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Toward a Synthetic Philosophy

When human consciousness at some time in the unknown past reached that point in its development where it turned a reflective vision upon its experience, taken as a comprehensive totality, it early discovered two seemingly opposed, yet complementary, components that are ineluctable parts, like poles, of that totality. These we know today as Spirit and Matter. Reflective thinkers, ever conditioned by individual psychology, have tended to realize and value one or the other of these components more completely. Indeed, some have seen them as interdependent, inhering in some common root; others, less integral in their vision, have seemed to find the ultimate in one or the other pole. Even those with the more comprehensive view have tended to accentuate one or the other component. Inevitably, then, when humankind became philosophically conscious, there was an inclination to polarize into schools of thought in which the common denominator of emphasis, or even exclusive recognition, was either Matter or Spirit, in whatever manner these two may have been conceived. Thus even a casual perusal of the history of philosophy leaves the student with the strong impression that there are always, in varying terms and forms, two main patterns conditioning the orientation of the world view of reflective humanity.

In modern Western terminology the division and contrast between these diverse lines of philosophical orientation are commonly represented by the schools of materialism, naturalism, and realism, standing in contrast to spiritualism, idealism and subjectivism. These divergent and opposed orientations are most forcibly represented in the modern West as naturalism and idealism, the former lying closer to science, the latter to religion. In addition to these most radically contrasting systems of philosophy, within the early part of the twentieth century, two other schools have arisen that occupy positions intermediate between the more extreme formulations. One of these, neorealism, occupies a position definitely closer to naturalism than to idealism, but conceives its objective reality as something considerably more subtle than that of naturalism. The other, pragmatism, diverges from neorealism to a view-

point rather closer to idealism, though definitely less absolutist and more empiric than the latter. These two later schools may be said to be more humanistic than the older and more classical ways of thought, in that they more definitely restrict themselves to the actual human processes of cognition, feeling and conation, with their corresponding contents and valuations. In any case, the divisions between these various schools are sufficiently notable to justify a fourfold classification based upon a root twofold division.

All these systems or ways of thinking bring into relief by accentuation authentic elements or complexes that are to be found in actual human experience or consciousness. Therefore, none may be wholly neglected, and a truly synthetic philosophy, when and if it is ever written, must do justice to, or at least find room for, the positive values of each. Regrettably, there is a strong tendency on the part of representatives of these various schools to formulate their positions in more or less exclusive or privative terms, producing features that must be expunged if there ever is to be a synthetic system.

It is proposed here to examine the primary features—the essential or defining characteristics—of these schools, with the central purpose of showing in what respect they are inadequate for effecting an integration sufficiently comprehensive to embrace the values and knowledge derived from Gnostic Realization. The intent is to clear the ground for the formulation that will follow, as well as to show that a need for such new formulation exists. The discussion will begin with naturalism, pass through neorealism, pragmatism and idealism, and then culminate in introceptualism, the term by which I have designated my systematic contribution, which is in some sense and degree new.