

# Epistemological Views of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá<sup>i</sup>

by Mikhail Sergeev, PhD

“Whatever the intelligence of man cannot understand religion ought not to accept.”

‘Abdu’l-Bahá

## Introductory Remarks

It became traditional in modern philosophy to begin the exposition of any philosophical system with a thinker’s take on epistemological issues. The son of the founder of Bahá’í Faith and the leader of the new religious movement after the death of his father, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not a systematic philosopher and he did not write a treatise on the theory of knowledge. He touched upon epistemological problems, however, in the context of various religious and philosophical topics he had been discussing in many of his talks and books. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá dwelled on epistemological themes in several chapters of *Some Answered Questions* (1904-06), as well as in the *Tablets of Divine Plan* (1916-17) and the *Tablet to Dr. Forel* (1921). He also made important remarks with regard to the theory of knowledge in a series of presentations on Bahá’í teachings delivered in Europe and North America and recorded in *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London and Paris Talks* (1911) as well as in the *Promulgation of Universal Peace* (1912).

The aim of my paper is to present a comprehensive reconstruction of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s epistemological views that are scattered throughout many of his writings and utterances.

## Types of Knowledge

Generally speaking, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá distinguishes two kinds of knowledge: “One is subjective and the other objective knowledge – that is to say, an intuitive knowledge and a knowledge derived from perception.”<sup>ii</sup> He writes,

The knowledge of things which men universally have is gained by reflection or by evidence – that is to say, either by the power of the mind the conception of an object is formed, or from beholding an object the form is produced in the mirror of the heart... But the second sort of knowledge, which is the knowledge of being... is like the cognizance and consciousness that man has of himself.<sup>iii</sup>

Reflecting on various aspects of inner or intuitive knowledge ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out that human insight comes to fruition in the course of meditation which

is the key for opening the doors of mysteries. In that state man abstracts himself: in that state man withdraws himself from all outside objects; in that subjective mood he is immersed in the ocean of spiritual life and can unfold the secrets of things-in-themselves.<sup>iv</sup>

“Through the faculty of meditation,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá continues,

man... receives the breath of the Holy Spirit [and] Divine inspiration... This faculty brings forth from the invisible plane the sciences and arts. Through the meditative faculty inventions are made possible, colossal undertakings are carried out... governments can run smoothly [and] man enters into the very Kingdom of God.<sup>v</sup>

The intuitive power of the human spirit can manifest itself in a wakeful state as well as in the state of sleep by means of dreams and visions. “How often it happens,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out,

that [man] sees a dream in the world of sleep, and its signification becomes apparent two years afterward in corresponding events. In the same way, how many times it happens that a question which one cannot solve in the world of wakefulness is solved in the world of dreams.<sup>vi</sup>

He also argues that our intuitive abilities allow us to communicate with the departed souls. Such “conversation can be held, but not as our [physical] conversation,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá remarks. “The heart of man is open to inspiration,” he adds, “this is spiritual communication. As in a dream one talks with a friend while the mouth is silent, so it is in the conversation of the spirit.”<sup>vii</sup>

The ultimate achievement of human intuition is revelation that is available only to a limited number of people called prophets. The prophets and, especially the founders of major religions whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to as Divine Manifestations, share with other humans the sensory and rational capacity for knowledge, but in addition they possess intuitive or heavenly comprehension that “embraces all things, knows all mysteries, discovers all signs, and rules over all things.”<sup>viii</sup> As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains, the source of intuitive understanding is

the spirit [that] surrounds the body and is aware of its sensations and powers. This knowledge is not the outcome of effort and study. It is an existing thing; it is an absolute gift. [Correspondingly, with the aid of the Holy Spirit] Manifestations of God surround the essence and qualities of the creatures, transcend and contain existing realities and understand all things, therefore, Their knowledge is divine knowledge, and not acquired – that is to say, it is a holy bounty; it is a divine revelation.<sup>ix</sup>

Divine Manifestations are capable of spiritual visions and discoveries such as, for example, the transfiguration of Jesus Christ that has been described in the Bible,<sup>x</sup> and they are the only source of the knowledge of God, his will and his attributes for the rest of humanity.

### **Reason vs. Sensory Perception**

Among the three main sources of knowledge – sensory perception, abstract reasoning and intuition – the latter is always individuated i.e. peculiar to the person who experiences it. We do not share our intuitions in common with other people and, therefore, cannot claim them to be generally valid. Sense perception and rationality, on the other hand, both refer to the objective world of nature and by virtue of that have universal character. While the senses provide us with perception of individual objects, rational analysis produces abstractions and generalities. Hence, reasoning appears, to be the strongest among various forms of human cognition because it is universal both in its sources and outcomes.

A new philosophical movement known as Positivism that arose in Europe around the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century challenged those traditional attitudes toward human rationality. A French philosopher, sociologist, and the founder of Positivism August Comte (1787-1857) stressed the importance of knowledge that is gained: through the five senses on the ground that observation and experimentation, which constitute the foundation of science, are impossible without empirical data. In his writings and talks ‘Abdu’l-Bahá criticized such an approach as inconsistent with empirical evidence itself.<sup>xi</sup> He said in this respect, for example:

Modern philosophers say: ‘We have never seen the spirit in man, and in spite of our researches into the secrets of the human body we do not perceive a spiritual power. How can we imagine a power which is not sensible?’

As he replies in answer to this questions:

If we wish to deny everything that is not sensible then we must deny the realities which unquestionably exist. For example, ethereal matter [the forces of which are said in physics to be heat, light, electricity and magnetism] is not sensible, though it has an undoubted existence. The power of attraction is not sensible, though it certainly exists. From what do we affirm these existences? From their signs [and effects].<sup>xii</sup>

It is well known that animals possess sensory perception that is often sharper and more powerful than that of humans. They lack, however, the faculty of reason that makes the animals the subject to nature and inferior to man. “God’s greatest gift to man is that of intellect, or understanding,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes,

All creation, preceding Man, is bound by the stern law of nature... Man alone has freedom, and, by his understanding or intellect, has been able to gain control of and adapt some of those natural laws to his own needs.<sup>xiii</sup>

The materialist position, on the contrary, assigned to human intellect the place within the natural order as its product and an inalienable part of it. While capable of rational inquiry human reason, as materialists contended, can never penetrate the essence of nature or understand all of creation, which is the sign of its inferiority to the world of nature. Furthermore, as they argued, human intellect is a physical endowment, very much like the endowment of sight, hearing and other senses, and, hence, it ceases to exist along with the rest of sense organs at the moment of death of an individual. As subject to decomposition, human intellect, therefore, also proves to be part of the natural order.

In responding to these arguments, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá distinguishes between physical and ideal endowments, material and ideal perception and virtues. He writes, for example, that the “sense of sight in man is a physical virtue; but insight, the power of inner perception, is ideal in its nature.”<sup>xiv</sup> He seems to agree with the materialists that “the power of ideation, or faculty of intellection, is material,” but considers the “acquisition of the realities of phenomena [as] an ideal virtue; likewise the emotions of man and his ability to prove the existence of God.”<sup>xv</sup>

In various places ‘Abdu’l-Bahá juxtaposes contemporary to him European empiricist philosophy with the tradition of classical rationalism. He writes:

The criterion of judgment in the estimation of western philosophers is sense perception... The philosophers of the East consider the perfect criterion to be reason or intellect...they state that the senses are the assistants and instruments of reason, and that although the investigation of realities may be conducted through the senses, the standard of knowing and judgment is reason itself.

He continues:

The materialistic philosophers of the West declare that man belongs to the animal kingdom, whereas the philosophers of the East – such as Plato, Aristotle and the Persian – divide the world of existence or phenomena of life into two general categories or kingdoms: one the animal kingdom, or world of nature, the other human kingdom, or world of reason.<sup>xvi</sup>

As a definite proof that humanity transcends the world of nature and does not fully constitute a part of it ‘Abdu’l-Bahá presents the following argument. “[I]t is evident,” he points out, “that in the world of nature conscious knowledge is absent. Nature is without knowing whereas man is conscious.” “If it be claimed that the intellectual reality of man belongs to the world of nature,” he continues, “– that it is a part of the whole – we ask is it possible for the part to contain virtues which the whole does not possess?” In other words: “Is it possible that the extraordinary faculty of reason in man is animal in character and quality?”<sup>xvii</sup> ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s own answer to this question is definitely negative.

### **Reason vs. Revelation**

In parallel with various types of cognition there can be empiricist, rationalist, intuitivist, traditionalist or scriptural philosophy. A British thinker John Locke, for instance, was a pioneer of empiricist philosophy in modern Europe. Socrates, Plato and Aristotle in ancient Greece and Descartes and Leibniz in more recent Western history advocated rationalist philosophy. A German thinker Schelling developed intuitivist philosophy that before him flourished in various schools of religious mysticism.

Traditionalist and scriptural philosophy have roots in human culture as deep as ancient rationalism of Plato and Aristotle. Already in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC a Chinese sage Confucius taught a social and moral philosophy that was based on the “tradition of the past” and such Chinese classics as the *Book of Odes*, the *Book of Ritual*, and others. Around the same time Indians invented scriptural philosophy in order to defend the truth of Hinduism by means of rational arguments. Scholars estimate that a Hindu thinker Jaimini wrote *Mimansa-Sutra* – the earliest treatise within the tradition of Hindu religious philosophy that belongs to the school of Purva-Mimansa – in the 4<sup>th</sup> century BC.

Philo of Alexandria is usually considered the first ‘scriptural philosopher’ in the Western intellectual tradition. Born around 20 B.C. and raised as an Orthodox Jew, Philo was heavily influenced by the ancient rationalism. In his own philosophical system Philo created a synthesis of Jewish wisdom and Greek thought. More specifically, he supported the revelation of Moses in the Torah by the philosophical speculation of Plato and the Stoics. Later Christian philosophers and theologians would engage in a similar enterprise but already with respect to their own Christian scriptural writings.

In the Middle Ages when philosophy became the ‘servant of theology’ such method of philosophizing produced great works coming from diverse religious traditions – Shankara and Ramanuja in Hinduism, Avicenna in Islam, Hemacandra in Jainism, Moses Maimonides in Judaism, Chu-Hsi in neo-Confucianism, and St. Thomas Aquinas in Christianity. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá belongs to the same tradition of scriptural philosophy as well. Even more so, in Bahá’í Faith he is regarded as both the infallible interpreter and creator of scriptures. And – as always is the case with this type of philosophizing – it is the interplay between reason and revelation that constitutes the nerve of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s thought.

Revelation brings about the knowledge of God, and it is “the bounty of the Holy Spirit,” as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, that “gives the true method of comprehension which is infallible and indubitable... this is the condition in which certainty can alone be attained.”<sup>xxviii</sup> The knowledge of God is delivered by God’s messenger or, in Bahá’í terms, a Divine Manifestation who “is like a mirror wherein the Sun of Reality is reflected.”<sup>xxix</sup> “All the prophets and Messengers have come from One Holy Spirit,” ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains in another place, “and bear the Message of God fitted to the age in which they appear.”<sup>xxx</sup> And later: “All the Manifestations of God bring the same Light; they only differ in degree, not in reality... The teaching is ever the same, it is only the outward forms that change.”<sup>xxxi</sup> Finally, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out, revelation always calls for rational explanation and interpretation since

Divine things are too deep to be expressed by common words. The heavenly teachings are expressed in parable in order to be understood and preserved for ages to come. When the spiritually minded dive deeply into the ocean of their meaning they bring to the surface the pearls of their inner significance. There is no greater pleasure than to study God’s Word with a spiritual mind.<sup>xxii</sup>

Now, if revelation is necessarily the subject to interpretation, reasoning as the most potent agent of human cognition must support it. Devoid of faith human rationality becomes autonomous, self-sufficient and may lose its higher purpose “for with learning cometh arrogance and pride, and it bringeth on error and indifference to God.”<sup>xxiii</sup> Without rational investigation, on the other hand, faith may turn into mere superstition. Hence – the dialectic of philosophy and theology, science and religion that plays such an important role in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s thought.

The need for the harmony between science and religion is one of the central principles of Bahá’í Faith that was enunciated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in his numerous speeches throughout Europe and America. In *Paris Talks* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, for instance, that “any religion contrary to science is not the truth.”<sup>xxiv</sup> He explains further:

All religious laws conform to reason, and are suited to the people for whom they are framed, and for the age in which they are to be obeyed... I say unto you: weigh carefully in the balance of reason and science everything that is presented to you as religion. If it passes this test, then accept it, for it is truth! If, however, it does not so conform, then reject it, for it is ignorance!<sup>xxv</sup>

In another place ‘Abdu’l-Bahá consoles his listeners with regard to possible – past and future – conflicts between faith and reason: “Our Father will not hold us responsible for the rejection of dogmas which we are unable either to believe or comprehend, for He is ever infinitely just to His children.”<sup>xxvi</sup>

## Limitations of Knowledge

The limitations of knowledge are an important subject matter in modern Western epistemology, especially after the works of Immanuel Kant. In his *Critique of Pure Reason* the founder of German Idealism has demonstrated the inherent limitations of human reasoning and questioned the possibility of metaphysics – the knowledge of the essences of things – as an exact science. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá does not mention Kant or Kant’s theories but he touches upon Kantian themes in his writings.

According to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, human cognition is significantly limited in several ways. First – and here he echoes the Kenigsberg thinker – one cannot penetrate the essences of things apart from their qualities. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá puts it:

Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its qualities. The essence of a thing is known through its qualities; otherwise it is unknown and hidden... everything is known by its qualities and not by its essence.<sup>xxvii</sup>

As he continues:

The inner essence of man is unknown and not evident but by its qualities it is characterized and known. [Also] the Divine Reality is unknown with regard to its essence and is known with regard to its attributes.<sup>xxviii</sup>

Likewise, the essence of the world of nature is also unknown and for the same reason since “[p]henomenal or created things are known to us only by their attributes.”<sup>xxix</sup>

The second limitation of knowledge refers to humanity’s place in creation and the corresponding inability to know higher levels of existence. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá points out, the “difference in degree is ever an obstacle to comprehension of the higher by the lower, the inferior.”<sup>xxx</sup> As he explains in another place:

A lower degree cannot comprehend a higher although all are in the same world of creation – whether mineral, vegetable or animal... In the human plane of existence we can say we have knowledge of a vegetable, its qualities and product; but the vegetable has no knowledge or comprehension whatever of us.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Hence, humans cannot comprehend Divinity, the essence of nature or of themselves since these are realities higher than that of our own. Neither can we comprehend the spiritual realm or life after death – similarly to animals that have no understanding of the reality of human existence.

The third limitation of knowledge, according to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, refers to the general liability of human cognition. As he points out, the “four criteria [of human knowledge] according to the declarations of men are: first, sense perception; second, reason; third, traditions; fourth, inspirations.”<sup>xxxii</sup> All of them are liable to error. The sense perception, for instance, “is imperfect [because] it is subject to many aberrations and inaccuracies.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> As for human reasoning, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá argues,

in the estimation of the people of insight this criterion is likewise defective and unreliable, for [those] philosophers who held to reason or intellect as the standard of human judgment have differed widely among themselves upon every subject of investigation... As they differ and are contradictory in conclusions, it is evidence that the method and standard of test must have been faulty and insufficient.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

Religious traditions can also be incomplete and inconclusive because their interpretations are formed by human reasoning as well and, as a result, produce contradictory explanations. Finally, intuitions or inspiration, as ‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes, “are the promptings or susceptibilities of the human heart [and can be] sometimes satanic.” “How are we to differentiate them?” – he asks – “How are we to tell whether a given statement is an inspiration and promptings of the heart through the merciful assistance or through the satanic agency?”<sup>xxxv</sup>

The conclusion ‘Abdu’l-Bahá arrives at is to combine all four standards of judgment in order to come to a more conclusive proof. He writes that

a statement presented to the mind accompanied by proofs which the senses can perceive to be correct, which the faculty of reason can accept, which is in accord with traditional authority and sanctioned by the promptings of the heart, can be adjudged and relied upon as perfectly correct, for it has been proved and tested by all the standards of judgment and found to be complete.<sup>xxxvi</sup>

One should note, however, that by using all four criteria of judgment we increase the probability of but do not necessarily arrive at the right conclusion. If each one of the criteria is liable to error, then all four of them – at least in theory – can also lead us astray. That is why numerous scriptural philosophers who belonged to various religious traditions didn’t come to agreement with each other and defended contradictory and even opposite doctrines and theories.

## Conclusions

In conclusion of my overview of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s epistemology I would like to propose another distinction that is not explicitly made in his writings. In addition to being objective and subjective, human and divine, knowledge can also be direct or indirect. Direct knowledge is acquired by the knower oneself while indirect knowledge is that which is mediated by another person.

The ultimate object and purpose of any knowledge is truth. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes, the “Truth [itself] never changes but man’s vision changes.”<sup>xxxvii</sup> The Holy Spirit delivers the certainty of truth in the form of revelation – but always through the intermediary of a chosen prophet. Hence, the error-free but indirect knowledge has to be supported and verified by our direct but often mistaken cognition – first of all by the “light of the intellect... the highest light that exists, for it is born of the *Light Divine*.”<sup>xxxviii</sup> Since our own capacities for knowledge are limited by God, nature, our education, life experiences and social environment, we lack the sense of certainty that is one of the attributes of prophecy.. As ‘Abdu’l-Bahá notes,

The only true Explainer of the Book of God is the Holy Spirit, for no two minds are alike, no two can comprehend alike, no two can speak alike. That is to say, from the mere human standpoint of interpretation there could be neither truth nor agreement.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Such an epistemological position has far-reaching practical implications. It explains the co-existence at any given historical moment of various conflicting religions and philosophies. It also lays the foundation for intellectual tolerance and inter-religious dialogue that would serve as a necessary prerequisite for achieving the global peace and security.

Mikhail Sergeev,  
University of the Arts.

---

<sup>i</sup> A version of this paper was presented at the Association for Bahá'í Studies 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Conference in Washington, DC, in August 2009.

<sup>ii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, in *Writings and Utterances of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, New Delhi, India: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 2000, p. 210. Later on pages 246-47 'Abdu'l-Bahá reinforces the same point: "... the power and the comprehension of the human spirit are of two kinds – that is to say, they perceive and act in two different modes. One way is through instruments and organs: thus with this eye it sees; with this ear it hears; with this tongue it talks... The other manifestation of the powers and actions of the spirit is without instruments and organs."

<sup>iii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 211.

<sup>iv</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, *ibid*, p. 789.

<sup>v</sup> *Ibid*, p. 789.

<sup>vi</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 247.

<sup>vii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, *ibid*, pp. 791-92.

<sup>viii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 242.

<sup>ix</sup> *Ibid*, p. 211.

<sup>x</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses in this context the event of transfiguration in *Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 260. As "a spiritual vision and a scene of the Kingdom," it is also mentioned in *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, *ibid*, p. 383.

<sup>xi</sup> Speaking about Positivists whom he simply calls materialists 'Abdu'l-Bahá displays an unusual and rare for him sense of sarcasm: "One of the strongest things witnessed is that the materialists of today are proud of their natural instincts and bondage. They state that nothing is entitled to belief and acceptance except that which is sensible or tangible. By their own statements they are captives of nature, unconscious of the spiritual world, uninformed of the divine Kingdom and unaware of heavenly bestowals. If this be a virtue, the animal has attained it to a superlative degree for the animal is absolutely ignorant of the realm of spirit and out of touch with the inner world of conscious realization. The animal would agree with the materialist in denying the existence of that which transcends the senses." 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, p. 958. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, pp. 1085.

<sup>xii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 174, 228. In this article we confine our analysis to epistemological and not ontological issues. So, the difference between sensible and intellectual reality is discussed here as an epistemological concern with no distinction made with respect to the objects of intellectual knowledge that may be either material (etherial matter) and spiritual (love). From the ontological perspective those non-sensible realities should be differentiated but they are often not when 'Abdu'l-Bahá speaks with reference to the theory of knowledge: "...the power of intellect is not sensible; none of the inner qualities of man is a sensible thing; on the contrary they are intellectual realities. So, love is a mental reality and not sensible... In the same was, nature, also in its essence is an intellectual reality and is not sensible; the human spirit is an intellectual, not sensible reality." (p. 174)

<sup>xiii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, *ibid*, pp. 715-16.

<sup>xiv</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, pp. 1085. 'Abdu'l-Bahá uses the term 'ideal' here as inter-changeable with 'spiritual': "the body of man expresses certain material virtues, but spirit of man manifests virtues that are ideal." He considers memory to be an ideal entity: "The sense of hearing is a physical endowment, whereas memory in man is ideal." (p. 1085)

<sup>xv</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1085.

<sup>xvi</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 1110-11.

<sup>xvii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1114.

<sup>xviii</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 283.

<sup>xix</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, p. 954.



- 
- <sup>xx</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, *ibid*, p. 1226.
- <sup>xxi</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1244.
- <sup>xxii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1250
- <sup>xxiii</sup> *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, *ibid*, p. 356.
- <sup>xxiv</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks*, *ibid*, pp. 764.
- <sup>xxv</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 770, 772.
- <sup>xxvi</sup> *Ibid*, p. 707.
- <sup>xxvii</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions*, *ibid*, p. 243.
- <sup>xxviii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 243.
- <sup>xxix</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, p. 1166. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers here to the so-called objective knowledge that is gained through the organs. In the case of subjective or spiritual knowledge he seems to accept the possibility of cognition of things-in-themselves. See Section 2 of this article.
- <sup>xxx</sup> *Ibid*, p. 955.
- <sup>xxxi</sup> *Ibid*, p. 904.
- <sup>xxxii</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, p. 823. In *Some Answered Questions* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá omits intuition or inspiration and juxtaposes senses, reason and tradition to the revelation of the Holy Spirit in order to emphasize the uncertain character of human cognition as compared to Divine omniscience. *Ibid*, pp. 282-83.
- <sup>xxxiii</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1024. In this quotation ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to the sense of sight but his analysis is equally applicable to all other senses.
- <sup>xxxiv</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1024. It should be noted that disagreement itself does not mean that the methods by which people come to the disagreement, are unreliable. We may have disagreed for centuries over the questions of philosophy not because our reason is deficient by nature, but because human intellectual capacities developed slowly over the millennia.
- <sup>xxxv</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1025.
- <sup>xxxvi</sup> *Ibid*, p. 1025.
- <sup>xxxvii</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London*, *ibid*, p. 1239.
- <sup>xxxviii</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Paris Talks*, *ibid*, pp. 731.
- <sup>xxxix</sup> *‘Abdu’l-Bahá, The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, *ibid*, pp. 988-89.