

Thesis, Antithesis, and Synthesis

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[Bold supplied; italics in original]

Again and again I am speechless with wonder, as I observe an incredible capacity, on the part of some eminent scholars, to find space enough in their roomy system for both A and non-A, both **thesis** and **antithesis**, all at the same time. It is often some of our most gifted humanists, adepts in discursive thinking, who manage to integrate, in their minds and hearts, mutually exclusive world views. They perform that "integration" with the elegance of fabulously performing acrobats.

About Women, p. 5.3

There has from times immemorial been great confusion among researchers, and among human beings by and large, as regards women's intellectual functions and what they tend to select for their personal enjoyment in the field of the intellect. Mantagezza complains, in his "Fisiologia," that a woman "does not succeed so well in (1) creation, (2) invention, (3) **synthesis**." He finds it difficult, however, to tell why: for man and woman "have equal intellectual force;"--nevertheless they "differ widely." What can be the reason for that difference?

About Women, p. 41.1

Now what about **SYNTHESIS**? Here I think it is particularly misleading to say, without any distinction or any proper differentiation: "Women are poorly gifted for **synthesis**." The opposite of **synthesis** is generally thought of as ANALYSIS. If a similar negative wholesale judgment was passed regarding women's poor ability to deal with analysis, we might not dare to protest so strongly. But precisely in the case of **synthesis** this depreciation would seem to assume a more serious character. For **synthesis**, you see, is commonly regarded as almost a synonym for UNIFICATION; that is, for getting things "back together" into a sound and solid bond of totality. And you know the stress we have already put on wholeness as the great wholesome thing for human life. How in the world could anyone imagine then that this wholeness which is the great aim for the whole outreach of the other-centered spirit, could be obtained without the blessed ingredient of **synthesis**!

Of course you never can tell: There might be forms of **synthesis**, also, so strongly imbued with the spirit of pure abstraction that they would have to be given up as being beyond the reach of a typically feminine mentality. But frankly, in that case, there would seem good reason to doubt that the thing eventually produced by that type of **synthesis** could have too much in common with just that profound intergration in human life which we are here speaking about. I rather suspect that the "**synthesis**" we had to do with, might be related to the weird type with which super-speculative philosophers have astonished the world. For details, see my chapter on Hegel's philosophy, contained in my peculiar

attempt to make an outline of the history of modern philosophy under the title of "Omega II: The Satanic Dynamics of Modern Philosophies Infiltrating the Endtime Church," pp. 19, ff. Certain brands of spiritualistic philosophy seem to arrive at concepts of "**synthesis**" that the alterocentric child is far too soberminded, far to realistic, to be bothered with.

What we here have to be concerned about is **synthesis** as a truly UNIFYING process. And when we speak about the opposite, namely analysis as an equally characteristic trend of human character, the theme we shall have to dwell upon is that of analysis as a dangerously, sometimes in fact fatally, disruptive process in human minds. If the disruption resulting from it proves to be nothing less than a subtle dismemberment and downright mutilation of life itself, then the danger is there, and it is ominous.

In order to understand more easily what that type of analysis really is, it might be profitable first to make clear some points as to what it is NOT.

About Women, pp. 42.3-43.3

Have you ever heard about a certain "awareness" of body and soul as "separate entities" and a veritable passion for absolute "independence" (perfect self-sufficiency), introduced as top ideals in our Western world culture some two and a half thousand years ago by Plato, the Father of Western Spiritualism and an incurably unrealistic dualist? Since that time "to be separate" and "absolutely independent" are qualities that have managed to acquire top prestige in this most self-centered of all cultures.

In an extended study of the Ego-Altero bipolarity it must be demonstrated that, on the contrary, only constructive concepts, such as **synthesis** and true wholeness (the very opposite of separateness and independence or self-sufficient isolation) can constitute a balm of healing for our culture, making it truly whole again.

Whenever man develops in the direction of proud humanistic self-sufficiency, including even a religiously flavored independence of the environment in which God has been pleased to place him, that is not a development logically calling for terms such as "progression." No, this is rather a tragic retardation or, downright retro-gression.

About Women, p. 50.3-5

....Hegelian dialectics, letting *thesis* and *antithesis* merge magically into a harmonious **Synthesis**

Agape and Eros, p. 220.6

What has happened to philosophy in modern times is a definitely epoch-making sensation. And we should all know it. I shall limit myself to mentioning in a summary way the case of one philosopher whose influence has been fatal. I shall not try to measure his share of responsibility for a tragic trend. It may be far less than some presume. For the ones most to blame may be you and me, and the entire "time spirit" that was prepared to absorb that nefarious influence. I am referring to the great wizard of modern European philosophy: Hegel: Certainly nothing has been more baneful in environments of modernistic thought patterns than that man's speculative fancies about what happens when **thesis** and **antithesis**, the two great opposites in men's minds, have their historic encounter. I say "historic" with emphasis. For the entire evolution of regular thought waves, deep deep down in gigantic world movements, is supposed to be involved in this

succession of thought and antithought. According to Hegel it is by the virtue of an historic necessity that the two are bound to meet. And his view of that meeting is frivolously optimistic. For -- Abra Cadabra, Hocus Pocus -- what is the mystic phenomenon suddenly bound to come out of the sorcerer's hat, as a result of the blessed encounter? It is something called by him **synthesis**. And that **synthesis** certainly seems to assert itself as a blessedly sympathetic thing. The merger is the great thing that takes care of our lives, solves our most disrupting problems. Is that naive assumption realistic? Alas, no! It is obvious what a philosophical optimism as blind as that about the way problems in this world solve themselves, must lead up to, if a sufficient number of people are hoodwinked by it. There can be no doubt that Hegel is, to a large extent, responsible for just that foolish enthusiasm about the absurd and the paradoxical, that has gripped our generation. You will understand better now why I started this book speaking at such length about certain amazing inconsistencies surrounding Bacchiocchi's Sabbath books, even inconsistencies for which he, himself, is hardly responsible.

Crucial Events, p. 59.2

I see my brother in the faith and colleague Jack Provonsha as a fairly typical exponent of an attitude which a large number of our learned theologians today are gradually adopting. You may feel awkwardly perplexed when you try to evaluate some of these people. On the one hand they may manifest a warm appreciation of something as radically characteristic of Seventh-day Adventism as Ellen White's writings. On the other hand they may go squarely against most essential points of the explicit realism contained in those writings.

What does this ambiguity mean? I assume that most readers of *Insight Magazine* have found a recent article by Provonsha (or rather an interview with him) comfortingly Christian. It has helped me to understand that interesting personality still better than ever before. Here is a man who expresses a heartily sincere desire for Christian fellowship, I may safely say Seventh-day Adventist fellowship. To the surprise of some he even proclaims that he considers himself to "be in the mainstream of Adventism", as the interviewer's expression goes.

And then he immediately goes on to express something which I assume to be right on target. In my book entitled *Omega II: The Satanic Dynamics of Pagan Philosophies, Infiltrating the Endtime Church* I speak about this at great length under the classical title of **SYNTHESIS**, a wonder-making device in modern Western philosophy which is expected to reconcile the most irreconcilable opposites in the holy name of philosophy. Our old teachers have taught us in a way that has certainly left its deep imprint upon our minds and hearts. But let me now come back to what Provonsha adds immediately after having assured us that he considers himself to be in mainstream Adventism:

"I am also committed to the notion that language must always be updated. The way in which we express our truths must be kept contemporary or we'll cease to really talk to people. I feel that it is my duty to see that the thought forms and language continue to express contemporary ways of looking at things. Many Adventists do not understand the essence of their message; they simply know its language. To them, if you have changed the language, you have changed the message. I'm afraid that many who have committed themselves to the church have done so at a much too superficial level. The essence of what's involved in the

doctrines such as that of the investigate judgment and the heavenly sanctuary has not been well understood."

Maybe we shall soon find out what this speech actually means. Hopefully it is something better than that barren humanism we are all tempted to espouse these days.

Day of Destiny, pp. 141.5-142.3

Well then, what is the Bible's unambiguous view of man? And on what points does the mentioned committee [an ad-hoc committee that developed *Recommendations to Medical Institutions* containing a "Statement of Principles for the Interruption of Pregnancy"]--and so many other Christians, including myself during decades of willful ignorance--demonstrate that it suffers from the effects of an entirely different view of man, viz., the pagan classical one? I need not here hang out the knowledge my own studies have acquired. I have the privilege of being able to quote some pertinent and well-formulated statements by one of our most outstanding contemporary research experts in the field of Protestant theology, Reinhold Niebuhr, in his standard work on Christian anthropology, *The Nature and Destiny of Man*. The historical development has here been portrayed with drama-filled simplicity:

All modern views of human nature are adaptations, transformations, and varying compounds of primarily two distinctive views of man: (a) the view of classical antiquity, that is, of the Graeco-Roman world, and (b) the Biblical view. It is important to remember that while these two views are distinct and partly incomparable, they were actually merged in the thought of Medieval Catholicism. (The perfect expression of this union is to be found in the Thomistic **synthesis** of Augustinian and Aristotelian thought.) The history of modern culture really begins with the destruction of this **synthesis**, foreshadowed in nominalism, and completed in the Renaissance and Reformation. (Niebuhr: *The Nature and Destiny of Man*, 1955, p. 5)

That last sentence should strike anyone today as something remarkable, particularly if he finds prestige in being a modern man rather than belonging to the Middle Ages. I am somewhat afraid, however, that Niebuhr may here run the risk of appearing a little too optimistic in behalf of our own epoch-making modern culture. It may be doubtful whether our time deserves the honor of distinguishing itself as destroying the false **synthesis** which the Middle Ages formed between those two incongruous views of man: the pagan-classical one and the Judeo-Christian one. Such a wholesome disentanglement, disengaging the true in anthropology from the false, is a feat of critical realism which hardly either the Renaissance or the Reformation can boast of having "completed." Least of all is it a general trait of our modern times to accumulate merits in that direction. Here, by the way, Niebuhr's realism comes out triumphantly. He points out that liberal Protestantism is doing its best in favor of a new bastard, some kind of *mixtum compositum* of the old pagan-classical and the Christian-Biblical view of man.

Modern culture has thus been a battleground of two opposing views of human nature. This conflict could not be resolved. It ended in the more or less complete triumph of the modernized classical view of man. (Ibid.)

That is the Platonic view of man as a hybrid monster--I dare to use this epithet, and I have demonstrated its validity in my book, *Man, the Indivisible* (Oslo University Press, 1971)--a disrupted wretch fighting its meaningless battle between a body too exclusively

material to have any trace of spirituality in it and a mind too abstractly intellectualistic to have any trace of personal humanity left in it.

God, the Situation Ethicist, pp. 149.3-151.2

I do not think it strange that some fears might arise for the safety of true totality where an extreme idealism of the type I first mentioned finds itself strangely coupled with an equally extreme yearning for personal success and personal well-being. But who would dare to say that the latter has no legitimate place whatsoever, along with the former? In my opinion, the true problem consists in bringing them together into that harmonious **synthesis** which must be the real aim of mature human existence.

However, my main point here is the following: Precisely the intensely agitated and critical character of that double set of boundless yearnings--one towards the realization of infinite ideals, the other towards the attainment of secular prosperity and material safety--this pointed duality makes adolescence an age of potent dangers. The prospect for unity in man's later life depends on one thing: Will that radical rupture between the inward-tending and the out-ward tending elements ever reach a point of final integration? If not, mature existence is bound to be without harmony!

The Maligned God, pp. 95.3-96.1

Up to the Reformation our world had been thoroughly accustomed to the externally well-rounded compromises and the internally well-digested **synthesis** of a platonized Christianity. By that I mean a humanly very attractive mixture between the noblest forms of human idealism and Christianity. It is not strange at all that such a world would tend to be scandalized by Luther's unpolished statement:

"Esto peccator et pecca fortiter, sed fortius fide et gaude in Christo, qui victor est peccati."

Small wonder that a stern adversary, the eminent Roman-Catholic Luther-scholar, Denifle, here exclaims with a certain consternation: "According to Luther, God accepts the sinner as righteous in such a way that the sinner remains a sinner".

However, one thing particularly in Denifle's attack against Luther's theology, I am at a loss to understand. That is the statement: Luther's force consists more in "the religious quietive" than in the "ethical motive". That seems to overlook completely the vehement indignation which caught the German reformer's entire person at the sight of the prevailing laxness of the contemporary clergy. It also seems to overlook a most practical ethical reform movement in which he was to assert himself as a tremendous dynamic force.

It would seem equally unwarranted to suggest that aggressive pride could be at the root of the Reformer's reaction.

When did it happen that a particularly alert consciousness of one's own unworthiness and a sincere sorrow over this unworthiness, led a person to proud defiance? Never. A true realization of our hopeless state as men left to the deplorable buttresses of our "own righteousness", can consistently drive us one way only: to the cross of Calvary; that is the narrow path of Life: Christ, our Righteousness.

The Maligned God, pp. 117.1-118.3

Considered from our special point of view, we might say that the French reformer

presents a "monism" of a somewhat strange type: It is apparently not so much based on **synthesis** and unification, but more on exclusion and annihilation of the refractory elements!

The great message Calvin endeavors to imprint upon the minds of his audience, with untiring energy and passionate zeal, is this: God is everything, man is nothing. That truth is all-important, --the more so as man's most inveterate perversity is that of overestimating and even idolizing both himself and all other created things.

To Calvin, however, God is not first and foremost the boundless love. He is above all the eternal, almighty will, which does not suffer any limitations whatsoever. Any creature or principle that could be imagined to possess any kind of proper values, or even any real existence, outside of God--that would be an absurdity to him. For it would imply such a limitation. But neither man nor evil, or any other thing you might mention could limit God.

Calvin's radicalism and passion for the absolute must necessarily lead him to awkward positions of downright irreality sometimes. Undoubtedly he has been rather painfully conscious of this himself. And who would envy his situation? There is certainly no beaten track ahead of the man who feels under a certain obligation to reduce everything, outside God, to absolutely nothing. Those extraneous things--such as the world, the evil, man, etc.--are not always so easily explained away even by means of the most subtle logics. For, every moment, they produce irrefutable evidence of the fact that they do exist, after all. So, if God's unlimited, untainted glory is to be fully maintained only at such a price, then his prophet on earth unquestionably has a most ungrateful task to perform.

The Maligned God, p. 121.1-4

Of course here, too, going from one extreme to the other is very tempting. For ages people have reasoned conventionally: "Deep thinking produces intense staring." So it sounds quite subtle, even revolutionary, doesn't it, to state, "no-no, intense staring, on the contrary, produces deep thought." This is also almost exactly what we observe some iconoclastic psychologists to assert.

Rightly considered, however, that new statement--pronounced with almost equal cocksureness by some lovers of paradoxical formulations--might of course be criticized as a dualistic onesidedness, just as unwarranted as the first. It is simply an analytical attitude of the opposite form. But if rather the **synthesis**, the *totality*, is the real truth, then we should think any separation, or splitting up of that totality, must inevitably remove us from the full and inalienable reality.

In fact, you are perfectly right in asking this very relevant question: if the inward thought or feeling on one hand, and its outward movement of expression on the other, are just different aspects of one single reality, why then give the latter a stress out of all proportion, as it may sometimes come to appear that we, too, have done in the present discussion?

Well, we have two good reasons for stressing the *outward* in our discussion: first, its dignity and importance as an *equal* partner has been sadly slighted in traditional thinking (as well as in traditional living). Secondly, its more tangible character--please notice this--makes it more apt to serve as a *practical hold* for a truly alterocentric orientation in life.

Man the Indivisible, p. 30.1-4

We may quote here just one little statement from a modern religious writer. It contains nothing startling from a dogmatic Christian point of view. For the views are in perfect accordance with what are considered to be orthodox Christian views, as regards man's utter inability to change himself without the grace and the miraculous intervention of God. Still it affords material for strange reflections:

It is a law of nature that our thoughts and feelings are encouraged and strengthened as we give them utterance. While words express thoughts, it is also true that *thoughts follow words*. If we would give more expression to our faith, rejoice more in the blessings that we know we have,--the great love and mercy of God,--we would have more faith and greater joy.* (Italics ours.)

And we know the striking piece of advice Pascal would not hesitate to give a group of young men who desired to obtain a deeper feeling of piety: Just conform your outward lives to all the outward practices of the Christian congregation, and you will soon see that the inward feeling of piety gradually appears 'spontaneously', so to speak.

It is the theorist who makes us believe that religious life, too, may be divided up into separate departments, something called 'faith' on one hand and something called 'works' on the other. In our 'Christian Anthropology' we shall in due course discuss what we call the *dualism of faith versus works*, showing that this too is an abstraction foreign to life's reality.

But is not this peculiar pattern of Christian 'pragmatism', here recommended by Pascal, after all, a sort of dualism in its turn? you might perhaps object. 'Perform some outward action *first*', it seems to say, 'and you will have some inward experience *afterwards*.' Ought not the true viewpoint of a really consistent totality and **synthesis** to rather exclude every form of mutual interaction between the outward and the inward? Should it not render impossible--in principle, so to say--any influence of Form upon matter, or of matter upon Form--to continue using Aristotle's terminology?

Man the Indivisible, pp. 32.4-33.4

Of course, that harmonious fusing together of the two, thus producing a perfect whole, is a fact which has impressed many admirers of antiquity before Schiller, and many after him as well. But few have dived so deeply into the underlying secrets of that striking fact. And few have given so good a description of the admirable *totality* characterizing the Greek mind in a general way, as a result of this **synthesis**.

It is of tremendous interest to us to have this established as *genuinely Greek*. For if it is genuinely Greek, then *Plato* cannot be so genuinely Greek as most historians have been inclined to think. We would dare to say that originally he is not at all. At least he is as far from this harmonious '*flowing together*' as any one can be. According to Schiller's conception of the typically Greek, the *material* and the *spiritual* here have no difficulty whatsoever in associating together. In fact, he states: one is simply not *allowed* except in association with the other. We had rather say: one is not *imaginable* except in association with the other. At least, in the living current of human life a *dissociation* of the two would be unthinkable.

Man the Indivisible, p. 100.1,3

* E. G. White: *Ministry of Healing*, 1905, p. 251

We shall presently have a closer look at Plato's dualistic views on *man*. Without a profound 'ideological reversal' here as well, there would be no hope anyway of any true **synthesis**. What is demanded is a thorough-going process of integration right in the core of everyday human life. That is what we call a genuinely *spiritual* trend towards wholeness and harmony in the world that really matters to man. Plato's 'reconciliation' of the 'two worlds' in *Timaios* is nothing but a half-hearted *modus vivendi*. It is merely a question of spirit and matter trying to get along together as best they can. There is no lasting and reliable improvement in the troubled relations previously conjured up between the two 'antagonists'. And what would be the true result of their recent 'agreement of co-existence'? To a man so seriously affected by the fatal illness of spiritualism as Plato that would only mean the entry into a more chronic stage of his old and henceforth incurable nostalgia for the dreamland of Pure-Soulism, a Utopia far beyond any shores of our immediate mind-body reality.

Man the Indivisible, p. 144.5

The following is an empirical fact of the history of ideas, we may safely say: where the idealism and spiritualism of pagan philosophy have made their way for some time, there pantheism, as a sort of 'religious' conviction, will faithfully follow their traces.

And what does this pantheism of pagan philosophy and pagan sham-religion represent, as regards the conservation of ideals of totality in our Western culture? We have entered upon a program of research in that field in our third volume of *Man, the Indivisible*. Here we shall limit ourselves to stating: *pantheism* represents not an integration of the ideal and the real, but a confusion of the two.

But what is the cause for this mere *attempt* at an integration, which only ends in sad confusion? In our opinion the cause is clear: it is just the great Automatism--automatism erected as the supreme principle, an axiomatic principle. That is the 'axiom' paralyzing every human endeavour from arriving at the **synthesis**, a sensible integration of all things seen and lived.

For that automatism, carried to its last 'logical' consequence, constitutes the simple negation of all meaning, all perfection, all life--briefly all reality. Automatism is the ultimate blockage of all reasonable reasoning.

Man the Indivisible, pp. 148.6-149.3

There is no doubt about it: after Plato a philosophy was needed which could overcome the dualism on which the theory of the Idea had remained hanging. We are not astonished to find that such a philosophy had to base itself on *biology* rather than on *mathematics*. For how could an Idea, in terms of a vain abstraction, ever become a principle of real life? It would seem a most sound reaction now to start longing for a philosophy realizing a happy **synthesis** of the *ideal* and the *real*. Such a philosophy ought to be equally capable of realizing the happy **synthesis** of *soul and body*.

Man the Indivisible, p. 153.2

In spite of all that Aristotle has in common with Plato, he was the man who, to an admirable extent, made the Idea descend from its high heavens of the absolute down upon the firm ground of concrete realities. The Form of Aristotle is still the Idea of Plato,

one may perhaps say. But it is now an Idea immanent in things. Dualism and idealistic spiritualism had received their first serious blow.

And nevertheless, the dualist conception of man may be said to have reigned with almost sovereign power in our world during the more than two millennia which have passed since the days of the highlight of Greek philosophy.

This is a trend which was never confronted by any entirely worthy match in reality. Professor Werner may very well say about the system of Aristotle something which seems to place Plato in the shade:

It joins in a vast **synthesis** all the currents of thought that had been produced before him, and it gives forever the model of true philosophical research.*

But whether that statement about the vast **synthesis** is a real eulogy, that may be a great question. For there are things which should never be synthesized. There are things which never *can* be synthesized.

What we must face unflinchingly is the situation, barely and squarely, such as it was in general likely to present itself to the vision of serious anthropologists, after the two giants of Greek philosophy, Plato and Aristotle, had thrown their weights into the balance of the history of ideas in our Western culture.

Verily, verily, the image of man which they have handed down to posterity is rather that of a hybrid creature, composed of a body too low to be worthy of true esteem and true salvation, and on the other hand a soul too high to be actually human.

Man the Indivisible, pp. 180.2-181.1

But let it be noted as a general historical fact: the Fathers of the Church during the very first centuries are far from anxious to espouse ideas of Platonic immortality. Personally they are not at all, as a rule, consciously troubled by such ideas. Accordingly, they are not consciously troubled by the philosophical problems involved in them either. That consciousness of a painful problem--for the Christian theologian as well as for the Christian philosopher--is a phenomenon springing up only by and by. In fact, it springs up only in connection with an increasingly conscious belief in 'natural human immortality'.

However, that belief is seen to spread at an accelerating pace, as century by century rolls over the Christian Church.

By the way, non-Christian philosophers seem doomed to wrestle with the same invincible enemy. *Avicenna*, in his mighty efforts to reconcile Aristotle with Mohammed, actually returns to the problem of reconciling Aristotle with Plato. He 'solves' the problem by considering the soul from two different points of view. A person you happen to meet, may, also, be considered from two different points of view, says Avicenna. He may be a *worker*, but first of all he is a *man*. He is a man by his *essence*, and a worker by his *function*. Something similar applies to the soul. 'In itself', or according to its *essence*, it is a substance. According to its *function*, however, it serves as a form for the human body.

Through this trick, both Aristotle and Plato should be fairly well satisfied. In other words: the soul certainly has the task of animating the human body. Certainly, also, that body dies. But still there is no actual reason to fear that the soul should be bound to die at

* Werner: *La Philosophie grecque*, p. 192.

the same time. What does the death of the body really mean, then? It only means that the soul has finished exerting 'its special *functions*'.

No wonder that even many Christian thinkers, in similar distress, found some temporary consolation in this ingenious attempt, on the part of a Mohammedan, to solve a painful problem. They, too, were obviously aching to have Plato's celestial immortality and Aristotle's unity of body and soul at the same time. Avicenna's eclecticism seemed to furnish that palatable **synthesis**.

Albertus Magnus has eloquently expressed the intense willingness of Christian philosophy to accept this desperate attempt at reconciling the irreconcilable.

But how one can actually agree with those two philosophers at the same time is of course only a new problem. If we accept the solution of considering the soul as a form given to the living body, how on earth can we still manage that fabulous trick of pure abstraction which consists in considering the soul 'in itself'!

Thomas Aquinas was no man of easy compromises. But he, too, was a man of the late Middle Ages. That is a time when the doctrine of the natural immortality of the human soul had already been firmly and sacredly established by the Christian Church. And Thomas was no iconoclastic destroyer of consecrated dogmas. So how could he think it his task to cut away violently the doctrine of natural immortality? On the contrary, he believes in that doctrine, just as good Christians during centuries before him, and during centuries after him, have believed in it.

So he really has no advantages whatsoever over his colleagues in the realms of human philosophy. He is not exempted from the *problem*. He sees only one possibility: *to face it*. He faces it more seriously and more inexorably than Avicenna. And he, too, is an Aristotelian. He fully believes in the oneness of the human being. However, with that truly Christian belief in human oneness on one hand, and a truly non-Christian belief in natural immortality on the other hand, how could he ever hope, in spite of the superior acuteness of his mind, to arrive at a true solution of the problem? How can there *be* any true solution, where there is no true problem? The 'enigma' of a union between body and soul is an artificial problem. It bases itself on postulates which, themselves, have no foundation whatsoever--namely the dualism of the substances and the immortality of the soul. The more truly intelligent a thinker is, the more unable he will be to find the 'true solution' of an entirely spurious problem.

Man the Indivisible, pp. 250.3-252.2

The element lacking in our peculiar practicality is, once more, the vision of a *purpose*, a meaningful goal. What is the picture we obtain here *if* we go to the really eminent and influential philosophers of modern times?

Of course we must first mention *Descartes*. His *Discours de la Methode* becomes a sort of constitutional charter to all subsequent philosophy. That illustrious manifesto of the principles of modern thinking, however, bluntly declares that the speculative philosophy of antiquity and of the Middle Ages must finally be replaced by a new philosophy,--a 'practical' philosophy!

But let us notice one thing: this is not *practical* in the mild, humanistic, and spiritual sense of the word. It is much rather practical in what we should like to call a 'political' sense. For what is the great goal here? It is, expressly, to make man a *possessor and master of nature*.

What now finds its genesis, is the era of Western science in fact, the *hardest* and *coldest* form intellectualism has ever adopted.

Science, that brilliant new star of technical progress and material prosperity, is finally to take over the intellectual leadership of this world after the bankrupt reign of impractical super-idealists, as some moderns might undoubtedly like to call their predecessors.

Thus the old form of intellectualism--comparatively naive and harmless, after all--is henceforth inexorably replaced by a form more relentless and glaringly one-sided (that is, deficient in human totality) than almost any other. For if idealism without science (factual knowledge) is a bad thing, then science without idealism is ten times worse. Here, too, the *exclusiveness* appears to be the great misfortune and the fatality. For true totality, also, may have its perfectly affirmative attitude towards intellectual life. And that attitude is just a happy **synthesis** of those two fateful extremes of isolation.

Man the Indivisible, pp. 253.2-254.3

What are the relationships between Platonism and Aristotelianism in the philosophical and anthropological activity of the Renaissance period?

Through the Academy of Florence, under the leadership of *Marsilio Ficino*, Plato's ideas have a veritable renaissance of their own. Both Ficino and *Pico*, another outstanding figure of the Florentine Academy, were thinkers of profound erudition and original creative power. Their school soon became the centre of a new Platonic influence in Europe. In England, for instance, the Florentine Academy exerted an influence which is clearly visible in the so-called Cambridge School of British thinking and theology. Ernst Cassirer has given a very interesting study on this Italian influence on the rebirth of Platonism in modern England.*

To our mind, there is a tinge of actual sadness pervading the whole history of that movement towards a *Platonic* reawakening right in the core of Western Christianity. Probably any attempt to create harmony and wholeness where there is nothing but discord and disintegration in the fundamental make-up, is bound to have something tragic about it. The battle between *faith* and *knowledge* has been the fateful disturber of inward peace with Occidental man for a long time. From this new secularized culture there seem to be no paths leading back to a genuine Christian culture of the old type. True, the cultural spirit of antiquity, embraced by this Western World, as it is being ushered into the era of modern times, is not exactly the same as the paganism of old. It is a new paganism, but sometimes a paganism even more pagan than the old one. Its distance from Christianity has become greater, as it were. It is a paganism more titanic--wilfully and deliberately titanic--than that of antiquity had ever been. Today there is no more *pia philosophia*--anxious to give at least a certain illusion of a reconciliation. The days have passed when it was naively believed that the virtue-conscious and heaven-bound Plato could still be reconciled with Jesus Christ.

To be sure, some of the most enthusiastic idealists of the Florentine Academy may one have imagined that they had finally knit the knot of wonderful **synthesis** between Platonic and Plotinian *Eros* on the one hand, and the Christian *Agape* on the other. But men like Giordano Bruno were also eminently characteristic of the Renaissance. And

* Ernst Cassirer: *The Platonic Renaissance in England*, 1953

such men seemed bent on proving to the world that the same Eros, whom pious souls had thought it possible to tame and Christianize, is forever indomitable, and pagan through and through. According to Giordano Bruno, love is 'the strongest evidence of titanic power in man'.

As time passes, more and more men will have to make the choice between Savonarola and Macchiavelli. The predominant trend of the times is to choose Macchiavelli rather than Savonarola.

Man the Indivisible, pp. 255.2-256.3

However, the relation between the interior world of man's consciousness, and the exterior world of things surrounding him, is not yet as problematic as it becomes with Plato. There is, after all, a considerable confidence that man, thanks to his natural senses, is fairly able to grasp the realities of his environment.

As for Aristotle, we know what important role *he* ascribed to the exterior object, for the whole process of sensation. That object, moreover, is not only the condition of every sensation, but even its very cause. The object must exert a positive influx on the human sense. The subject is sensitive only in a more passive way; he is a potential perceiver. But the object first has to perform an act and a movement.*

There must be a contact between the object and the subject for any sensation, but the first impulse comes from the object perceived. Not that Aristotle underestimates the part the *subject* has in this process of sensation. In fact, it can only be explained through a **synthesis** of the *subject* and the *object*.

Here we think Aristotle's remarkable sense of totality, of oneness and wholeness, in fact his anti-dualistic tendency, comes in.

He admits the obvious diversity between the notion of colours or sounds on one hand, and that of sight or hearing on the other. But in the very act of seeing, the colour and the sight are no longer two distinct things. They are one and the same fact, a vital process, one identical metaphysical reality. For then the physical quality of the exterior object passes into the act of sight, and the sight passes into the quality.**

Man the Indivisible, pp. 298.3-299.4

So a sort of brand new philosophy embracing both spirit and matter would seem to suggest itself as an imperious need. The sad thing is, however, that the forthcoming "**synthesis**," which, in this historic game of a dialectical hocus pocus, is supposed to make the **thesis** and the **antithesis** join in mysterious wedlock, is bound to be just as empty as each one of the two entities composing it. My students, who have overheard me so many times saying that a person's soul and body are only two sides of one and the same totality, often think they have a most problematic question with which to disarm my eternal "doctrine of oneness" or "dogmatic monism." How come, they say, challengingly, that pantheism's ingenious combination of spirit, on the one hand, and matter, on the other hand, should not be wholeheartedly accepted as producing exactly the same totality you constantly speak about?

I am sorry--that is all I can say--You are perfectly wrong when you assume that the pantheist actually proposes a realistic merger of body and soul, matter and spirit. Please

* *De anima*, II, 5, 417 a, 17-18.

** *De anima*, III, 12, 425 b, 25.

remember: what the professional spiritualist operates with is not at all real spirit. By no means; it is "pure spirit," and that is absolute emptiness. A *spiritual* reality from which you cut away every bit of material concreteness, is no longer any spiritual reality at all. By no means. It is a specter, a ghostly nonentity. It is a zero, nothing more. In the same way, the body (for instance, of a human being) which the professional materialist speaks about, is no body at all. That, too, is a mere abstraction, so a blank zero. And you know, what sound mathematics arrives at when one zero is added to another zero. That makes zero, not one bit more. So the totality here achieved is total nothingness. And still I must remind you about one most important fact: Nothingness is not the worst thing you could achieve. The worst thing is minus infinite. That is what pantheism has achieved.

Mystic Omega of End-Time Crisis, pp. 48.2-49.1

It is simply below all real places of a world of sound human senses we must imagine that "locus" of a cryptic rendezvous between spiritualism proper and the darkest materialism; that is, between the superstar ideal of "pure spirit" as the exclusive "value," and "black" matter ("matter as such," matter "per se").

Do you realize something of the tragedy of tragedies here implied? It is the miserably disrupted human heart seeking its eventual "peace" and "rest" in that abyss of philosophical disruption: Pantheism. Never has there been a more fantastic compromise devised. Pantheism, you see, is a brain child more monstrous, indeed, than either of its parents. So intelligent human beings have all good reason to ask with incredulity: How could there be imagined any compromise, any "**synthesis**" whatsoever, between those two obnoxious extremes we have been contemplating?

And still the bastard offspring of that shamelessly unnatural wedlock is a historical fact, and the spiritual movement it represents is a fearful reality we have to accept, not as a fatality we should get resigned to, but as a demon we have to fight with resoluteness and wisdom from God.

We should never flatter ourselves that pantheism is something we can fully understand. It is too foolish, indeed, for that. And foolishness can hardly ever be properly understood. All I can say is this: It must have been a pretty hard-pressed spiritualism, and a pretty hard-pressed materialism, too, that could finally amalgamate to form pantheism. Here the all-time peak of absurdity as a virtual doctrine, taught by demons and by men, must have been reached. You know what that doctrine of pantheism actually preaches don't you? It solemnly proclaims that matter itself is from eternity. Matter is incorruptible. Matter is absolutely divine.

Mystic Omega of End-Time Crisis, p. 51.1-4

By and large, Protestants have never acquired any fame comparable to that of Catholics for what theology and philosophy have called "*reconciliatio oppositorum*"* or "*complexio oppositorum*".** In fact it is rather secular philosophy -- and not at all traditional religion -- that has developed the habit of astonishing the world of thinking men by having the boldness to blow up the virtual problem of mutually exclusive stand-points into thin air.

In the history of ideas in terms of quite secular thinking, it is true, this phenomenon of

* *reconciliatio oppositorum*--reconciliation of the opposites.

** *complexio oppositorum*--a complex of the opposites.

a *reconciliatio oppositorum* is so significant that we could not possibly pass it by in silence. Above all, it would be blamable in the highest degree, in fact a fatal negligence, if you and I now decided to close our eyes to what is here taking place right in our midst.

At first glance, you might not think that Raymond Cottrell would be the man launching out on this kind of an experiment at all, of reconciling the absolute opposites. In the first place you might feel convinced that he, like anyone among his colleagues, must be too deeply troubled indeed by that hopeless "oppositio" (that 'gulf fixed') between what he thinks the Bible says and what he thinks the Spirit of Prophecy says. Just listen to the definiteness with which he proclaims the following:

"With the traditional Adventist interpretation of Daniel 8:14 as **thesis** the historic-linguistic-contextual method of exegesis, which stands in opposition to it at practically every point, is its **antithesis**. Raymond F. Cottrell: *A Hermeneutic for Daniel 8:14*, unprocessed manuscript, p. 15.

And in the following paragraph the author goes on to describe this **thesis/antithesis** confrontation within our denomination as something rather untreatable and almost tragic:

"Our interpretational **thesis** and methodological **antithesis** are as impossible and mutually exclusive as matter and anti-matter and have the potential of mutually destroying each other, and the church as well. While Adventist Bible scholars have adopted the historical method, the church, as a whole, still basically practices the proof text method. Unresolved this dichotomy could have unfortunate consequences". *Ibid.*

You might here naturally imagine something about Cottrell which has not come true at all. You might think: Such a man must opt for a clear choice with all his heart, for instance something like the following: "The Bible is right. So Ellen White must be wrong."

You might also naturally assume: Such a cutting short of the matter could not take place without a most painful experience in Cottrell's deepest heart. For it is evident that he is still heartily attached to the idea of the Spirit of Prophecy as something an old Seventh-day Adventist can never give up without the agonizing feeling of having had to give up Seventh-day Adventism itself. To Cottrell, the act of giving up your faith in the divine origin of the visions of Ellen White comes pretty close to giving up your very survival as a Seventh-day Adventist. That man seems to have a heart vibrating with existential engagement and ultimate concern. So when I hear his cry of despair, how could I fail to adopt toward him the same attitude of sympathy that I express toward other cases, in the history of modern philosophy, of man's desperate leap into the ultimate absurdity. What I grant to Kierkegaard and Tillich I must grant to Cottrell. It is evident that our man finds his refuge in an escape mechanism which is not one bit less tragic than the one existentialist philosophers in our day have made famous. Raymond Cottrell goes on to say his final say, and it *is* tragic indeed:

"The only way to resolve a problem such as this, is to find **synthesis** on a higher level of understanding."

In the following pages he presents that hermeneutic of his, evidently without any sense of shame or hesitation. It is precisely the disrupted kind of pagan **synthesis** to which we in our culture have fallen victim. He describes it as the "hermeneutical bridge" from the historic method to the concepts Seventh-day Adventists (including Ellen White) have, so far, based on Daniel 8:14.

Was there anything different in what happened to seriously troubled theologians of the past, such as Kierkegaard and Tillich? They, as well, had a deep sigh of relief at the moment when they decided that they did not have to engage in any "positive findings" of modern scientific research, on the one hand, or against the childlike statements of the Scriptures on the other hand. God's truths were of an "entirely different order." They were "beyond all puny mathematical logicalness." God's thoughts and dealings did not need to make sense.

Exactly in the same way Cottrell has found peace for his tormented soul as a sophisticated Bible scholar. He has solved the problem. He has found the principle of a "**synthesis** on a higher level of understanding."

Omega II, pp. 14.4-16.4

Now back then to precisely that precarious case of ours in the dramatic age of theological polarizations. At the very moment that you and I have pushed our polarization quarrels in theology to their ultimate extreme, we are ripe for the worst of all. "Operation Vapor" was the name I gave to it in "Omega I" (pp. 32-33) [*The Mystic Omega of End-Time Crisis*]. Ellen White's anti-spiritualistic message said: "Heaven is *not* a vapor. It is a place." There is a literal sanctuary, a concrete reality in time and space. Christ has gone to prepare something for us. What is that? It is "mansions for those who love Him, those who in obedience to His commands come out from the world, and are separate." (Letter 253) What always happens after the sophisticated theological quarrels with their culmination in terms of ultimate polarization, is a reaction significantly described as the "evaporation". What, exactly, is apparently evaporated (or thoroughly neutralized)? It is the reality of **antithesis**. And Hegel certainly was not the first philosopher who taught us to put **thesis** and **antithesis** in the same bottle, as it were, shaking them up and then serving the delicious product coming out of the blender as a most wonderful gastronomic new creation: the **SYNTHESIS**. No, Satan himself was the first masterful operator of the magic blender.

What some of our Bible scholars think they have arrived at as the great unalterable truth, is their **THESIS**. So, what Ellen White states contrary to this, will inevitably be viewed as the **ANTITHESIS**. This sounds tragic. But the culmination of the tragedy is not yet.

We can still have considerable respect for research experts who arrive at the conclusion that for instance Ellen White's statements about what happened in 1844 are irreconcilably unbiblical. I have the gentleman duty to assume that those experts are men of ethical integrity in their research. Some of them show signs of being visibly unhappy about their findings. They just have to declare what their famous historic-linguistic research tool, has presented to them as "the barren facts." They decide to face those facts, and take the consequences.

But what now about a similarly convinced theologian arriving at the very same conclusion, but then suddenly saying: Let us apply the method of dialectic concoction to this nasty case. For it is too bad to be faced squarely. Hopefully the **synthesis** resulting from the blending process will heal the brew. It will simply take the whole venom out of the pot.

Frankly, can we preserve the same respect for a theologian who thus turns into a magician, spiritually speaking? Of course we can still respect him as a magician, a

sleight-of-hand expert of admirable dexterity. But let it be noted: to a theological scholar, the simple swinging of the magic wand cannot command any true admiration. It is not realism of any adequate description. It offends the standards of integrity necessarily maintained by any field of respectable science.

This just is not the way intelligent science works. Take any matter you have scientifically established as a reliable fact, a true *thesis*. As soon as that *thesis* meets its plain *antithesis*, one of two things is bound to happen. Either there will be a consistent fight, most likely a life-and-death battle, or another possibility is of course lurking in the background all the time, that is, the "great merger". The two antagonists join heartily in a sort of mystic matrimony. The outcome of that is the bastard phenomenon so passionately desired. It so happens that it is called the "*synthesis*" in some philosophical circles. But of course it does not have anything to do with *synthesis* in the normal scientific sense of the term. Here there is, for instance, no question of sound totality. Frankly, what do we ever expect from a *hocus pocus* experiment of simple sorcery anyway?

At the moment when a person makes as if disagreeable encounters with reality do not have any legitimate existence, thus letting the hard fact of *antithesis* vanish into thin air, he has actually established himself as some kind of miniature Hegel. He has, in his turn, assimilated the art of what Hegel calls "negating the negation".

But that is, and will always be, an affront to all sensible logic, whether human or divine. It is the romantic humanist's day-dream way of dispensing with disagreeable discoveries in his life and in his research. He negates their very existence.

Omega II, pp. 23.1-24.3

So far, that celebrated theologian-philosopher Paul Tillich may have proved to be perfectly consistent in his own secret reasoning. I am not trying to be hilarious or facetious at the great theologian's expense. Tillich certainly knows what "concern" means in terms of human worry, the worry of man about man.

Going to that man's private life history, we know for sure that he was subject to a worry that shook his very existence. I have already told you about the confrontation he had to go through, facing what he, no doubt most candidly, felt obliged (if he was not to give up his intellectual integrity) to consider as mutually exclusive positions: on the one hand the almost unanimous and particularly loud-spoken testimony of natural science in those days, and on the other hand, the testimony of traditional Christianity, the simple record of Holy Writ.

To Tillich this was a *thesis/antithesis* confrontation, if ever there existed one. How was he going to cope with that? Would he choose the tough road of genuine Christian Realism, or would he choose the cheap one of pagano-Christian dialectic. He had already made his choice.

As a man *without* a God, he embraced the *doctrine* of God (theology). Is a duplicity of that kind realistic? No, such a lukewarm compromise is bound to be tragically unrealistic. It cannot fail to vitiate the integrity of all who engage in it.

By settling for this "solution" Tillich at the same time settled for the greatest worry (or "concern" or whatever you would like to call that heart-rending agony) any man can bring into his life. Such a man has due reason for being chronically worried, so "ultimately concerned" in the fullest existential sense of the term. In fact, that is the most disturbingly human sense imaginable.

Worried about what? Worried about the destiny of his very calling, that profession which his heart counted dearest of all things: the sacred task of being a Christian teacher.

Omega II, p. 33.1-6

So back to the research teams we are particularly speaking about.

What does elementary research ethics demand of them? It cannot be avoided in an intelligent creature's life that he is faced with an *Either-Or*. In the great case of *thesis* versus *antithesis*, common sense logic testifies unambiguously that there is no place for a *Both-And*. Whoever insists on having that Both-And, instead of the Either-Or, is bastardingly unfaithful to his inner integrity, intellectually as well as morally. For intellectual honesty and ethical honesty are inseparable aspects of a tremendous totality.

Do I then say: Tillich should have thrown overboard every bit of his faith in Christianity? No, I just say: This would have been better, infinitely better, than doing what he did.

He went, with his head raised, into the weird no-mans-land of metaphysical speculation. That is a great temptation to some people. For it affords the comforting sense of a certain immunity. The speculative philosopher seems to think that henceforth he is beyond the grasp of anyone who might like to arrest him and haul him right in front of the great tribunal of an ethical right or wrong. But does the God of Biblical realism respect that kind of an intellectual or moral "immunity"? No. To Him all such escape mechanisms are sheer foolishness. And He has clearly told us so.

Well, you may again object head-shakingly, do you then suggest that Tillich should have chosen the way of Thomas Paine, rather than that of the great theologian Paul Tillich? No, not that either. My suggestion is that he should have followed the example of William Miller. He too once was a professor of atheism (or at least deism). But he was a most candid atheist (deist). Right in the midst of his darkest atheism Miller was still struggling to save that sense of meaningfulness in life which no other philosophy than Biblical realism can guarantee. So he went on digging and digging for the pure gold of illuminating truth, a hope based on rock-bottom realism. And he finally found what he was looking for. Do you think William Miller was less intelligent than Paul Tillich in any respect? There is nothing in favor of such an assumption. The uprightness of William Miller's heart made him truly intelligent.

Miller too had a tremendous appreciation of the significance of symbolism in spiritual life. But he did not, like so many philosophizing theologians of the modernist mold, succumb to the alluring temptation of a pitfall I have called *symbolo-mania*.

Omega II, pp. 34.5-35.5

10 April 2014