

INCREASING COMPLEXITY AS A PROCESS

IN SOCIAL EVOLUTION:

A Case Study of the Baha'i Faith

by

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Abstract

The Introduction to the thesis contains statements of purpose and method. The purpose, as explained in the thesis, is to provide evidence that the teachings of the Baha'i Faith and the works of various sociologists can be shown to complement one another. The method, it is stated, is a comparative analysis.

Chapter 2 briefly outlines the development of the evolutionary perspective. Special attention is given to the ideas of Robert Nisbet concerning the Western model of social development. Historically, the metaphor of growth is taken through presociological theories (including Hebrew, Grecian and Christian), the classical period (Comte, Marx, and Spenser), the middle period (including the social Darwinists, Lester Frank Ward, Maine, Morgan, Toennies, and Durkheim), and the modern period (including White, Sahlins, Service, and Steward). Finally, the cult or ideology of progress in American society is mentioned.

Chapter 3 considers the Baha'i Faith, the case of this study. The Baha'i concepts of religion and divine Revelation, its notion of Covenant, a brief history, and a statement of the goal of the Baha'i Faith to bring about a new world order are presented.

Innovation and diffusion are discussed in chapter 4. It is stressed that a technological innovation is the application of knowledge to the solution of a particular problem. The nature of diffusion is also discussed. Comparisons are made between the social-scientific writings on innovation and diffusion and the Baha'i teachings on those subjects.

The process of complexification is examined in chapter 5. Two forms of complexification are dealt with: interdependence and differentiation. The chapter states that interdependence is to be attributed to instantaneous global communication and rapid intercontinental transportation.

Chapter 6 turns to a discussion of the three forms of social interaction, according to this writer's own construct. These are: interpersonal, intergroup, and person-group interaction. The thoughts of George Herbert Mead, Leslie White, and Leopold von Wiese, among others, are considered in this chapter. The Baha'i teachings are again compared directly to the social-scientific writings.

In the Conclusion it is pointed out that social evolutionism is only one of a number of approaches to the study of social change, e.g. cyclical theory, equilibrium theory, etc. It is also mentioned that the research offered in this thesis is tentative and exploratory, and that the writer plans to devote future research to additional comparisons.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

The modernization of tribal societies and the increasing complexity (complexification) which inevitably accompanies the introduction of technological innovations into non-Western cultures have prompted many sociologists, perhaps Marion Levy and Neil Smelser among the most noteworthy, to examine the implications of the industrializing process. Modernization is often conceived as evolution in the Spencerian sense - it is inevitable and cannot be halted. Other social scientists, mostly anthropologists, have found it appropriate to examine the role of technology in social development. Some of these writers will be discussed in chapter 2.

Purpose

This thesis will provide evidence that the teachings of the Baha'i Faith can be understood using the works of certain sociologists and contribute to a general understanding of the dynamics of social change. The writer is not as presumptuous as to claim theory-building. Rather, the aim is to show how the Baha'i teachings, in consonance with other approaches, contribute to a basic conceptual model of social evolution; a way of viewing social development.

The Baha'i teachings do in fact deal with many ideas which are similar to sociological theory. Both religion and science are concerned with human relationships. Moreover, religion is essentially social in nature.

This purpose is quite in line with a significant notion stressed by the Baha'i teachings: the essential harmony of science and religion. What this signifies, in one important respect, is that points of commonality must be found between the works of science and the Baha'i Writings. If religion disagrees with science, that religion may well be closer to superstition than reality. Witness the classic debate that has proceeded between the biological evolutionists and the Biblical creationists. In order to justify their disagreement with science, certain fundamentalist Christian biologists have attempted to propose creationism as a "scientific" alternative to Darwinism. The Baha'i Faith reconciles these two views by admitting the reality of evolution, while saying that the impetus behind it was divine in nature. The Genesis Story is explained as an allegory.

Method

The method of comparative analysis is used to study social phenomena through the analysis of an individual case of its occurrence. Data relevant to the case are gathered and then organized in terms of the case. The advantage of this method is that it gives a unitary character to the data being studied by interrelating a variety of facts to a single case. It also gives the researcher the opportunity to intensively analyze the many specific details often overlooked with other methods (Theodorson and Theodorson: 38).

The case with which this thesis is concerned is the Baha'i Faith. **It is a comparative analysis of** the process of complexification in social evolution. Similarities to social-scientific theories on complexification were found in the Baha'i teachings.

The first step of this writer in the research process was to make an extensive compilation of passages from the Baha'i texts dealing with social evolution. Most of the references to the Baha'i Writings in this thesis were obtained from the compilation. The compilation was quite extensive (perhaps 8,000 words), and only a relatively small portion of the material could actually be used in the thesis. The criterion used in selecting appropriate citations was their representativeness. Some passages were essentially repetitive.

Then, the second step was to search the social scientific literature for passages which related to many of the same ideas as did the Baha'i teachings. Similar concepts were found in many areas, including technological innovation and diffusion, functional interdependence and differentiation, and social interaction. Comparisons were made between the Baha'i teachings and the social-scientific writings. Many parallels in content were discovered.

Finally, through **several** revisions of this thesis, the comparisons between the Baha'i teachings and the social-scientific literature became closer, and the content became increasingly refined. In short, the organization of data around the case increased in clarity, **until the** format of the thesis reached its present condition.

Chapter 2 A Brief Overview of Evolutionism

Preface

Before the writer can properly consider the Baha'i teachings on social evolution, it seems appropriate to survey the development of the metaphor of growth in Western thought. The concept of evolution will be traced as it has proceeded through classical, middle, and modern periods. In its middle and modern forms, it will be compared, in later sections of the thesis, to certain of the Baha'i teachings.

Presociological Theories

The belief that societies evolve from simpler to more complex forms, with the usually implicit or explicit references to notions of progress, is basic to the Western Weltansicht of social development. Evolutionism, originating in biology and metaphorically applied to the social world, is the traditional organicism or view that society is structurally and functionally similar to a physical organism.

Robert Nisbet (7) has traced the history of the Western world view through Grecian, Hebrew, **Christian**, and modern sources. He wrote that of all metaphors in Western thought which are concerned with mankind and culture, the **oldest** and most powerful is the metaphor of growth. The notion of growth or development, he explains, refers to non-random change that is intrinsic to the entity.

Furthermore, growth or development imply certain things. Directionality is implied. It moves from one point in time to another. **Additionally**, change is cumulative. Whatever can be seen is the accumulation of all that has preceded in its life. Moreover, developmental change is **irreversible**, as is the case with a biological organism. Finally, development has certain stages, and these stages unfold according to a special purpose.

Hesiod (circa 750 B.C.) formulated a theory of evolution in **cycles**, each containing five stages: (1) a Golden Age of the gods who created a race of men which lived as they did, free from toil and anguish; (2) a Silver Age of a degenerate race of men; (3) a Heroic Age marked by justice and the stamp of the divine; and (4) an Iron Age of human corruption, applied by Hesiod to his own time. The Greek poet advocated the virtues of industry, frugality, and prudence and stressed that justice could be restored through voluntary human actions.

Hesiod's theory makes evident the dominant Weltanschauung of ancient Greece, an adoration of growth and an acceptance of social decay. Nisbet wrote that when the first Greek declared that change is natural to each living thing, and that it has its own laws of cause, purpose, and mechanism, he almost literally initiated a scientific pursuit that is among the principal glories of Western intellectual history (16).

This perspective was shared by Aristotle who traced evolution from the family, to the village, to the state. The village is typified as a complex of families and the state as the integration of several villages (Nisbet).

The Christian conception, according to Nisbet, was based on a fusion of Grecian philosophies with the Hebrew Covenant or conditions regulating man's relation with God. St. Augustine, who played the primary role in its formulation, regarded mankind in a process of growth through the will of an Almighty God. Augustine, it is known, based his theology on Paul who, though of Hebrew ancestry, was significantly influenced by many of the Eastern cults which had sizable Roman followings. Indeed, so plentiful were the pagan doctrines which the church incorporated in its early years, that a case may be made for Christianity, in the tradition of Pauline eclecticism (see, for example, I Cor. 9:22), being more a religion founded by Paul than by Christ (Schaefer).

Augustine, inspired by Paul's Christology, divided history into two periods: that which came before Christ and all which will follow - the basis of our own Gregorian calendar. Jesus thus came to be regarded, quite in keeping with a Christocentric viewpoint, as indicating a point of transition between a dispensation of law and one of grace. Good works, therefore, become no longer essential to salvation. Faith, alone, in the physical resurrection of Christ and in his eventual return, is required of man. The world is regarded as moving inexorably toward a consummation when all men, both from Heaven and Hell, are to stand before the judgment-seat of God.

Christianity, perhaps under the influence of a Mithraic dualism, has burgeoned a theological cosmology which conceives the world as dominated by two contradictory beings. Although Satan - the fallen Lucifer - has been given dominion over this world as its prince until the commencement of the millenium of peace, when he and his demons will be cast into a lake of fire, God, in his three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, leaves to each individual the choice of turning to him and seeking divine forgiveness for sin. This "Christian Dialectic" is believed to be steadily moving the world along toward its destiny of peace, according to the writer's own investigations.

Dialectic is not all that inappropriate, really. According to Nisbet, Augustine regarded conflict as the "motor-force" behind history. The struggle which has always taken place between the two natures in man, the one base and the other noble, has been the animus of social and cultural development. Western philosophies of history have been built around this theme of conflict in the last fifteen-hundred years since Augustine. The relation between Adam, Eve, and the forbidden fruit is one of its most powerful aspects. The doctrine of original sin portrays all of human history as a continual battle against iniquity.

In the nineteenth century, the Adams brothers, Henry and Brooks, reacted strongly against what was then a strong faith in the progressive development of human society. According to Nisbet, Henry Adams increasingly began to believe that what history reveals is not a pattern of progress, but regress. Entropy, he said, not progressive expansion and differentiation, is at the heart

of the historical process. Brooks Adams, however, preferred a traditional notion of recurring cycles of growth and decay. (Nisbet:134).

Classical Period

When, eighteen-hundred years after the beginning of Christianity, the nineteenth-century social evolutionists started writing their own literature, they had a well established tradition of theories of social progress behind them. Nisbet wrote of the eighteenth century's interest in intellectual and cultural improvement and its belief in successive stages through which all humanity had to pass in the process of human development to attain its present level of eminence. According to these "natural" historians, the examination of social progress as a purposeful and reasoned unfoldment was the highest form of historical study (Nisbet:139-158).

Auguste Comte in France, Karl Marx in Germany, and Herbert Spencer in Britain were influenced by nineteenth-century Europe's interest in social development. Nisbet pointed out that, although Charles Darwin's The Origin of the Species impacted both biological and sociocultural evolutionary thinkers, his was preceded by the published works of the three mentioned writers. Darwin was a good, an even excellent, synthesizer but produced little that was original. Spencer, in fact, was counted by Darwin among his predecessors. Similarly, the works of Henry Maine and Lewis Henry Morgan, though chronologically following Darwin's, appear to be independent of the biological studies (Applebaum; Nisbet).

Comte, who gave the discipline of sociology its name, proposed a theory of historical progress through which the human mind develops in three stages: the theological or fictitious, the metaphysical or abstract, and the scientific or positive. To Comte, he had discovered "a fundamental law" to which the human intelligence is subjected from necessity (19).

He wrote in his Cours de Philosophie Positive, first published in Paris 1830-1842. of the three stages in the development of history. The **theological** system was attained after the monotheistic belief in a single providential Deity replaced the polytheistic belief in numerous independent divinities. Subsequently, the metaphysical system conceived not of different particular entities, but of **one** general entity, that is, nature, as the source of all phenomena. The **positive** or scientific system would see all observable phenomena as the cases of one single fact, such as gravity. This was man's present stage. Comte equated the theological stage with the military and attachment to the home and family; the metaphysical stage with legalism and a veneration for the state; and the positive stage with industry and universal benevolence for humanity (Comte:20-21).

Spencer's three stages followed a different pattern. Civilization, which to Spencer was actually a part of nature, progresses from the militant state, to the industrial state, to the ethical state. Society he regarded as a superorganismic complex of individual organisms. Society evolves, not accidentally, but as a flower unfolds or as an embryo develops. It passes from a state of relative homogeneity to a coherent heterogeneity. Human will is subordinate to the forces of change (Spencer:27).

Like Spencer, Karl Marx also believed in human subservience to the forces of social change, but, unlike him, Marx's evolutionism was based on a theory of historical materialism and conflict, developed in collaboration with Frederick Engels, and was essentially a variation of the Hegelian dialectic. According to Hegel, every thesis or postulate when challenged by its antithesis or opposite is ultimately resolved in their synthesis or integration. This synthesis then becomes the new thesis, thereby reinitiating the dialectical process (Sorokin:737).

By taking Hegel's formula of unity through opposition and applying it to the economically-based evolution of human society from primitive communism, to ancient slavery, to medieval feudalism, to modern capitalism, and ultimately to future communism, Marx attempted to prove that in each stage, except for the first and the last, a conflict ensues between the economic oppressors and the oppressed, culminating in dialectical contradictions that clash with the thesis and become the means by which society evolves toward its next stage of development. The only hope for ending this process is in eliminating the exploitation of the oppressors and thereby doing away with social contradictions. In capitalism, for instance, the dissension which exists between the bourgeoisie (literally, townpeople) or capitalist owners of the means of production and the proletariat (originally a member of the lower class of ancient Rome) or laborers will, Marx argued, conclude in a process of revolution by the masses, when they establish a dictatorship - a prerequisite for the classless, communist society (Sorokin:523-526).

Marx, with Comte and Spencer, formed what might well be regarded as the classical period in social evolutionism. Centuries of Western thinking began to germinate with these three theorists. Yet, in the United States, it is only recently that at least two of them have been re-examined for their contributions to social thought: Marx by the neo-Marxists and Spencer by the neoevolutionists.

Middle Period

The middle period, which extended through the early 1950's, included the popular social Darwinist theories. Based on a synthesis of Darwin's and Spencer's theories, this approach was highlighted, in the United States, by William Graham Sumner of Yale, a disciple of Spencer, often considered to have been the most influential and active American social Darwinist. To Sumner, as to Spencer, society was a superorganism. As men struggled to adapt themselves to the environment, they became rivals for leadership in the conquest of nature. Social progress, argued Sumner, depends upon the process of natural selection, which further assumes the workings of an unfettered competition. In such a system, only the fittest survive.

Social Darwinism was later challenged by the psychological evolutionism of Lester Frank Ward. The notion of a self-perpetuating, impersonal evolution was to Ward unthinkable. In the beginning of its development, evolution is understood as taking place as Spencer described it, where evolution is the product of blind forces. However, as the function of the human intellect increases, social adaptation becomes more self-controlled (Sorokin:640-642).

Henry Sumner Maine traced the history of social progress from relationships based on status to those based on contract. Through an examination of Roman law, he concluded that patriarchal relationships were the basis of ancient societies. Whatever social position one's own family occupied tended to determine one's own status. Power was undifferentiated; whether it was family or slaves mattered little to ancient man. However, when Roman law had become more **advanced**, the use of power became more discriminating. Hence, the status of slave was replaced by the contractual relation between servant and master. (Applebaum:23-24).

Writing at approximately the same time as Maine, Lewis Henry Morgan viewed societies as progressing through a fixed series of stages: (1) Savagery, (2) Barbarism, and (3) Civilization. It was, moreover, the state of subsistence technology which provided the foundation for Morgan's conceptual scheme. For example, the development of the art of pottery initiated Barbarism, and a phonetic alphabet marked the beginning of Civilization. V. Gordon Childe later elaborated on Morgan's theory (Applebaum:25-27).

Ferdinand Toennies, according to Sorokin one of the founders of "formal sociology" (491), distinguished between two forms of society or social relations: Gemeinschaft (roughly translated as community) and Gesellschaft (or society). The former is a union of individuals by purely natural forces, not the result of personal will. Here, persons have no real identity and are only members of a body. The individual will is suppressed by the community will. This is identical to Durkheim's "mechanical solidarity," according to Sorokin (491).

But where Gemeinschaft is characterized by common will, no personal individuality, domination of community interests, beliefs, religion, customs, and communal ownership of property, Gesellschaft has individual will, individuality of members, domination of individual interest, doctrine, public opinion, fads, and private property, all in a central position. According to Toennies, the transition from one social form to the other is irreversible (Sorokin:491).

Durkheim discussed the historical movement from mechanical to organic solidarity. He wrote that this change was due to the division of labor. While mechanical solidarity is established in the similarity of the individual members of a society, organic solidarity is rooted in their dissimilarity. Although evolution is not the primary focus of Durkheim's work, he has nonetheless provided an evolutionary framework (70-132). "The more primitive societies are," he wrote, "the more resemblances there are among the individuals who compose them" (133). As societies acquire a greater specialization of function, they evolve from mechanical to organic solidarity. This recalls Spencer's earlier distinction between homogeneity and heterogeneity.

Modern Period

The modern period has been characterized by a revival of interest in evolutionary theory and is usually attributed to one man, Leslie White, an anthropologist who died in 1975. Although White's interests extended into many areas, the concern here is only with his role in the development of sociocultural evolutionism. The writer will later deal with some of his thoughts on symbols. White wrote:

As the amount of energy harnessed by sociocultural systems increases per capita per year, the systems not only increase in size, but become more highly evolved; i.e. they become more differentiated structurally and more specialized functionally (40).

According to White, cultural systems, like biological organisms, use their energy to extend and maintain themselves. Cultural systems expand quantitatively by dividing and forming new social groups. They expand qualitatively by developing higher forms of social organization and greater concentrations of energy. White explains that the degree of organization in any system is proportional to the amount of energy incorporated into it. He defines energy as "the ability to do work" (40). Furthermore, cultural systems vary in their ability to harness energy. Some are more effective than others. A society may be defined as the manner in which it makes use of its technology. The form of social organization, the prevalent ideologies, sentiments, and attitudes are all based on the types and utilizations of technology. White refers to his theory as a form of "technological determination" (24). Although social systems affect philosophies, the social systems themselves are determined

by technologies. Thus, he explains, by considering a certain level of technology, one can determine the type of philosophy which correlates with it. The same holds true with sentiments, although these are less significant in explaining cultural systems than are institutions and systems of beliefs.

Two of White's students, Marshall Sahlins and Elman Service, have clarified certain aspects of evolutionary theory. Perhaps their most noteworthy contribution is in their distinction between "general evolution" versus "specific evolution" (Sahlins et al.: 12-13). They explain that evolution moves simultaneously in two directions. Specific evolution creates diversity as new forms differentiate from old by adapting to changing conditions. General evolution, the authors argue, generates progress as "higher forms" surpass lower ones. However, it is noted that general and specific evolution are not to be conceived of as different concrete realities. Rather, they are aspects of the same total process. They are two ways of perceiving the same evolutionary phenomena. Any given cultural change can be viewed as either adaptation or as over-all progress.

Sahlins echoes White when he says that a culture is "an integrated organization of technology, social structure, and philosophy adjusted to the life problems posed by its natural habitat and by nearby and often competing cultures" (53). As cultures adapt to changes, they inevitably become more specialized in their specific evolutions. Moreover, he writes, "Adaptation to nature will shape a culture's technology and derivatively its social and ideological components" (48).

While specific evolution leads to increasing "adaptation," general evolution leads to greater "adaptability" (70). "A higher, more progressive type in the general evolutionary sense has adaptability which extends the ecological horizon," Sahlins writes (70). In other words, as society in general is able to achieve a greater degree of dominance, permitting it to exploit more of the environment, one might say that society has progressed from a "lower" to a "higher" stage (69).

Julian Steward prefers to call general evolution, "unilinear evolution" and specific evolution, "multilinear evolution" (15-19). He contends that the only form of evolution which can be researched is multilinear evolution. He opposes those who attempt to classify historical data into universal stages. Steward feels that it is preferable to concentrate one's attention on those limited parallels between cultures which have empirical validity. In other words, Steward considers that each culture evolves with its own distinct pattern, but that it is possible to look for any similarities of form, function, and sequence which can be demonstrated scientifically. Of his own comparative method, Steward writes:

The kinds of parallels or similarities with which multilinear evolution deals are distinguished by their limited occurrence and their specificity (22).

Steward calls this method "parallelism" (19). He argues that what is lost in generality and a more universalistic perspective will be gained in a more specific, concrete, and empirical approach.

The Cult of Progress

The concept of social progress, shared by many of the theories we have surveyed, is deeply rooted into American culture. Reece McGee wrote of America's obsession with that which is regarded as "new" and its rejection of the "old-fashioned" and the "obsolete." Americans have traditionally associated this cult or ideology of progress with the philosophy of optimism, where change is viewed positively, and the orientation is nearly always towards the future and almost never towards the past. "How many Americans," McGee asked (153), "Really believe - or ever will ask themselves if - their children ~~or~~ grandchildren will be worse off than themselves?" There are, however, some solid historical realities upon which this ideology is based. America has been traditionally regarded as the land of promise where immigrants from diverse societies could come to forge their own destinies. Yet, beginning in the nineteenth century, progress was to be increasingly conceived in technological terms. Utopia was brought within reach, many believed, through the development of science.

Summary

The notion of growth and decay has dominated the Western mind since ancient Grecian times. We have seen how this metaphor was developed through the times of Augustine, the Adams brothers, and the social scientists of the classical, middle, and modern periods.

In more recent times, and especially through the works of White, the concepts of work, energy, and technology have acquired added significance. They are seen to be related to the degree of social complexity. After considering some major aspects of the Baha'i Faith, we will begin examining areas of similarity between the Baha'i teachings on social complexity and the social-scientific theories on the subject.

It is interesting to note that many of the earliest sociologists took an interest in theology. Comte founded a "Religion of Humanity" whose love-object was the "Great Being" of humanity. The religion of a scientist or a positivist must not be deistic, but man-centered. Comte was very idealistic and expected unity to result out of his religion. The Pope, Comte expected, would resign in his favor (Comte:9,13,14). The connection between religion and sociology has thus existed from the birth of sociology.

Chapter 3 The Baha'i Faith: The Case

Preface

Having surveyed the Western metaphor of growth, the writer turns now to a brief treatment of the Baha'i Faith, the case in this study. The purpose of this section is to acquaint the reader with its development and essential teachings. Later, when the Baha'i Faith will be examined in its more specialized aspects, relating to technology and social complexity, it will be helpful to have had this more general overview of the Baha'i teachings. Moreover, references to the Baha'i Faith in later chapters will be more comprehensible after having considered already its basic teachings and history. The Baha'i view of religion and Revelation, its concept of Covenant, its basic history, and goals are all touched upon in this chapter.

The Nature of Religion and Revelation

Religion has been defined by George and Achilles Theodorson as:

A system of beliefs, practices, and philosophical values concerned with the definition of the sacred, the comprehension of life, and salvation from the problems of human existence.... Religion is a social phenomenon...because it necessarily stresses fellowship in the development, teaching and perpetuation of religious insight and knowledge (344).

It is this particularly social nature of religion which makes it comparable to sociological theory. The Baha'i Faith stresses that social evolution is the product of social integration in an increasingly complex world. In this thesis, however, in chapter 3, the writer will be interested in those aspects of the Baha'i teachings which have a special bearing on social complexity.

Religion is, according to the Baha'i view, the acceptance of the doctrines or "Revelation" of a Prophet of God. This Revelation is, in each age, recorded in certain Holy Books or Scriptures. Thus we have the Islamic Qur'an (Koran), the Hindu Vedas, the Buddhist Dhammapada, the Zoroastrian Avesta, and, in the Baha'i Faith, the equivalent of one-hundred volumes written by the Prophet-Founder of the Baha'i Faith, Baha'u'llah.

The Baha'i Faith teaches that Revelation is progressive. It is dispensed by the Prophet according to the capacity of mankind. The Prophet comes into the human world as a mediator between God and man and functions almost like a step-down transformer of God's power.

As a child progresses from grade one to grade twelve, so humanity as a whole has progressed through the teachings of Moses, Buddha, Christ, Muhammad, and others. If the child had suddenly decided, irrespective of the wishes of his parents and teachers, to discontinue his education at some point, obviously his development would be stifled. In much the same way, some have chosen to remain in the Faith of Moses, others in the Faith of Krishna, or in the Faith of Christ, or of Muhammad.

The Covenant of God

The Covenant of God is, in effect, the connection which links one Prophet of God with the next. According to the Baha'i teachings, each Prophet predicts in his speech or writing, the coming of the next. In other words, He makes a Covenant with his followers that they will accept the next Prophet. However, the Baha'i teachings show how in each age a significant proportion of the population rejects the Prophet.

A Short History

Baha'u'llah, Whom the Baha'is accept as the latest of the Prophets, was heralded by Siyyid 'Ali Muhammad, cognominated the Bab (Arabic, Gate), a resident of the Iranian city of Shiraz. At two hours and eleven minutes after sunset on May 22, 1844, the Bab announced privately that He had come to harbinger the Promised One of all religions, Baha'u'llah. In retribution for Him making this claim, the Bab was shot, six years later, after great persecution to both Himself and His followers, by a firing squad of 750 riflemen.

In 1863, the year predicted by the Bab, Mirza Husayn 'Ali announced that He was the one foretold by the Bab, Baha'u'llah (Arabic, the Glory of God). Baha'is see in Him the return of the Spirit of Christ, awaited by the Christians; the coming of the Messiah, hoped for by the Jews; the Shah-Bahram, anticipated by the Zoroastrians; the Maitrya Buddha, expected by the Buddhists; as well as the realization of the dreams and visions of poets and seers throughout history. Baha'u'llah, after having been in prison and exile for more than forty years, died in the vicinity of Haifa, Israel, in 1892. By that time, the Baha'i Faith was already established in fifteen countries and dependencies.

Before Baha'u'llah's passing, He appointed in His Writings His eldest Son, 'Abbas, surnamed 'Abdu'l-Baha (Arabic, Servant of the Glory), as His Successor. In 1912, 'Abdu'l-Baha spent nearly eight months in the United States and Canada spreading His Father's teachings. He also visited various countries in Europe. By the time of His passing in 1921, the Baha'i Faith had spread to thirty-five countries and dependencies.

Shoghi Effendi, 'Abdu'l-Baha's grandson, named the Guardian of the Baha'i Faith in 'Abdu'l-Baha's Will and Testament, directed the activities of the Baha'i world until his passing in 1957. He worked diligently to develop the basic Baha'i Administrative Order and initiated Baha'i teaching plans which expanded the Baha'i community into two-hundred fifty-nine countries and dependencies by 1963.

In 1963, the first Universal House of Justice, the supreme administrative body of the Baha'i world, was elected in Haifa, Israel, in accordance with provisions established by both 'Abdu'l-Baha and Shoghi Effendi. This institution, consisting of nine members, elected, at present, every five years, has the authority to legislate on any matter not explicitly set down in the Baha'i Writings. Furthermore, the Universal House of Justice is both the establisher and abrogator of its own laws. Through the plans which they have formulated, the Baha'i community now resides in well over three-hundred countries and dependencies.

The Goal of the Baha'i Faith

The basic objective of the Baha'i Faith is to form the structure of a new world-encircling order, united under Baha'u'llah and His teachings. Georg Simmel wrote, "The subordination of a group under a single person results, above all, in a very decisive unification of the group" (190). The Baha'i world community works to strengthen its unity in a time of international disorganization and unrest on the one hand and increasing social complexity on the other.

The new order, as foreshadowed in the Baha'i teachings, incorporates elements of Howard Becker's "sacred" and "secular" social types. As to its sacred elements, Shoghi Effendi explained how the Baha'i society would be well integrated, homogeneous in beliefs and values, and dedicated to improving the quality of human relationships (d:152-156). Becker attributed these characteristics to what he termed "the sacred society" (Theodorson and Theodorson:360-361). Yet Becker also considered conservatism as an aspect of the sacred society. This does not apply to the Baha'i plan of world order.

The secular society, according to Becker, accepts and promotes innovation and change (Theodorson and Theodorson: 373). Similarly, Shoghi Effendi explained that scientific and technological development will be a central factor in what he termed the "world federal system." The prolongation of human life, the extermination of disease, and the strengthening and refinement of the human brain will be major concerns (d:202). This blending of the sacred and the secular is essential to the Baha'i principle of the harmony of science and religion, discussed in chapter 1.

Summary

The Baha'i Faith has, as does all religion, certain fundamentally social concerns. Its basic aim is the transformation of the individual. For unless the individual is changed, society will remain stagnant. Moreover, when the structure of society is changed, people will be influenced.

The Baha'i teachings stress unity. Technological development is not regarded as sufficient. Social evolution is not only the increasing complexity of society, but it is social integration in complexification. Only to the extent to which society becomes integrated in higher levels of complexity does it evolve, according to the Baha'i Faith.

Chapter 4 Innovation and Diffusion

Preface

Having already considered the background of the Western model of social development and aspects of Baha'i teachings and history, the writer will now consider relations between sociological and Baha'i writings on social innovation and diffusion. The study will be primarily on the effects of technological innovation and diffusion on the two processes in increasing social complexity: interdependence and differentiation.

Technological Innovation

According to Wilbert Moore, "Technology is best understood as the application of knowledge to the achievement of particular goals or to the solution of particular problems" (5). In the industrialized world, and in the increasingly modernized Third World, knowledge of technique is usually the product of modern science, but it need not be restricted to that. Stone-age man's invention of fire and of the wheel were techniques which drastically altered the environment in which he lived.

In today's society, one would certainly find it a difficult task to think of a single aspect of human life which has not been revolutionized by modern scientific technologies. Yet, before the latter part of the eighteenth century, agriculture was the predominant vocation of the Western world. But with the establishment of factories and the consequent demand for an urban work force, increasing numbers left the country and moved into the city.

All new technologies are the result of one or more inventions which, according to H.G. Barnett, should be understood as mental phenomena. He defined an innovation as any thought, behavior, thing, or idea that is new because it is qualitatively different from existing forms. While some innovations do, in fact become tangible and overt in expression, other remain only mental organizations. These innovations that do take on a sensible form, that do become technological innovations, are termed inventions, Barnett explained (7).

Likewise, the Baha'i teachings point out that the power of the human mind is responsible for inventions and discoveries. 'Abdu'l-Baha said:

...these existing sciences, arts, laws, and endless inventions of man at one time were invisible, mysterious, and hidden secrets; it is only the all-encompassing human power which has discovered...them So telegraphy, photography, and all such inventions and wonderful arts, were at one time hidden mysteries: the human reality discovered...them (Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha: 304).

Moreover, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha, "...the mind encompasses all things, and the outward beings are comprehended by it (d:255-256)." Through its properties, designated as "imagination, thought, comprehension, and memory," plus an additional "common faculty" which conveys sensory perceptions to the other mental faculties (Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha:317-318), man is able to make discoveries which raise him above the world of nature.

The Culture Base in Technological Innovation

Charles Horton Cooley (17) wrote that inventions come about through a combination of "traditional knowledge with fecundating conditions." And Barnett referred to a "cultural inventory" which circumscribes the area within which the innovator must function. He argued that the range of technology and knowledge available to an innovator in his own culture makes some new developments possible while making others quite impossible. According to Barnett, this notion of a cultural inventory explains why invention is so minimal in "less well endowed societies" (40). Similarly, White wrote:

The accumulated knowledge, skills, tools, machines, and techniques developed by primitive, preliterate peoples laid the basis for civilization and all the higher cultures. They invented and developed all the basic tools, weapons, and utensils.... This age-old process of accumulation and development culminated in the Agricultural Revolution, which, as we have seen, profoundly transformed the whole cultural tradition (271-272).

The Baha'i teachings, much along the same line, also discuss the accumulation of culture base, composed of material and non-material elements. In one of 'Abdu'l-Baha's earliest works, written in 1875, He wrote that the reason for the superiority of the present over the past is that not only can the present use the achievements of the past as a model, but it can add to these its own innovations. So whereas the experience and knowledge of the past is known to the present, the knowledge of the present is unknown to the past, according to 'Abdu'l-Baha (b:1970).

The Diffusion of Innovations

There are parallels between various social scientific writers and the Baha'i teachings on the subject of cultural diffusion. White defined diffusion as the transmission of culture traits from one sociocultural system to another (29). William Ogburn observed, "Inventions have a way of spreading after a time from one part of the world to another" (44). And Darcy Ribeiro maintained that cultures do not develop in isolation from one another but in a continuous interrelation (6). When new traits are introduced from outside the social system, he said, the course of evolutionary development may be altered. Ribeiro added that change is more often than not brought about through inter-cultural diffusion than is it generated from within the system.

Attempts to understand the process by which a less developed society becomes modernized have been made by the modernization theorists of which Marion Levy is representative. His definition of modernization as relating to the "ratio of inanimate to animate sources of power" (35) recalls White's formula mentioned earlier. Levy considers much of the Third World as in a similar condition as was the Western world up until the eighteenth century. In order to become industrialized, these societies must borrow from the industrialized world. Modernization, then, becomes essentially synonymous with Westernization. It may be pointed out here that many nations, not wishing to become Westernized, have tried to find their own model of social development - not akin to either the Western or Soviet models.

'Abdu'l-Baha explained that "although all created things grow and develop, yet they are subjected to influences from without" (c:49). He wrote of the preferability of borrowing "the principles of civilization" and "methods which extend the scope of culture" to reinventing what is already in use. Should the attempt be made to start from scratch, He said, "many generations would pass by and still the goal would not be reached" (b:112-113).

The advantage of diffusion, 'Abdu'l-Baha remarked, perhaps somewhat jocularly:

...the importation from foreign countries of the principles and procedures of civilization, and the acquisition from them of sciences and techniques - in brief, of whatever will contribute to the general good - is entirely permissible (b:31-32).

To strengthen His argument, He pointed to Japan:

...for some years, Japan has opened its eyes and adopted the techniques of contemporary progress and civilization, promoting sciences and industries of use to the public, and striving to the utmost of their power and competence until public opinion was focused on reform (b:111).

Summary

This chapter has discussed the relation between technological innovation and social complexity. It is also seen how innovation spreads through a process which is termed diffusion. The Baha'i teachings show how they contain elements which could contribute to a secular society, i.e. an emphasis on technology as a mechanism of change, and not the conservative resistance to change which is characteristic of the sacred society. Innovation and diffusion are encouraged in the Baha'i teachings.

Chapter 5 The Process of Complexification

Preface

Previous chapters have given a history of the Western Weltansicht of social development, provided a survey of the teachings of the Baha'i Faith and briefly explored its history, and explained the function of social innovation and diffusion. This chapter examines the result of the diffusion of innovation, increasing complexity (complexification).

Technology and the concomitant accumulation of the culture complex has historically produced two forms of complexification: functional interdependence and functional differentiation, both of which increase the potential for interaction among diverse peoples. This chapter will examine interdependence and differentiation. Chapter 6 will be concerned with social interaction.

Interdependence and differentiation complement one another and are evidences of the accelerating impact of technology on societies. It should be born in mind, however, that basic technologies are, in themselves, neutral. It is in how they are utilized that important value questions come into play. Nuclear energy, for example, can be used either to evaporate or to illuminate cities.

Theodorson and Theodorson define social evolution as a theory of social change which is based on the assumption that human societies develop in "a series of major stages" - each with a more complex level of social organization (137). The process of complexification is basic to social evolution. An analogy has been made to the development of the fetus in the womb, as its functions become increasingly differentiated and interdependent.

Szymon Chodak, a Romanian sociologist, spoke of social change in terms of "growing systemness." He argued that as societies become increasingly interdependent and differentiated - grow in systemness - they increase both in size and in the volume of overlapping units. In addition, their organizational activities become more specialized (59). But whether one refers to social evolution as a growing systemness or as complexification is not as vital as grasping the dynamics of the process and its implications.

Shoghi Effendi wrote of the implications of the rapid complexification of the world order:

...the world [has been] contracted and transformed into a single highly complex organism by the marvellous progress achieved in the realm of physical science [and]...by the worldwide expansion of commerce and industry (d:47).

Interdependence

The technologies of instantaneous global communication and rapid intercontinental transportation have resulted in an increasing functional interdependence of the nations and peoples of the world - economically, industrially, politically, and socially.

Although some authors have equated interdependence with integration (such as Talcott Parsons and Neil Smelser who refer to integration as the preservation of communication lines between possessors of differentiated roles), Szymon Chodak, a Romanian Marxist sociologist, explains that while integration implies a relatively high quality of relation between the units in interaction, interdependence is a neutral term which only suggests that there is a closeness of relation. He wrote that although the literature on the subject most often speaks of growing integration, he prefers to discuss a growing interdependence. In clarifying his point, Chodak explains that integration is a form of interdependence which implies, in addition to the dependence of the units on one another, "a degree of cohesion or cooperation among them." However, interdependence may consist in any steady flow of exchanges between units, i.e. cooperation, competition, or a balanced autonomy or sovereignty of the units. The physical isolation of the units does not matter so much (Chodak:132). Chodak explains that within this accelerating interdependence are "means and channels of communication and exchange" through which innovations are diffused rapidly between nations, adding that such interdependence does not imply greater world or international unity (133). He distinguished three types of increasing interdependencies: (1) units in proximity, but not in cooperation; (2) autonomous units involved in calculated exchange; and (3) nonautonomous units subordinated to a center. Chodak pointed out that, although all societies contain these three types of interdependencies, they differ in the extent to which one or another is dominant (133).

In a similar vein, Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore suggest that ties of interdependence, strengthened by the television media, are transforming the earth into a "global village." They explain how before many tribes become literate, they are exposed to the television. In many cases they are receiving much the same programming (perhaps dubbed into the local language) as those received in the West (McLuhan and Fiore:7). It has been challenged by some, however, whether the television medium is primarily responsible for this new closeness, or if it is merely an evidence of increased interdependence.

Shoghi Effendi wrote of the increased interdependence:

...fundamental changes [have been] effected in the economic life of society, as a consequence of the contraction of the world, through a revolution in the means of transportation and communication [Moreover] in a world of interdependent nations and peoples, the advantage of the part is best to be reached by the advantage of the whole (c:127).

The establishment of agreements between nations to cooperate in space exploration, the founding of the European Common Market and the European Currency Unit (ECU) are evidences of this complexification. Pan-African agreements and the existence of OPEC indicate an interdependence among member Third-World nations.

Increased interdependence is a factor to be dealt with. If the grain production is too low in the United States, people may go hungry in other parts of the world. Likewise, political climates influence the interdependence of nations. If the relations with a particular country are favorable, then goods may be available in a country whereas otherwise they might not.

Interdependence is a product of technology. It is neither favorable nor unfavorable to the harmonious interactions among nations. Interdependence could mean either war or economic cooperation. Interdependence is a product of technological innovation and, as such, should be distinguished from social integration, which implies a certain quality in human relations.

Differentiation

The differentiation, specialization, and division of labor among the parts and members of society and between diverse nations and peoples has been facilitated by our interdependent global system. According to Leopold von Wiese, processes leading to differentiation include individualization, stratification, selection, social promotion **and** degradation, and domination and subordination (Sorokin:494). Georg Simmel regarded individualism as having differentiated society. Whereas in the eighteenth century, the emphasis was on equality under the law, beginning from the nineteenth century, the individual has sought to distinguish himself from others. The shift was from equality to inequality. Simmel wrote that the type of differentiation leading to the domination of a single individual over a group leads to an equalization of the group, inasmuch as they are all under common subordination (Simmel:190). Emile Durkheim considered the increasing division of labor under organic solidarity in a manner that was not unlike his predecessor, Herbert Spencer's discussion of the increasing heterogeneity that is characteristic of the evolutionary transformation from a less integrated homogeneity.

Theodorson and Theodorson define differentiation as the process by which different statuses, groups, roles, and strata persist or develop within a society. They point out that differentiation and specialization result in dissimilar role behavior for members of varied income groups, occupations, ages, skills, and incomes (387).

A Dictionary of the Social Sciences defines differentiation as "the process of becoming separate, distinct, specialized" and "the acquisition of specialized forms or functions" (Gould and Kolb: 198-199). While differentiation, as it is here defined, was originally applied to biological evolution, it was later extended to include sociocultural development.

'Abdu'l-Baha described the process of differentiation by analogy:

The world of politics is like unto the world of man; he is a seed at first, and then passes by degrees to the condition of embryo and foetus, **being** clothed with flesh, taking on its own special form ... (b: 107).

The term "mass" culture has been used to describe the highly differentiated society of the West, usually in connection with the mass media. A mass media became possible in the nineteenth century when an increasing division of labor was accompanied by the introduction of new printing and distribution technologies. Inexpensive newspapers could now be produced in quantity. A heterogeneous audience began to be exposed to the same information and entertainment. Later, the mass newspaper was followed by, first, magazines, then radio, and then, television. It has been argued that because the mass media often try to appeal to their audience's lowest common denominator, quality information and entertainment are being sacrificed for a quantity audience.

Summary

Social complexification includes two types of processes: interdependence and differentiation. Both processes are the results of the increasing complexity of contemporary technologies. Interdependence implies that units, specifically nation-states, have come into relationships where if one nation acts, all the others are in some way influenced by it. Differentiation, however, refers to a division of labor, as Durkheim referred to it. In the world community, nations import and export goods from one another. A differentiation of function is obviously dependent upon sufficient transportation technologies so that products can be shipped from one location to another.

Chapter 6 Social Interaction

Preface

Having already discussed the complexification of interacting units, the writer will now examine the types of interaction themselves and the nature of interaction. At the heart of human interaction is symbolic communication which is one of the traits distinguishing man from the animal. George Herbert Mead logically considered the difference between the human mind or intelligence and animal impulses. He provided the example of a man observing a foot print, saying it means "bear," and then, through the use of symbolic communication, being able to recount all the implications of that animal's presence, with possible modifications in conduct (121).

White wrote that it is man's ability to "symbol" which distinguishes him from the animal. Only man can discriminate between ordinary water and holy water, he explained. While perhaps a dog can understand ordinary words, White admitted, it was not the animal which originated the meaning. Only man could do that. Incest and adultery exist for man alone. Only man can be influenced by voodoo and other forms of sympathetic magic. White, like Mead, considered this to be due to the unique symboling ability of the human mind (3-5).

'Abdu'l-Baha (Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha) said that the mind is circumscribed and comprehends the abstract by the aid of concrete sensory perception. Intellectual realities, such as love, He explained, must be expressed through sensible figures.(d).

One might express attraction to a certain individual, whereas human beings are obviously not tangible magnets which can be drawn to one another. Similarly, if one says that such a man has made great progress, this does not imply that he necessarily had to traverse great distances to accomplish this. But while man has the ability to leap beyond the realm of outward appearance, animals have no such power.

Won Wiese distinguished interactive relationships between individuals from those between groups. The former includes relations toward each other, a concept nearly identical, and most likely derived from Simmel's "association" (contact, approach, adaptation, combination, and union); away from each other, similar to Simmel's "dissociation" (competition, opposition, and conflict); and a mixed relation, partly toward and partly away. The latter includes differentiating processes (as stratification, individualization, domination, and subordination); integrating processes (as socialization); destructive processes (as corruption, formalization, and commercialization); and modifying-constructive processes (as institutionalization and professionalization) (Sorokin: 494).

The Baha'i teachings also discuss types of social interaction. This chapter will compare the sociological and Baha'i writings on the subject. Three forms of interaction are designated: interpersonal, intergroup, and person-group, a construct of the present writer.

Interpersonal Interaction

Interpersonal interaction is substantially based on socialized values and norms. Mead called this socialized self, the "me." The "me," he said, was based on the organized set of attitudes which other persons have toward the individual. The "me" is the conventional and habitual individual, devoid of spontaneity. It always exists, whether the individual does anything to strengthen it or not.

Likewise, the Universal House of Justice has written, "...the condition of society has a direct effect on the individuals who must live within it" (a:106). And 'Abdu'l-Baha wrote that the individual must be so conditioned as to shun the committing of crimes (c).

In the socialization process, early training is the rule. 'Abdu'l-Baha explained that the child will become the product of however he was reared by the mother and that the results of the first education will remain with him throughout his lifetime (c). Furthermore, He explained that profound difficulty will be experienced in trying to remedy mistakes after puberty, and that modification of behavior must therefore take place during early childhood (c).

Behavior modification is one of the essential elements in Skinner's psychological behaviorism and in Robert Burgess's behavioral sociology. Burgess views socialization as the process through which one's behavior is modified by the use of behavior reinforcements (or rewards) and punishments (Ritzer:151). Thus a child (or an adult) may be rewarded for certain types of behavior and punished for others.

According to Baha'u'llah, justice is the trainer of the world and "is upheld by two pillars, reward and punishment," which are "the sources of life to the world" (d:27). Baha'i educators emphasize the importance of using this principle in education. When justice is discussed, it is often in the negative aspect of punishment for wrong-doing. However, reward is just as important, if not more so.

Despite the great difficulty involved in changing behavior after puberty, it can be done. Mead pointed out that despite the influence of the socialized self, the "me," the active self, the "I," has the capacity to react spontaneously and independently to the behavior of others. (176-177). Likewise, 'Abdu'l-Baha said that the choice of actions is left to man's free will (d).

Intergroup Interaction

On a more complex level, intergroup interaction is based on either the values and norms of those who, in the system of functional differentiation, occupy positions of authority or on group values and norms, shared collectively.

However, according to C. Wright Mills, in the interactions of the United States with other nations, the existence of a "power elite" plays a major role. Mills wrote of the United States Pentagon "warlords" who play a decisive role in the formation of foreign policy and in the execution of international relations (171-224).

According to Mills, the power elite is composed of men whose positions enable them to transcend the ordinary environments of ordinary people. They are the decision makers. Whether they make decisions is less important than the fact that they occupy central positions. The power elite are in command of the major hierarchies, organizations, and corporations of modern society. They run "the machinery of the state" and "direct the military establishment" (3-4).

Likewise, Baha'u'llah wrote of the authority of the renowned divines over the general populace and lamented that none of them had accepted His (the Baha'i) Faith (b: 229). To the contrary, the clergy turned the Persian Muslims against the followers of Baha'u'llah, who also observed:

Every nation augmenteth, each year, its forces, for their ministers of war are insatiable in their desire to add fresh recruits to their Battalions (a: 131).

Georg Simmel's concept of the triad can be applied to intergroup interaction (as well as to interpersonal interaction). A triad is a group of three, as contrasted with a dyad, a group of two. In the former, even if one member should choose to drop out, the group continues to exist, while this is not true in the latter case (Simmel: 135). Frequently, there are triadic relations between various nations in which two will slanderize each other, trying to make the other appear to be the enemy of world peace, while each vies for the friendship of a third nation.

Person-group Interaction

Mills was in many ways a humanist. He considered the predicament of the ordinary man in American society. Great changes were beyond his control, yet they exerted a powerful impact upon his conduct and outlook. He was actually similar in this regard to Marx, from whom he borrowed many of his own ideas. Here we have a contemporary example of person-group interaction. The ordinary person is confronted by an independent group: the power elite.

The Baha'i community attempts to do away with this problem through the institution of the local spiritual assembly. This body of nine, elected annually by all adult residents of the community, is open to any person who wishes to turn to it for advice. In the future, according to the Baha'i teachings, this assembly will also control the House of Finance, regulating the economic affairs of the community.

Summary

Interaction functions on interpersonal, intergroup, and person-group levels. As society increases in complexity, the potential for a greater diversity of interactions increases accordingly. In our complex society, nations and peoples which might never before had come into association, are now highly interdependent.

Chapter 7 Conclusion

This thesis has examined the dynamics of the process of complexification in social evolution through a case study of the Baha'i Faith and has attempted to show how the Baha'i teachings complement the social scientific literature. Yet, social evolution is only one of a number of contemporary approaches to the study of social change, e.g. cyclical theory, equilibrium theory, etc. Furthermore, social evolutionists are sharply divided among themselves. On the one hand there are those who, as the late Leslie White, have been identified with an essentially cultural-functional perspective and have viewed various cultural traits as functioning together in a cultural system. On the other, there are the Marxists and neo-Marxists who subscribe to a theory of dialectical and historical materialism.

It is not, however, in a purely dogmatic and stubborn adherence to one position of another wherein lies the ideal solution. To the contrary, it is often the case that seemingly irreconcilable and contradictory viewpoints can be harmonized as they contribute to a more inclusive model.

Although sociology developed out of the philosophy of history with Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, and Herbert Spencer and was, in many ways, a historical discipline, it has since strayed from that course. But the role of sociology as a nomothetic science, as contrasted with the primarily idiographic nature of history, makes the former particularly well-suited to the comparative study of social evolution. For while an idiographic discipline is concerned with "individual, unique facts" and is primarily descriptive (Theodorson and Theodorson:369), nomothetic science primarily deals with the general rather than the particular and is concerned with abstraction (369).

There is, no doubt, need for a greater dialogue between historians and sociologists. Such interdisciplinary communication will perform at least two functions. First, it will acquaint historians with some of the methods used by sociologists in the comparative study of social interaction and social situations. Second it will give sociologists a keener sense for authentic historical documents. The data which some sociologists may consider sufficiently reliable would often be brushed aside by the historian.

The research offered here is tentative and exploratory. It will remain for future researchers to delve more deeply into the Baha'i teachings on social evolution. The subject is vast, and this thesis has dealt with only one area, that of the process of social complexification. Other topics of interest might be the role of social conflict, particularly a comparison of Simmel's concept of dissociation with the Baha'i teachings in that area; the processes of integration and disintegration in human interaction; and a comparison of Sorokin's theory of cyclical development with the Baha'i teaching of evolution in cycles.

What can be concluded from this research is that there are areas of closeness between sociological theory and the Baha'i teachings. The Baha'i Faith is, as is most religion, inherently social. It deals with finding solutions to social problems. Much of sociological research is also involved in the study of social problems. The benefits to be gained on both sides from an increased dialogue are enormous. The writer plans to devote future research to additional comparisons.

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