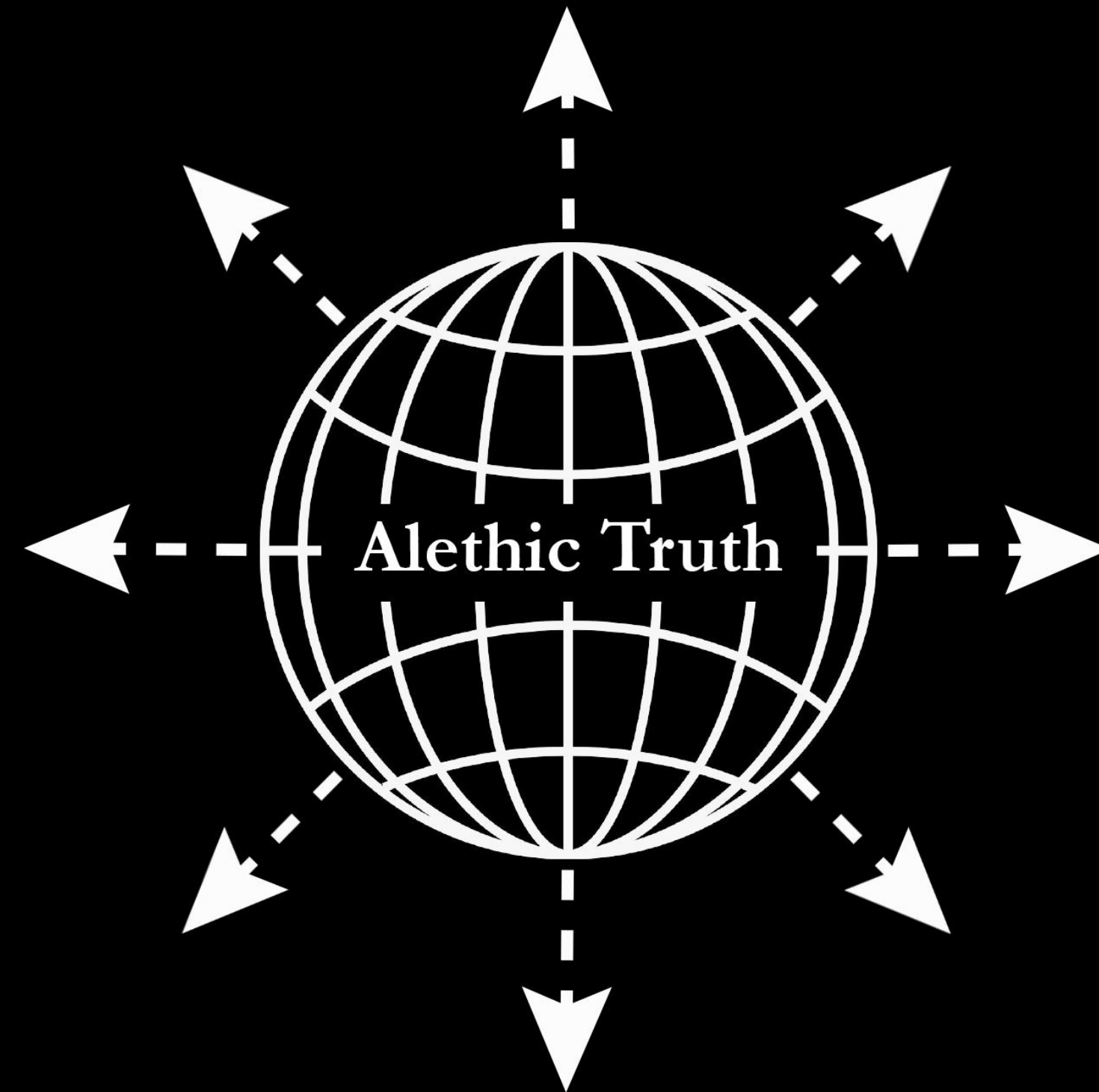
If changing experience of objects is to be possible, objects must have a distinct being in space and time from the experiences of which they are the objects (...) when modern sailors refer to what ancient mariners called a sea-serpent as a school of porpoises, we must suppose that there is something which they are describing in different ways (1975, p. 31)





# Ontic/Alethic Truth

Reality is the 'truth maker' (Porpora, 2015)



Meaning is an ongoing human creation (...) this process is structurally framed within a wider context: the nature of reality and the reality of our nature (...) It is a combination of how the world is and how we are (Potter, 2002)

# The Realism of Abstraction



(We abstract from) the many other aspects which together constitute concrete objects such as people, economics, nations, institutions, activities and so on  
(Sayer, 1992)

The abstract and the concrete should not be aligned with the distinction between thought and reality (ibid.)



# The Realism of Abstraction



Abstractions, such as ‘class’, ‘gender’, ‘role’, or ‘norm’, are not more vague or unreal than natural science abstractions, such as ‘air pressure’, ‘density’, ‘energy’, or ‘gravitation’. What unites all these phenomena is that they manifest themselves through their effects, but it is not possible to immediately observe or ‘touch’ what the concepts represent, that is, the generative mechanisms (Danermark et al. 2019)

By ‘concrete’ we mean something real, but not something which is reducible to the empirical: we mean far more than just ‘factual’. The concrete object is concrete not simply because it exists, but because it is a combination of many diverse forces or processes (Sayer, 1981)

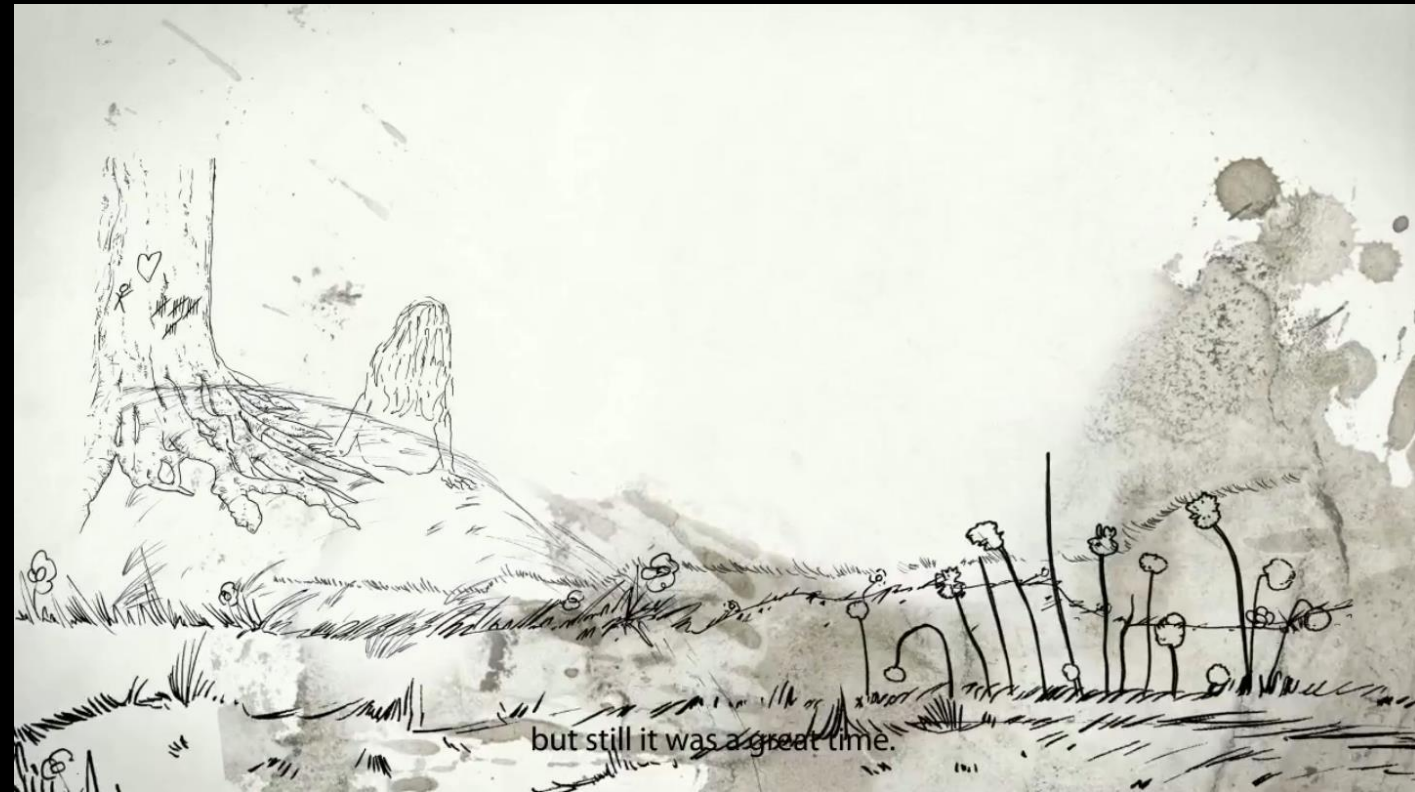
## **The Realism of Abstraction**

Interpretation is both motivated and determined by socio-historical (...) and existential (...) factors. Therefore, clearly, interpretation cannot be regarded as irreducibly subjective or relativistic in nature (Cashell, 2009)

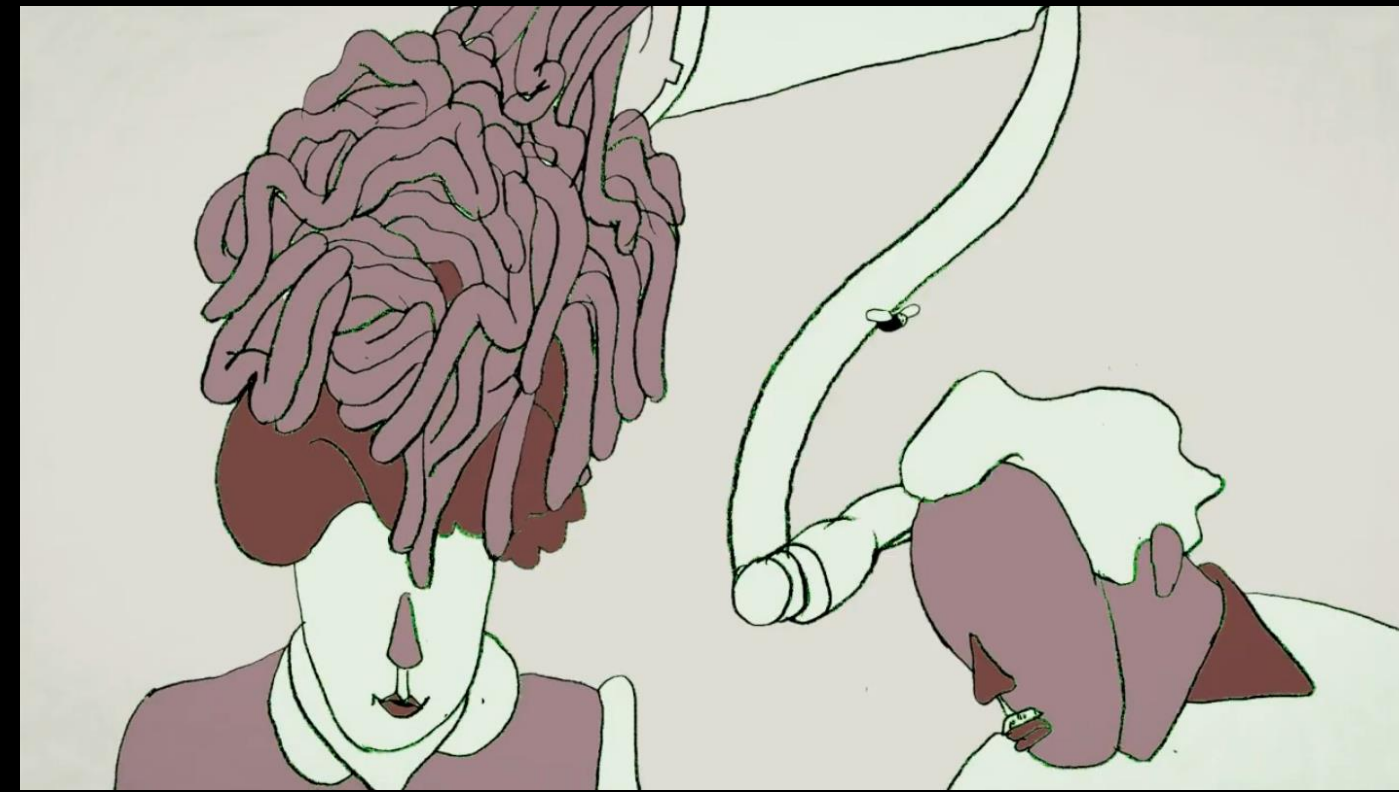
Abstractions are not subjective classifications of an undifferentiated empirical reality, but attempts to grasp (...) precisely the generative mechanisms and causal structures which account in all their complex and multiple determinations for the concrete phenomena of human history (Bhaskar, 1998)



# The Realism of Abstraction



*Andersartig*, Dennis Stein-Schomberg



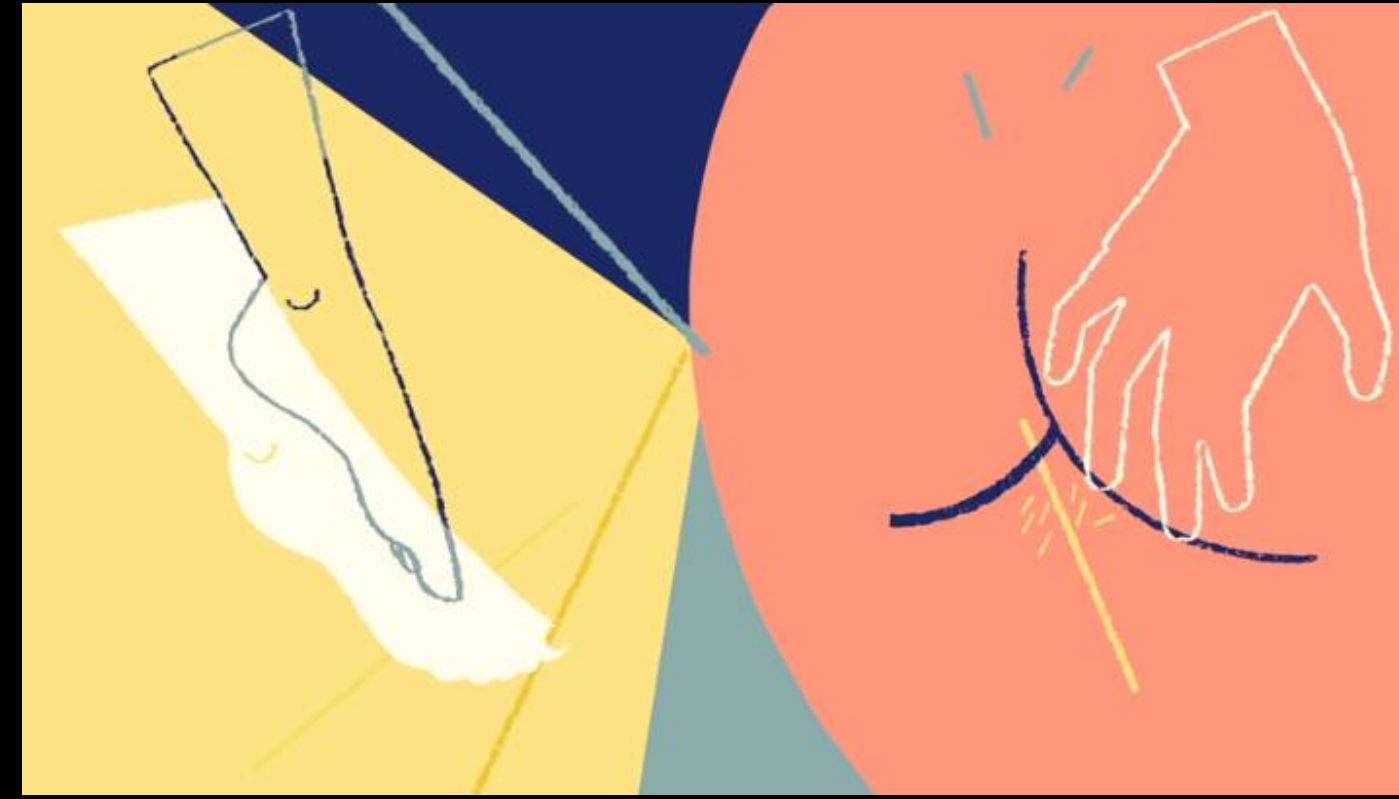
*Table d'Hôte*, Alexandra Levasseur



*30% women and politics in Sierra Leone*, Anna Cady & Em Cooper



*I'm OK*, Elizabeth Hobbs



*Private Parts*, Anna Ginsburg



*The Torture Letters*, Jocie Juritz & Laurence Ralph

*Imagined*, not Imaginary

Of an *alethic*, not an epistemic truth



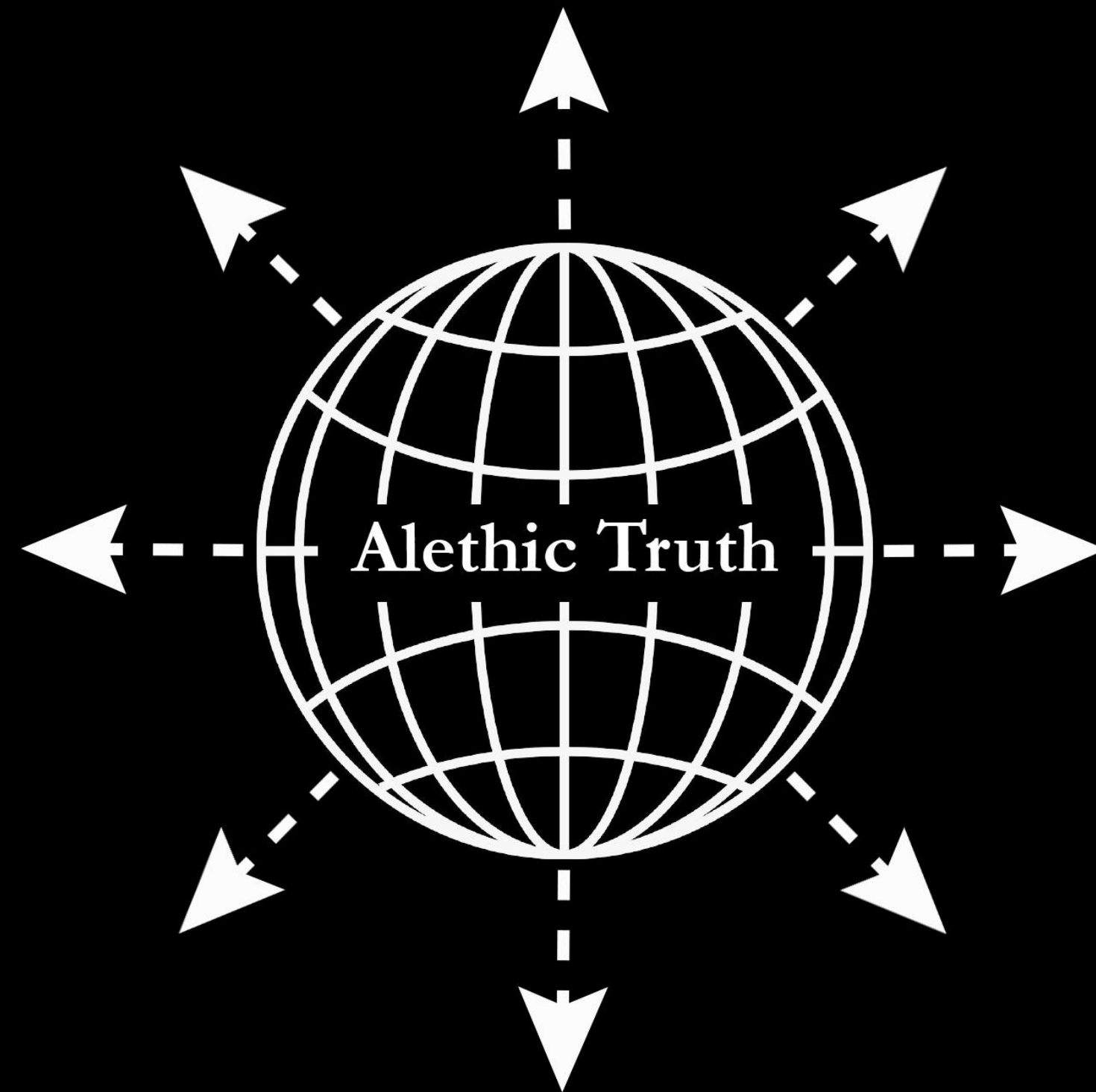
## **Non-Dualism and Hybridity**

The perpetual negotiation between the real event and its representation (...) the two remain distinct but interactive (Bruzzi, 2000)

Searches for a means of moving beyond the surface and getting at the structures, and with the structures, the causal mechanisms, powers, capacities and dispositions of social reality that account for the surface events (Rutzou, 2016)

# Reality, Visibility, Politics

Animation can be the realm in which such graphic rendition might make social forms available to knowledge (Leslie, 2014)



Thanks