The End of Theology II: The Metaphysical Status of Cosmos and the Resolution of Kant's Antinomies in Bahá'í Metaphysics

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Abstract

This second article continues the inquiry inaugurated in the first, extending the Bahá'í critique of speculative theology to the domain of cosmology and metaphysical antinomy. Where the prior study demonstrated the closure of classical theological speculation concerning God, the Manifestation, and the soul, this installment examines the ontological and epistemological status of the cosmos through the lens of Bahá'í metaphysics. Revisiting Kant's antinomies of reason—the finitude or infinity of the world, the necessity or contingency of the cosmos—this article argues that Bahá'í scripture resolves these paradoxes not through speculative synthesis but by reframing the cosmos as a structured domain of divine signs, oriented toward meaning rather than mastery. The hierarchy of worlds, the progressive nature of revelation, and the Manifestation of God as cosmological axis reveal a teleological order in which Being, time, and causality are reconfigured beyond classical metaphysics. This reorientation fulfills theology not through further speculation but through reverent recognition of the cosmos as theophanic disclosure. Thus, the end of theology entails not the abandonment of cosmology but its transformation into a space of orientation and response, preparing the ground for a subsequent articulation of praxis-based theology.

Introduction

The first article in this series established the end of speculative theology in the Bahá'í Writings through an acknowledgment of divine unknowability, the mediating function of the Primal Will, the theophanic reality of the Manifestation, and the eternal progression of the soul. It

demonstrated that Bahá'í theology does not abolish metaphysical questions but fulfills them by clarifying their epistemological and ontological limits. Theology, in this light, finds its telos not in speculative mastery but in orientation toward divine signs and the reverent recognition of the boundaries of human comprehension.

This second article extends that inquiry from theology to cosmology and metaphysical antinomy. Specifically, it examines how the Bahá'í Writings offer a distinctive resolution to the classical paradoxes concerning the cosmos by redefining the nature of reality through the lens of structured revelation. Kant's antinomies posed enduring questions about the finitude or infinity, necessity or contingency of the world—questions that remain central to philosophical cosmology today. This study contends that Bahá'í metaphysics resolves these tensions not through speculative dialectic but through a reorientation of cosmology as a domain of signs, structured hierarchically and directed toward the Manifestation of God as the axis of meaning.

Revisiting Kant's antinomies of pure reason—the contradictions inherent in claims about the world's temporal and spatial limits, its necessary or contingent existence—this article demonstrates how Bahá'í metaphysics reframes these questions. Rather than attempting to resolve the antinomies through rational synthesis, Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá relocate them within a broader metaphysical architecture in which Being, causality, and temporality are understood through the structures of divine self-disclosure rather than speculative reason.

This article proceeds in four stages. First, it reexamines Kant's antinomies in light of Bahá'í metaphysics, showing how revelation reframes these longstanding philosophical dilemmas. Second, it explores the Bahá'í cosmological hierarchy—distinguishing the realms of command and creation, the worlds of spirit and matter—and the function of signs within this structure. Third, it considers the implications of progressive revelation, temporality, causality, and

emergence for understanding cosmic order, drawing comparisons with Islamic philosophy and Heidegger's account of temporality. Finally, it argues that the end of theology entails a transformation of cosmology: from an object of abstraction to a space of orientation, from a speculative puzzle to a domain of reverent engagement.

In this movement, Bahá'í metaphysics does not reject cosmological inquiry but reconfigures its significance. The cosmos becomes theophanic: not a brute totality to be mastered by reason but a domain of structured meaning, oriented toward the Manifestation and divine purpose. Theology thus reaches its fulfillment not through speculative conquest but through the recognition of signs and the cultivation of spiritual orientation, preparing the ground for a subsequent articulation of praxis-based theology.

Kant's Antinomies Revisited through Bahá'í Thought

The Problem of the Infinite vs. Finite Cosmos

Immanuel Kant, in the first part of his *Critique of Pure Reason*, introduces the critical problem he names the "Antinomies of Pure Reason." These are contradictions that arise when reason, unbounded by empirical constraints, attempts to conceive the totality of the world (cosmos) as a complete and self-contained whole.

In Kant's formulation, the "world" refers not to things-in-themselves (noumena), but to appearances (phenomena)—what is experienced within the forms of space and time, which are themselves subjective conditions of human sensibility. Thus, the cosmos is a projection of the mind's a priori structures, not an ontologically self-contained totality.

The first antinomy Kant presents is as follows:

	Antinomy Thesis (Affirmative Claim)	Antithesis (Negative Claim)
1st	The world has a beginning in time and is limited in space.	The world has no beginning in time and is infinite in space.

According to Kant, both claims can be supported by rational argument, yet both ultimately collapse into contradiction when reason attempts to extend itself beyond the bounds of possible experience. He resolves the antinomy by distinguishing between appearances (empirically knowable) and things-in-themselves (transcendentally unknowable). The cosmos as a totality has no determinate beginning or limit because such totality is not a possible object of experience. This illusion arises because reason mistakenly treats the empirical world as if it were an object existing independently as noumenon.

The Necessity vs. Contingency of the Cosmos

The sacred texts of Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá bypass the Kantian antinomy by redefining the ontological terms. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states: "Certain sages and philosophers hold that there are two kinds of pre-existence—essential and temporal—and that there are likewise two kinds of origination—essential and temporal. Essential pre-existence is an existence which is not preceded by a cause; essential origination is preceded by a cause... The world of existence, in relation to its Creator, is essentially originated."[1]

Here, the Bahá'í position draws upon classical metaphysical distinctions rooted in both Islamic and Aristotelian traditions. The cosmos is contingent in relation to its Creator—it is essentially originated (ḥādith dhātī). While it is essentially originated, it does not require a temporal

[1] Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fifth Edition, page 323

beginning; it may be eternally sustained in time as part of the continuous outpouring of divine grace. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continues: "Although the rays are always inseparable from the sun, the sun is pre-existent and the rays are originated... Likewise, the existence of creation is non-existence in relation to that of God. Thus, even though the universe has existence, in relation to God it is non-existence."

The Bahá’í metaphysical framework thus preserves a dual perspective: the cosmos is both temporally continuous and ontologically dependent. It is originated not in time but in its essence, because it is dependent upon a cause. This is echoed in another statement from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: "Existence is of two kinds: one is the existence of God which is beyond the comprehension of man... The second kind of existence is the human existence. It is a common existence, comprehensible to the human mind, is not ancient, is dependent and hath a cause to it."[2]

This ontological distinction undermines the foundational assumption of Kant’s antinomy—that the world must be either finite or infinite, either caused or uncaused, in time and space. From the Bahá’í standpoint, such questions are improperly framed if they ignore the **relational** nature of existence in Bahá’í metaphysics: existence derives its reality only in relation to its Source. Absolute non-existence cannot become existence because, in this view, creation is not ex nihilo in a strict philosophical sense but a continuous relationship of dependence upon divine will.

Bahá’u'lláh revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas, expresses a similar non-dualistic view: "Wert thou to assert that it hath ever existed and shall continue to exist, it would be true; or wert thou to

[2] Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, 30, Existence is of two kinds: one is the existence of God which is beyond the comprehension of man.

affirm the same concept as is mentioned in the sacred Scriptures, no doubt would there be about it, for it hath been revealed by God, the Lord of the worlds. Indeed He was a hidden treasure."

This passage evokes the ḥadīth qudsī, "I was a hidden treasure, and I loved to be known," interpreted by many Islamic philosophers as a timeless act of divine self-disclosure. Bahá'u'lláh describes the Word of God as the mediating principle between the Absolute and the contingent cosmos: "Know then that the Word of God, exalted and glorified be He, is too lofty and exalted to be apprehended by the senses, for it is neither of nature nor of substance. It hath never ceased to flow into the world—it is the Supreme Effulgence that hath been the cause of all emanations, and it is a being sanctified above all that hath been and shall be."

Thus, while Kant's reason reaches a limit in trying to think the cosmos as a totality, Bahá'í metaphysics asserts that the cosmos, as a contingent emanation, has no temporal origin yet remains ontologically originated. Bahá'u'lláh affirms: "Know that this enduringness (*baqā'*) is temporal, not essential—for it is preceded by a cause. Essential permanence (*baqā' dhātī*), which is not preceded, is the sole prerogative of the True One."

In this regard, Bahá'í thought reframes the antinomy through a metaphysical distinction between essence and condition. The world has no temporal beginning in the chronological sense but possesses ontological dependence, which constitutes its true mode of origination. Its continuity in time does not negate its essential contingency upon divine will.

Furthermore, in another epistle, Bahá'u'lláh declares: "Know that creation hath ever been and shall ever be. It has neither a first beginning nor a final end."

Where Kant sees contradiction, Bahá'í metaphysics sees the transcendence of the categories that generate the contradiction. The cosmos, as creation, reflects the names and attributes of God—most significantly, the attribute of eternal generosity. To suppose that this outpouring should have a beginning or end would be, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá says, contrary to the perfections of God.

Can these claims be scientifically or philosophically verified? From a Kantian or empirical standpoint, no. The Bahá'í position does not submit itself to the epistemological constraints of empirical verification. Rather, it constructs a metaphysical cosmology based on revealed knowledge and philosophical reasoning. Its explanatory power lies not in its testability but in its coherence and its capacity to situate the cosmos within a meaningful ontological hierarchy.

As a result, Kant's antinomy arises from applying categories of sensibility (space and time) beyond their empirical domain. Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá resolve this not by choosing between thesis and antithesis, but by distinguishing between temporal continuity and ontological dependency. Their position affirms the eternality of creation in time while maintaining its essential origination in relation to God. This reframing avoids the contradictions of reason by appealing to a metaphysics that transcends both empirical science and speculative rationalism.

The cosmos, then, is not a self-enclosed totality to be measured or bounded. It is the mirror of divine attributes, an unfolding expression of the inexhaustible Word of God. While Kant's critical project closes the door on metaphysical cosmology, the Bahá'í writings reopen it through revelation, reconfigured categories, and a vision of reality grounded not in the limits of reason but in the inexhaustibility of divine speech.

The Cosmos as Structured Revelation

Within the metaphysical framework advanced by the Bahá'í Writings, the cosmos is conceived as a structured domain of signs (āyāt), theophanic in nature—that is, a manifestation of the divine—fundamentally oriented toward spiritual recognition. It is not to be mastered through abstraction but approached through reverent engagement with its signs, understood as reflections of divine attributes.

Bahá'í cosmology inherits and reconfigures ancient philosophical traditions, particularly those rooted in Islamic metaphysics, wherein the cosmos is stratified according to degrees of being. Bahá'u'lláh delineates realms such as the World of Command (ʻĀlam al-Amr) and the World of Creation (ʻĀlam al-Khalq), corresponding to ontological registers of immediacy and mediation, transcendence and immanence. The cosmos, in this schema, is not brute fact but structured reality, ordered teleologically toward the Manifestation of God, who serves as the ontological and epistemological axis of being.

In *The Tablet of Wisdom*, Bahá'u'lláh underscores the essential interrelation between the realms of existence and the Word of God: "Know then that the Word of God—exalted and glorified be He—is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world, a light which hath shone forth from the Horizon of Will, expressed through the tongue of the Manifestation."

The cosmos, in this understanding, is fundamentally a response to the Word—a created order brought forth not through mechanical necessity but through the inexhaustible effulgence of divine speech. The hierarchy of worlds (ʻālamāt) embodies this theophanic structure: from the invisible world of divine Will to the perceptible world of material manifestation, each level of reality reflects, in differing degrees of intensity, the attributes of the Absolute.

The Manifestation of God occupies a unique position within this cosmological hierarchy as the Logos—the intermediary through whom divine knowledge and will are actualized in the contingent world. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains, the Manifestation discloses divine attributes in human form, providing the epistemological and ontological axis through which the cosmos becomes intelligible. Without this axis, the world would remain a closed totality, opaque to comprehension. Through the Manifestation, the cosmos is unveiled not merely as a passive text but as a dynamic site where divine attributes unfold through historical and spiritual forms. This adds a dimension of agency to the cosmos beyond its passive reflection.

This teleological orientation is expressed succinctly in the Bahá’í Writings’ insistence upon the purposefulness of creation. Bahá’u’lláh affirms: "The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and attain His Presence."[3]

Thus, the cosmos is not neutral space but a structured pedagogical reality wherein the human soul encounters divine signs and is drawn through stages of recognition, detachment, and return. It serves not as an object of mastery but as a medium of spiritual orientation—directing consciousness beyond the material to the transcendent. This orientation toward divine recognition suffuses the cosmos with meaning, shaping it as a dynamic site of spiritual formation. The movement of history, the cycles of revelation, and the progression of civilizations are all integrated into this teleological schema, wherein the Manifestation of God remains the fixed center, the *axis mundi* around which the cosmos orbits.

[3] Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u'lláh

In this light, the cosmos is revealed as dynamic rather than static. It is not a closed system but an open text, continually reinterpreted and reoriented through the successive appearances of the Manifestation. The cosmos embodies the intersection of continuity and transformation, where the eternal principles of divine Will engage the temporal realm through the agency of the Manifestation. This reaffirms the centrality of the Logos in rendering creation intelligible and oriented toward its ultimate source.

Furthermore, this cosmological vision reframes the notion of causality itself. In contrast to the mechanistic models of modern science or the deterministic chains of classical metaphysics, Bahá'í thought posits a causality grounded in divine volition and mediated through the Logos. The world is not governed by blind necessity but by intentionality—a structured order whose telos is the manifestation of divine attributes in the realm of contingency.

In this orientation, the end of theology is fulfilled: the cosmos is no longer the object of speculative conquest but the field of reverent engagement, drawing the soul beyond itself toward the ineffable Source from which all reality proceeds and to which it ultimately returns.

Temporality, Causality, and Emergence

The Bahá'í metaphysical framework offers a radical reconfiguration of temporality, causality, and the very notion of emergence, departing significantly from the assumptions of classical metaphysics while simultaneously offering a critique of modern scientific materialism. This triadic constellation—time, causation, and the arising of novelty—cannot be separated from the central theological principle that Being itself is not a static substrate but a dynamic act, a perpetual theophany in which the divine Word unfolds itself through successive realities. Hence, temporality in Bahá'í thought cannot be reduced to a linear sequence of measurable instants nor

merely to the subjective horizon of human consciousness, as Kant would have it. Rather, it reflects the ontological rhythm of divine self-disclosure, an eternal recurrence not in Nietzsche's sense of mechanical repetition but as a ceaseless actualization of potentiality in which new forms emerge from prior conditions through the agency of the Primal Will (Mashiyyat).

Bahá'u'lláh speaks of this dynamic order in profoundly metaphysical terms: "Know that creation hath ever been and shall ever be. It has neither a first beginning nor a final end." This statement reframes the question of temporality entirely. The cosmos is not a closed system progressing from alpha to omega but a living, breathing reality eternally sustained by the outpouring of divine grace. Time itself, therefore, is not an independent container in which events unfold but a derivative reality, a mode of the relationship between the emanative principle (the Word of God) and the contingent world. Each moment is thus not a discrete point but a threshold of becoming, a locus where the infinite intersects with the finite, where the timeless Word actualizes itself in temporal conditions. In this view, temporality is constituted by the continuous theophanic descent of the Word into ever new forms, each of which bears within itself the trace of its antecedents while opening the horizon for further novelty.

Causality, too, undergoes redefinition within this schema. Classical causality, rooted in Aristotelian notions of efficient, formal, material, and final causes, presupposes a closed chain of necessity in which each effect is deterministically linked to its cause. Modern science inherits this view in its preference for mechanistic explanations, albeit stripped of Aristotelian teleology. Bahá'í metaphysics, however, posits causality as fundamentally teleological but not in the Aristotelian sense of fixed ends imposed from without. Rather, causality is rooted in the inherent dynamism of being itself, which unfolds according to the exigencies of divine attributes manifesting through the Mashiyyat. This is a causality of emergence, not mechanical

compulsion—a becoming structured by purpose, yet open to novelty. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá articulates this clearly when he affirms that creation is continuous, that new worlds emerge as expressions of divine bounty without exhaustion or limit.

Emergence in this context is not the mere sum of simpler components giving rise to complexity, as in contemporary systems theory. Rather, it is the ontological actualization of latent potentials inherent in the divine Names and Attributes. Every emergent phenomenon, from the formation of galaxies to the arising of consciousness, is a sign (āyah) of the unfolding Mashiyyat, each stage necessitated not by mechanical causality but by the inherent logic of the divine will’s self-diffusion. Thus, emergence is neither arbitrary nor strictly necessary; it is purposive, aligned with the teleological unfolding of reality toward ever more complete manifestations of divine attributes. This understanding transcends both classical metaphysical determinism and modern scientific contingency by situating emergence within a dynamic metaphysics of theophanic actualization.

This conception bears profound implications for human temporality and agency. The human soul, as the seat of consciousness and volition, participates in this unfolding through acts of choice and understanding that are themselves emergent from the deeper ontological structure of reality. Human history is not merely a sequence of causes and effects but a drama of becoming in which new possibilities arise through the dialectic of revelation and response. Revelation itself is not a mere intervention but the appearance of new modalities of divine speech, each Manifestation disclosing further dimensions of the eternal Word. Thus, history and cosmology are unified under the sign of theophanic emergence: both are arenas in which Being continually gives rise to new forms, new understandings, and new modes of existence.

In sum, Bahá'í metaphysics offers a vision of temporality as the rhythmic unfolding of divine self-disclosure, of causality as the purposive movement of emergent realities aligned with the will of God, and of emergence itself as the continuous actualization of latent potentialities inherent in the divine attributes. This vision transcends the dichotomies of classical and modern thought by locating change not in mere succession or material compulsion but in the ceaseless dynamism of the Word as it unfolds through the cosmos. The implications for theology, cosmology, and human existence are profound: to live is to participate in this sacred unfolding, to act is to further the realization of divine purpose in time, and to understand is to glimpse the traces of the Eternal in the ever-new forms of the temporal.

Theological Implications: The End of Classical Cosmology

The theological implications of this reconfiguration of temporality, causality, and emergence reach beyond mere metaphysical speculation; they mark the end of what might be called classical cosmology—the inherited conception of the universe as a closed, mechanistic system governed by abstract, impersonal laws of cause and effect. Classical cosmology, rooted in both Aristotelian and later Newtonian frameworks, imagined the cosmos as a rationally ordered whole, comprehensible through the faculties of reason and reducible to its underlying principles. Even Kant's critical philosophy, while limiting speculative reason's reach, nonetheless reinforced the assumption that the world operates under strict causal regularity within the bounds of space and time as forms of intuition. In this vision, causality is an abstraction, a necessity imposed upon phenomena without inherent purpose beyond the continuation of mechanical succession.

Bahá'í thought decisively moves beyond this horizon by restoring causality to its ontological and theological roots. Causality is not an abstract, blind necessity but the unfolding of meaningful order, the disclosure of divine intention through the medium of the contingent world. Every

event, every emergent phenomenon, bears within it not only the trace of its antecedents but the imprint of purposiveness—an orientation toward the realization of latent potentials embedded within the created order by the divine Names and Attributes. As such, the cosmos is not a neutral field for scientific mastery but a space of orientation: it invites humanity to read the signs of its own unfolding, to discern in the rhythms of nature and history the traces of a transcendent purpose that exceeds mere survival or manipulation of matter.

The cosmos in this framework is not a puzzle to be solved but a mystery to be inhabited. Its intelligibility is not exhausted by causal explanation; it retains, at its core, an element of sacred unknowability. Bahá'u'lláh's affirmation that creation "hath ever been and shall ever be" marks the limit of speculative theology and cosmology alike. There is no absolute origin within time to be discovered, no first moment that can anchor our understanding in definitive knowledge of beginnings. Instead, the eternal recurrence of creation reflects the inexhaustible generosity of the divine will, the perpetual self-disclosure of Being through new forms. This unknowability of ultimate origins does not negate meaning but rather reaffirms it: the lack of a temporal starting point underscores the metaphysical truth that the world's reality is relational, not self-subsistent, and that its enduring being is grounded in the continual act of divine volition.

Within this cosmology, human knowledge is re-situated as an act of participation rather than domination. To know is not to exhaust but to orient oneself within a field of meaning that precedes and exceeds human intellect. The task of theology, then, is not to construct closed systems of explanation but to articulate the openness of reality to divine presence, the ways in which the temporal and contingent reflect, however dimly, the eternal and necessary. The end of classical cosmology thus marks a return to reverence: an acknowledgment that the world's order

is not merely functional but sacramental, a sign of deeper realities that summon humanity to humility, wonder, and ethical responsibility.

In this light, the cosmos becomes the arena for the fulfillment of divine purpose, not merely a stage for human projects. Its emergent complexity is not the accidental byproduct of blind forces but the unfolding revelation of divine wisdom, calling humanity to recognize its place within an order that is both infinitely greater and intimately participatory. Such a vision affirms not only the unknowability of ultimate origins but the meaningfulness of all that exists as oriented toward the divine. It replaces the desire for mastery with the aspiration toward understanding, not in the sense of possession but in the sense of attunement: to read the world as scripture, to interpret its signs as invitations to deeper recognition of the unity that underlies all being.

The Third Antinomy: Freedom vs. Determinism

Among the four famous antinomies presented by Immanuel Kant in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, the third—concerning the opposition between freedom and determinism—is of singular philosophical and ethical significance. Unlike the first and second antinomies, which address cosmological questions regarding time, space, and causality, the third antinomy engages directly with the foundations of moral responsibility, human agency, and the very possibility of ethics.

Kant formulates this antinomy in the following terms:

Antinomy	Thesis (Freedom)	Antithesis (Determinism)
3rd	There is spontaneous causality—acts not determined by preceding events—that is, human freedom exists.	Every event in the world is causally determined by preceding events, according to the laws of nature.

Both positions, Kant argues, are rationally defensible yet jointly contradictory. If every event is determined, there can be no genuine freedom; conversely, without freedom, the coherence of moral responsibility collapses. Kant resolves this antinomy by positing his critical distinction between the phenomenal and noumenal realms:

- In the phenomenal realm (the world of appearances), all events are governed by natural causality and determinism.
- In the noumenal realm (things-in-themselves), human beings transcend empirical causality. It is within this noumenal domain that freedom—understood as the capacity for spontaneous causation—may properly be located.

Thus, to safeguard the coherence of moral autonomy, Kant situates freedom within the noumenal self. Although the empirical self is subject to deterministic causal chains—both physical and psychological—the moral self operates within the domain of pure practical reason, unconditioned by empirical necessity.

The Bahá'í writings, particularly those of the Báb and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, approach this philosophical problem from a distinct theological and metaphysical standpoint, yet arrive at a resolution that echoes Kant's concerns while surpassing them by grounding freedom ontologically in the relational structure of divine will and human agency. The Bahá'í solution is encapsulated in the doctrinal principle: neither absolute compulsion (jabr) nor absolute delegation (tafwīḍ).

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains: "Certain matters are subject to the free will of man, such as acting with justice and fairness, or injustice and iniquity… But there are certain matters where man is forced

and compelled, such as sleep, death, sickness, failing powers… These are not subject to the will of man and he is not accountable for them."[4]

This distinction mirrors Kant's division between the phenomenal and noumenal realms but grounds the difference ontologically rather than epistemologically. Man is free in moral action but dependent on divine assistance for existence and power: "Nevertheless, in whatever direction the rudder is turned, the power of the steam propels the ship in that direction. If the rudder is turned to the east, the ship moves eastward… All the doings of man are sustained by the power of divine assistance, but the choice of good or evil belongs to him alone."

This analogy—of the ship moved by steam yet directed by the rudder—provides a theological model of compatibilism: divine grace is the condition of agency, but not its determinant. Human volition remains real, even though exercised within a matrix of divine causality.

`Abdu'l-Bahá, in *Some Answered Questions*, frames the issue within the doctrine of *tawḥīd-i-af'āl* (the unity of divine action): "In the station of the Divine Unity of Acts… everything upon which the name of thingness may be applied—its Creator is God, alone… The actions of the doers are neither by compulsion nor by delegation. Nay, the Command of God is beyond these two doctrines…"

Here, `Abdu'l-Bahá explicitly clarifies the Bahá'í position, rejecting both determinism (*jabr*) and libertarian free will. He posits a metaphysical middle path wherein God is the sole Creator, yet human beings exercise volition.

This perspective is in harmony with the Báb's teachings on free will. For instance, the Báb, in His *Ṣaḥīfat al-Uṣūl wa'l-Furū'* (Book of Principles and Branches), elucidates this dynamic

[4] Some Answered Questions, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Fifth Edition, page 287

relationship by stating: "The secret of the matter is this: God, the All-Knowing, is aware of the choices of all things, and in accordance with the choices of each, He creates them and renders unto them their recompense."

This indicates that God's creative act is not temporally posterior to human choice but eternally concurrent with His knowledge of the creature's volition. Thus, human will is real but always contingent—neither absolutely free nor absolutely constrained. The causality of divine knowledge precedes all created volition but does not impose it. This doctrine preserves both the sovereignty of God and the moral accountability of the creature.

`Abdu'l-Bahá clarifies this paradox by explaining that human action, unlike the involuntary motion of nature, stems from our volition, involving concepts such as preparedness (isti'dād) and receptivity (qabílíyyah). He highlights that while human beings act by choice, ultimately, the Divine Will is the mover of all things.

This concept is found throughout `Abdu'l-Bahá's discussion on free will and determinism in Some Answered Questions, particularly in Chapter 70, "Free Will and Its Limits." While the exact quote provided is a synthesis, its core ideas are elucidated therein, explaining that human action is distinct from natural phenomena by virtue of choice, yet both are ultimately set in motion by God.

Here, a clear ontological distinction is drawn between human and non-human creation. Trees move by necessity; humans, by volition. Yet the source of both motions remains divine. Human action involves response, intention, and deliberation—qualities absent from inanimate nature. Divine causality remains the ground of being, but not the negation of agency.

The doctrine of "neither compulsion nor delegation" is not a mere theological compromise; it reflects a profound metaphysical reconfiguration of causality itself. God does not act within the same causal register as contingent beings. His causality is enabling and sustaining, not coercive or reactive. As the Báb writes: "The Command of God is broader than the span between the heaven of Will and the earth of matter."

This principle resonates with Kant's account of practical freedom—that moral responsibility presupposes the capacity to act otherwise. Yet, where Kant grounds this capacity in the noumenal self accessible only through inference, the Bahá'í writings situate freedom within a theological ontology that integrates divine foreknowledge, sustaining grace, and human volition within a unified metaphysical structure.

To summarize:

- Kant resolves the freedom-determinism antinomy through a division between phenomenal determinism and noumenal freedom.
- Bahá'í thought maintains that human freedom is real but contingent, enacted within the matrix of divine knowledge and grace.
- The human will is enabled by divine assistance but directed by personal volition.
- God is the cause of all being but not the author of moral evil.

Both Kantian and Bahá'í perspectives affirm the necessity of freedom for moral responsibility within a universe governed by law. However, while Kant's solution relies on a metaphysical dualism between appearances and things-in-themselves, the Bahá'í view situates freedom within

a relational ontology: the creature's will operates within the field of divine sustenance and knowledge without being negated by it.

Human beings are neither puppets of fate nor sovereign creators of value; they are responsible agents whose freedom is a trust, exercised within the framework of divine assistance and omniscience. This subtle metaphysical middle path allows for ethics, accountability, and divine justice without sacrificing the unity of divine action or the necessity of creation.

Thus, the Bahá'í resolution of Kant's third antinomy not only preserves the coherence of moral responsibility but elevates it into a theology of relational freedom: an ethical ontology wherein the human will participates in, but is not dissolved by, the broader economy of divine causality. In this, Bahá'í thought advances beyond the limits of speculative metaphysics toward a metaphysics grounded in the praxis of freedom, responsibility, and divine purpose.

Necessary Being and Negative Ontology (Kant's Fourth Antinomy)

Immanuel Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* identifies a series of "antinomies" that arise when reason attempts to extend its principles beyond the limits of possible experience. The fourth and final antinomy concerns the question of an absolutely necessary being—a ground of existence that must exist unconditionally, either within the empirical world or beyond it.

Kant formulates the antinomy as follows:

Antinomy	Thesis (Necessary Being)	Antithesis (No Necessary Being)
4th	There is an absolutely necessary being, either in the world or outside it.	There is no absolutely necessary being, neither in the world nor outside it.

This antinomy encapsulates the conflict between two foundational impulses in metaphysics: the need for an unconditioned ground of existence, and the skepticism that denies such a ground as rationally demonstrable. The thesis affirms that reason leads inevitably to a necessary being as the terminus of all conditioned existence. The antithesis rejects this, arguing that necessity cannot be ascribed to any being, whether within experience or outside it, since every concept of existence remains contingent and mediated through thought.

Kant resolves this antinomy by distinguishing between the phenomenal and noumenal domains. In the phenomenal realm—the world of appearances—every event is conditioned by prior causes; necessity in this domain is impossible. However, in the noumenal realm—the domain of things as they are in themselves—a necessary being may be postulated, though not demonstrated. It serves as a regulative idea that guides reason toward unity in our understanding but cannot be established through analytic or synthetic a priori arguments. In this way, Kant neutralizes the contradiction without affirming the metaphysical reality of the necessary being.

In contrast to Kant's epistemological restraint, Bahá'í metaphysics affirms the existence of a Necessary Being (Wājib al-Wujūd) through a framework that neither relies on scholastic proofs nor collapses into rationalist dogma. For Bahá'u'lláh and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, the Necessary Being is not an object among objects but the source and ground of all existence, utterly transcendent yet causally efficacious. This affirmation is tempered by a principled apophaticism: the essence of the Necessary Being is unknowable, accessible only through its manifestations and effects.

In the Tablet to Mánikchí Sáḥib (often found within the Lawḥ-i-Jawáb), Bahá'u'lláh surveys four theological positions regarding the nature of existence and the Divine. Among these, He articulates the view closest to traditional Islamic metaphysics regarding God's transcendence and the role of the Manifestations, stating: "Another school claimeth that God is that Essence that

must of necessity exist, that His Messengers are the intermediaries between Him and His creatures, and that their mission is to lead humanity unto Him."

This understanding is further expounded by `Abdu'l-Bahá in His Commentary on the Hidden Treasure, where He clarifies the absolute distinction between the Creator and creation: "It is clear and evident that what is Possible Being cannot be part of the Absolute for no similarity, likeness, comparison or resemblance can there be between Creator and creature, between Necessary Being and Possible Being, and between Absolute and the creation."

Bahá'u'lláh's classification does more than state a preference; it reframes the problem of divine necessity not as a matter for speculative syllogism but as a truth revealed through theophanic mediation. While Kant suspends judgment on the noumenal, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that divine necessity manifests itself through the Prophets, who serve as the epistemic bridge between the contingent and the absolute.

A further articulation of Bahá'í metaphysics is found in Bahá'u'lláh's *Lawḥ-i-Basīṭ al-Ḥaqīqah*, where He addresses the philosophical notion of simple reality (*basīṭ al-ḥaqīqah*). Bahá'u'lláh interprets the maxim "the Simple Reality is all things" not as pantheistic fusion but as an ontological affirmation of the plenitude of Being itself. The Necessary Being contains all perfections without division, yet transcends all limitations: "Basīṭ al-Ḥaqīqah is all things, but not something among things."

Bahá'u'lláh emphasizes that Being as such is infinite and indivisible. It encompasses all perfections without limit or opposition, yet cannot be understood as dissolving into finite realities. The Necessary Being is not within creation but transcends it while sustaining it. Its

reality is beyond rise and decline, beyond limitation or conjunction. This ontological simplicity means that all things manifest the perfections of Being without exhausting or defining it.

In this schema, Bahá'u'lláh identifies two distinct stations in understanding Divine Unity:

1. Existential Unity (tawḥīd-i-wujūdī): In this station, only God truly exists; creation is understood as vanishingly existent in light of His Reality. "God was and there was nothing with Him; and now it is as it was."
2. Visionary Unity (tawḥīd-i-shuhūdī): In this station, the signs of the Divine are manifest in all things; the world reflects divine attributes but does not contain the Divine Essence.

These distinctions reflect a dialectic of stations, moving from the ontological negation of all but God to the affirmative recognition of His signs within creation. The world is not God, but neither is it independent; it is the disclosive veil of divine attributes.

Bahá'í metaphysics reframes Kant's Fourth Antinomy not through speculative deduction but through metaphysical humility and theological affirmation. Where Kant posits the necessary being as a regulative ideal, Bahá'u'lláh affirms it as an ontological reality—while simultaneously denying that its essence is accessible to human thought.

Kant's antinomy exposes the contradiction inherent in reason's attempt to comprehend the unconditioned. Bahá'u'lláh transcends this by asserting that the Necessary Being is not subject to conceptual grasp but is encountered through its manifestations—the Prophets—and reflected in the ordered structure of creation. Revelation becomes the epistemic ground for affirming necessity without collapsing into metaphysical presumption.

Bahá'u'lláh's metaphysics rejects the closure of rational systems. The Necessary Being is not in or out of the world; rather, the world depends on and is defined by that Being. The logic is not one of immanence or participation but of emanation and manifestation. This distinction circumvents the binaries Kant identifies: the necessary being is not an object in the causal chain, nor a mere abstract postulate, but the ontological ground of all conditioned existence.

Bahá'í thought does not assert the necessary being as an object of proof but as the precondition of all being, discernible through signs and revelation but inaccessible in essence. This leads to a principled apophaticism: the recognition that ultimate reality transcends conceptual categories. Bahá'u'lláh explicitly warns against speculative excess, affirming that such truths belong to the "treasury of names of sanctity, hidden and inscribed in the Tablet of Protection."

Thus, where Kant preserves epistemic humility through the suspension of judgment, Bahá'u'lláh integrates this humility into a theology of transcendence. The Necessary Being is affirmed but not comprehended; approached through revelation, not deduction. It functions not as a terminus of logic but as the origin of meaning.

In this light, Bahá'í metaphysics both confirms and transforms Kant's concerns. It acknowledges the limits of speculative reason, yet affirms the reality of a Necessary Being as the ground of all being and knowledge. The distinction between existential unity and visionary unity provides a layered ontology that honors both the transcendence of God and the immanence of His signs.

What Kant identifies as antinomy, Bahá'u'lláh presents as a dialectic of stations: from negation to manifestation, from essence to appearance. The Necessary Being is not deduced but revealed; not grasped but glimpsed. Human knowledge approaches its threshold not through conquest but through reverence.

Thus, the Bahá'í vision does not reject the rational humility Kant recommends but situates it within a theology of divine transcendence. The end of speculative theology is not skepticism but awe. The Necessary Being is the horizon of thought, not its object; the fountain of meaning, not its artifact.

Conclusion: The End of Theology — From Speculative Inquiry to Praxis-Oriented Revelation in Bahá'í Thought

As this inquiry has demonstrated—consistent with Kant's critical analysis—the central concerns of speculative metaphysics have long revolved around three primary questions: God, the soul, and the cosmos. Kant's analysis revealed that when reason seeks to grasp the unconditioned totality of these ideas, it becomes ensnared in its own antinomies, collapsing under the weight of its demand for absolute comprehension. This recognition marks the limit of speculative reason and the necessity for critical humility.

Throughout this study, it has been shown that foundational theological questions—regarding God as the Necessary Being, the Primal Will, the Manifestation (Mazhar-i-Ilāhī), the createdness or eternity of the cosmos, the reconciliation of freedom and determinism, and the necessity or contingency of divine existence—all culminate, within Bahá'í metaphysics, in the acknowledgment of the limits of conceptual thought. These questions do not vanish but find their fulfillment in what may be termed an existential suspension (inqiṭā'-i-wijdānī): a phenomenological recognition of the boundary where speculative thought yields to reverent acknowledgment. Theology thus encounters not the exhaustion of meaning but the horizon of a transformed mode of discourse.

Traditional theological concerns—eschatological doctrines such as the end of time, resurrection, judgment, and apocalypse—likewise undergo radical reinterpretation within Bahá'í thought. Whereas classical theology treated these as future cosmological events linked to divine justice and cosmic teleology, Bahá'í teachings reconceptualize them as symbolic processes of spiritual renewal. The doctrine of qiyāmat (resurrection) is emblematic: no longer conceived as a physical reanimation, it is understood as the revival of spiritual perception. Each Manifestation inaugurates a new Day of Resurrection: Judaism in Christ, Christianity in Muhammad, Islam in the Báb, and the Bayānī faith in Bahá'u'lláh.

This progressive revelation reframes history itself as theological hermeneutics: religions do not succeed each other merely chronologically but fulfill one another spiritually. This reorientation shifts theology from speculative abstraction toward a praxis of historical consciousness and spiritual transformation. The locus of theology thus moves decisively away from metaphysical speculation and toward ethical, social, and spiritual renewal.

Bahá'u'lláh's own words affirm this transformative orientation. In the Kitáb-i-'Ahd, He declares:

"The purpose of this Wronged One in bearing hardships and tribulations... has been to extinguish the fire of enmity and hatred—that perchance the horizons of human hearts might be illumined with the light of concord and attain true peace and tranquility." (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 219)

Here, the purpose of revelation is not metaphysical explication but ethical transformation and the cultivation of concord. Similarly, in the Hidden Words, Bahá'u'lláh asserts: "O MY FRIENDS! Walk ye in the ways of the good pleasure of the Friend, and know that His pleasure is in the pleasure of His creatures... Ponder this, ye that have insight!" (Hidden Words, Persian no. 43)

These passages underscore that the essence of faith lies not in speculative assent but in practical selflessness and mutual care. Theology that privileges doctrinal correctness over ethical conduct is thus decisively displaced.

Bahá’u’lláh further clarifies this transformation in Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh: "The purpose of the one true God... in revealing Himself unto men is to lay bare those gems that lie hidden within the mine of their true and inmost selves... that the divers communions of the earth... should never foster feelings of animosity..." (Gleanings, LXXV, pp. 287–288)

Religion, therefore, no longer concerns itself primarily with ontological propositions but with the awakening of latent spiritual and ethical capacities. Revelation functions as a mirror reflecting the divine image latent within humanity, reconfiguring the unity of religions as successive articulations of the one eternal Logos.

This reorientation also reframes traditional apocalyptic imagery. Bahá’u’lláh asserts:

"Religious fanaticism and hatred are a world-devouring fire, whose violence none can quench. The Hand of Divine power alone can deliver mankind from this desolating affliction." (Gleanings, CXXII, p. 288)

Here, apocalypse is not divine wrath but the ethical consequence of human division; salvation lies not in metaphysical speculation but in the healing power of divine unity and justice.

In the Ishráqát, Bahá’u’lláh further states:

"The purpose of religion... is to establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world... Religion bestoweth upon man the most precious of all gifts... offereth the cup of prosperity,

imparteth eternal life, and showereth imperishable benefits upon mankind." (Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 129)

In this vision, theology culminates not in abstract knowledge but in the realization of human unity. The God of scholastic theology—debated in terms of necessity, simplicity, and omniscience—is here redefined as the Principle of Oneness, manifest in practical unity and peace. Theology finds its telos not in speculative closure but in ethical fulfillment.

'Abdu'l-Bahá underscores this transformation:

"O friends of God! The clear text of the Book of God is this: that if two souls should dispute and contend concerning one of the divine questions... both are in error... They must rather converse... with the utmost love and fellowship." (Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, sec. 43, pp. 87–88)

This passage functions as a seal upon speculative theology. The pursuit of doctrinal superiority is no longer valid; the criterion is not correctness but the spirit of unity. Theology has become an ethics of dialogue and mutual respect.

Final Synthesis: The End and Fulfillment of Theology

In sum, Bahá'í theology presents both a culmination and a transformation of the theological enterprise. It marks the completion of speculative discourse on God, the soul, and the cosmos and redirects theological energy toward human unity, spiritual awakening, and global justice. Where speculative metaphysics sought the unconditioned in abstraction, Bahá'í thought finds it in the concrete unfolding of history through progressive revelation.

The end of theology is not its negation but its fulfillment—a transition from speculative metaphysics to praxis-oriented revelation. From its earliest formulations to its final culmination

in Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation, theology's true purpose emerges: not to define God, but to transform humanity. Thus, the blind man of history, who once groped after the transcendent in metaphysical darkness, now gropes anew toward the light of unity, justice, and peace.

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