

Philosophy:

Material and Spiritual

Compilation and Commentary by Peter Terry ¹

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Let us begin with a definition of terms as they are used in the Baha'i source texts.

'Abdu'l-Baha defined philosophy in "Some Answered Questions":

"Philosophy consists in comprehending the reality of things as they exist, according to the capacity and the power of man." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Some Answered Questions, Chapter 59, p. 221)²

And He reiterated that definition in one of His talks:

"Philosophy develops the mind. Christ and the Word of God are revealed through the Spirit. Plato says, "The mental conclusions are so and so." Christ says, "Be led of the Spirit." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 212)

In one of His Tablets to an American believer He wrote:

"In the Tablets of His Holiness BAHÁ'ULLÁH, there are many philosophic questions. For example, the Tablet of Wisdom, but it has not yet been translated. It may be found that his honor Fazel Mazindarani gave this Tablet to a Persian expert to translate into English. In His Tablets He has encouraged and rather urged (the people) to study philosophy. Therefore, in the religion of BAHÁ'ULLÁH philosophy is highly esteemed.

"As to life, however, it has had no beginning, nor will it have any end. The eternal grace of God has always been the cause of life. It has had no starting point and it will not approach any end. But concerning the degrees through which the soul has gone, these degrees are spiritual. Consider all the advancement of the word of humanity which is at present manifest and known. This has been realized through the spirit. The manifestation of the

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² Citations in this paper from Some Answered Questions are from the translation available at the time.

will of the Omnipotent, in the universe, means the manifestation of the divine laws and disciplines which are essential to the realities of beings, and in the world of the Kingdom they are ideals which in the appearance of the holy Manifestations (of God) are realized.

"The fruits of the deeds of man, i.e. the harvest of the reward of man's conduct, is gathered in the heavenly realm.

"But as to evolution, it is true of both the body and the spirit. Consider how many sciences, arts, discoveries and achievements have come into existence since the days of Moses till the present time through the progress of the human soul in knowledge and perfections. Similarly, how much the soul has evolved from the moral point of view. From the material standpoint, you can see also how much civilization has progressed." (Tablet addressed to Mr. Alwyn J. Baker, Berkeley, California, translated December 2, 1920, by Aziz'ullah Bahadur; published in Star of the West, Vol. 12, p. 194)

'Abdu'l-Baha recommended that all be educated in philosophy:

"Among other teachings and principles Bahá'u'lláh counsels the education of all members of society. No individual should be denied or deprived of intellectual training, although each should receive according to capacity. None must be left in the grades of ignorance, for ignorance is a defect in the human world. All mankind must be given a knowledge of science and philosophy—that is, as much as may be deemed necessary. All cannot be scientists and philosophers, but each should be educated according to his needs and deserts." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, 108)

Shoghi Effendi reiterated this principle in two letters written by his secretary on his behalf:

"It is hoped that all the Bahá'í students will ... be led to investigate and analyze the principles of the Faith and to correlate them with the modern aspects of philosophy and science. Every intelligent and thoughtful young Bahá'í should always approach the Cause in this way, for therein lies the very essence of the principle of independent investigation of truth." (6 August 1933, on behalf of Shoghi Effendi to an individual believer; published in many compilations of scholarship and in 1997 Aug 13, Letter on Science and Religion, p. 2)

"Philosophy, as you will study it and later teach it, is certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splitting is meant, not a sound branch of learning like philosophy..."

"As regards your own studies: he would advise you not to devote too much of your time to the abstract side of philosophy, but rather to approach it from a more historical angle. As

to correlating philosophy with the Bahá'í teachings: this is a tremendous work which scholars in the future can undertake. We must remember that not only are all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still come to light which are at present owned privately." (From a letter dated 15 February 1947 written on behalf Guardian to an individual believer; in The Unfolding Destiny of the British Baha'i Community, p. 445; and in Letters, 1999 Dec 13, Two Compilations on Scholarship - 1979 and 1983)

In the Tablet of Wisdom and other Writings, Baha'u'llah indicated that the origin of philosophy is not to be found in the Golden Age of the ancient Greeks, but in the Prophets of God:

"The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge from the Prophets, inasmuch as the latter were the Exponents of divine philosophy and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 144-145)

"The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 145)

He reiterates an Islamic tradition, that the father of philosophy was Idris, called a prophet in the Qur'an (19:56-57). He identifies Idris with Hermes, considered the founder of philosophy in the Hermetic tradition, whose writings were called "Hermetic" and "chrysolite tablets":

"The first person who devoted himself to philosophy was Idris. Thus was he named. Some called him also Hermes. In every tongue he hath a special name. He it is who hath set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing statements. After him Balinus derived his knowledge and sciences from the Hermetic Tablets and most of the philosophers who followed him made their philosophical and scientific discoveries from his words and statements..." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh al-Basit al-Haqiqqa; cited in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Note 1, p. 148)

"...the theories put forward by the Father of Philosophy regarding the mysteries of creation as given in his chrysolite tablets..." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 147)

While it may be surmised that in its origins, philosophy was integrated, inasmuch as the Father of Philosophy "set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing statements," philosophy was at some point differentiated into two branches. In some of His talks 'Abdu'l-Baha refers to these two branches of the primordial philosophy as two kinds of philosophy:

"Philosophy is of two kinds: natural and divine. Natural philosophy seeks knowledge of physical verities and explains material phenomena, whereas divine philosophy deals with ideal verities and phenomena of the spirit. The field and scope of natural philosophy have

been greatly enlarged, and its accomplishments are most praiseworthy, for it has served humanity. But according to the evidence of present world conditions divine philosophy—which has for its object the sublimation of human nature, spiritual advancement, heavenly guidance for the development of the human race, attainment to the breaths of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the verities of God—has been outdistanced and neglected. Now is the time for us to make an effort and enable it to advance apace with the philosophy of material investigation so that awakening of the ideal virtues may progress equally with the unfoldment of the natural powers. In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us. The philosophers of Greece—such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others—were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools of teaching they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to humanity. This was the reason of the triumph and survival of their teachings and principles. Man should continue both these lines of research and investigation so that all the human virtues, outer and inner, may become possible. The attainment of these virtues, both material and ideal, is conditioned upon intelligent investigation of reality, by which investigation the sublimity of man and his intellectual progress is accomplished. Forms must be set aside and renounced; reality must be sought. We must discover for ourselves where and what reality is.

(‘Abdu’l-Baha, address given in a private home on 20 September 1912; The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 326-327)

"This endowment is the most praiseworthy power of man, for through its employment and exercise the betterment of the human race is accomplished, the development of the virtues of mankind is made possible and the spirit and mysteries of God become manifest. Therefore, I am greatly pleased with my visit to this university. Praise be to God that this country abounds in such institutions of learning where the knowledge of sciences and arts may readily be acquired.

"As material and physical sciences are taught here and are constantly unfolding in wider vistas of attainment, I am hopeful that spiritual development may also follow and keep

pace with these outer advantages. As material knowledge is illuminating those within the walls of this great temple of learning, so also may the light of the spirit, the inner and divine light of the real philosophy glorify this institution. The most important principle of divine philosophy is the oneness of the world of humanity, the unity of mankind, the bond conjoining East and West, the tie of love which blends human hearts."

(Abdu'l-Baha, address given at Columbia University on 19 April 1912; in The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 31; Foundations of World Unity, p. 45)

In another talk, He refers to the two kinds of philosophy as two kinds of sciences:

"Scientific knowledge is the highest attainment upon the human plane, for science is the discoverer of realities. It is of two kinds: material and spiritual. Material science is the investigation of natural phenomena; divine science is the discovery and realization of spiritual verities. The world of humanity must acquire both. A bird has two wings; it cannot fly with one. Material and spiritual science are the two wings of human uplift and attainment. Both are necessary--one the natural, the other supernatural; one material, the other divine. By the divine we mean the discovery of the mysteries of God, the comprehension of spiritual realities, the wisdom of God, inner significances of the heavenly religions and foundation of the law." (Talk at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Francis W. Breed, Cambridge, Massachusetts, on 23 May 1912; in The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p, 138)

"Baha'u'llah taught that in all schools and colleges sciences, both divine and material, should be taught, in order that the students may discover material realities and the realities of the Kingdom, for material realities and sciences are as the body and divine sciences are as the spirit. The body must live by the spirit. If the spirit does not exist the body then is dead. Though the body be in utmost beauty, yet, if deprived of the outpourings of the spirit, it will be fruitless and of benefit to no one, nay, rather its non-existence were better than its existence." ("Two Kinds of Education," address of 'Abdu'l-Baha at Unitarian Church, Dublin, New Hampshire, United States, 11 August 1912, published in Star of the West, XIV:2, (May 1923), p. 44)

Some philosophers have devoted themselves to both kinds of philosophy, the material and the divine:

"The philosophers of Greece -- such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others -- were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools of teaching they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to

humanity. This was the reason of the triumph and survival of their teachings and principles. Man should continue both these lines of research and investigation so that all the human virtues, outer and inner, may become possible. " ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 327)

'Abdu'l-Baha pointed out that some philosophers, notably amongst the ancient Greeks, and many in the modern West, are materialists, and deny the existence of the spiritual:

"The people of the world are divided into two classes. One class is the materialistic philosophers who deny the spirit and its immortality. The second class comprises the divine philosophers the wise men of God, the wise illuminati. They believe in the spirit and its immortality. Some of the Greek philosophers declared man to consist of simply the material elements. These material elements compose the cellular elements of the human organism, and when this composition is subjected to disintegration, the life of man becomes extinct. They taught that other than the body there is no spirit. It is body and body only. From these elements these human emanations have come. To them the eye and the ear are due; by them the sense of taste, smell and touch are caused; and when these element are decomposed, these senses are likewise decomposed. This is the statement of the materialistic philosophers.

"But the philosophers of God say, No! the spirit does exist; the spirit is living and eternal. Because of the objections of the materialistic philosophers, therefore, the wise men of God have advanced rational proofs in regard to the validity of the spirit. The materialistic philosophers do not believe in the books of God, and, hence, for them traditional proofs are no evidence; materialistic proofs are necessary. Consequently, the philosophizers and wise men of God have said that it is firmly established that existing phenomena may be resolved into grades; that is to say, the mineral, vegetable or animal kingdoms." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Talk at the Theosophical Society, Boston, on July 24, 1912; in Star of the West, IV:7, pp. 115-117; VIII:7, pp. 85-86)

"The philosophers of the world are divided into two classes: materialists, who deny the spirit and its immortality, and the divine philosophers, the wise men of God, the true illuminati who believe in the spirit and its continuance hereafter. The ancient philosophers taught that man consists simply of the material elements which compose his cellular structure and that when this composition is disintegrated the life of man becomes extinct. They reasoned that man is body only, and from this elemental composition the organs and their functions, the senses, powers and attributes which characterize man have proceeded, and that these disappear completely with the physical body. This is practically the statement of all the materialists.

"The divine philosophers proclaim that the spirit of man is ever-living and eternal, and because of the objections of the materialists, these wise men of God have advanced rational proofs to support the validity of their statement. Inasmuch as the materialistic philosophers deny the Books of God, scriptural demonstration is not evidence to them, and materialistic proofs are necessary. Answering them, the men of divine knowledge have said that all existing phenomena may be resolved into grades or kingdoms, classified progressively as mineral, vegetable, animal and human..." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Talk at the Theosophical Society, Boston, on July 24, 1912; in edited version, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 239)

"In schools and temples of learning knowledge of the sciences acquired is based upon material observations only; there is no realization of Divinity in their methods and conclusions -- all have reference to the world of matter. They are not interested in attaining knowledge of the mysteries of God or understanding the secrets of the heavenly Kingdom; what they acquire is based altogether upon visible and tangible evidences. Beyond these evidences they are without susceptibilities; they have no idea of the world of inner significances and are utterly out of touch with God, considering this an indication of reasonable attitude and philosophical judgment whereof they are self-sufficient and proud.

"As a matter of fact, this supposed excellence is possessed in its superlative degree by the animals. The animals are without knowledge of God; so to speak, they are deniers of Divinity and understand nothing of the Kingdom and its heavenly mysteries. As deniers of the Kingdom, they are utterly ignorant of spiritual things and uninformed of the supernatural world. Therefore, if it be a perfection and virtue to be without knowledge of God and His Kingdom, the animals have attained the highest degree of excellence and proficiency. Then the donkey is the greatest scientist and the cow an accomplished naturalist, for they have obtained what they know without schooling and years of laborious study in colleges, trusting implicitly to the evidence of the senses and relying solely upon intuitive virtues. The cow, for instance, is a lover of the visible and a believer in the tangible, contented and happy when pasture is plenty, perfectly serene, a blissful exponent of the transcendental school of philosophy. Such is the status of the material philosophers, who glory in sharing the condition of the cow, imagining themselves in a lofty station. Reflect upon their ignorance and blindness." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 261-262)

"In these days there are new schools of philosophy blindly claiming that the world of nature is perfect. If this is true, why are children trained and educated in schools, and what is the need of extended courses in sciences, arts and letters in colleges and universities? What would be the result if humanity were left in its natural condition without education or training? All scientific discoveries and attainments are the outcomes of knowledge and education. The telegraph, phonograph, telephone were latent and potential in the world of

nature but would never have come forth into the realm of visibility unless man through education had penetrated and discovered the laws which control them. All the marvelous developments and miracles of what we call civilization would have remained hidden, unknown and, so to speak, nonexistent, if man had remained in his natural condition, deprived of the bounties, blessings and benefits of education and mental culture. The intrinsic difference between the ignorant man and the astute philosopher is that the former has not been lifted out of his natural condition, while the latter has undergone systematic training and education in schools and colleges until his mind has awakened and unfolded to higher realms of thought and perception; otherwise, both are human and natural. "God has sent forth the Prophets for the purpose of quickening the soul of man into higher and divine recognitions. He has revealed the heavenly Books for this great purpose. For this the breaths of the Holy Spirit have been wafted through the gardens of human hearts, the doors of the divine Kingdom opened to mankind and the invisible inspirations sent forth from on high. This divine and ideal power has been bestowed upon man in order that he may purify himself from the imperfections of nature and uplift his soul to the realm of might and power. God has purposed that the darkness of the world of nature shall be dispelled and the imperfect attributes of the natal self be effaced in the effulgent reflection of the Sun of Truth. The mission of the Prophets of God has been to train the souls of humanity and free them from the thralldom of natural instincts and physical tendencies. They are like unto Gardeners, and the world of humanity is the field of Their cultivation, the wilderness and untrained jungle growth wherein They proceed to labor. They cause the crooked branches to become straightened, the fruitless trees to become fruitful, and gradually transform this great wild, uncultivated field into a beautiful orchard producing wonderful abundance and outcome.

"If the world of nature were perfect and complete in itself, there would be no need of such training and cultivation in the human world--no need of teachers, schools and universities, arts and crafts. The revelations of the Prophets of God would not have been necessary, and the heavenly Books would have been superfluous. If the world of nature were perfect and sufficient for mankind, we would have no need of God and our belief in Him. Therefore, the bestowal of all these great helps and accessories to the attainment of divine life is because the world of nature is incomplete and imperfect. Consider this Canadian country during the early history of Montreal when the land was in its wild, uncultivated and natural condition. The soil was unproductive, rocky and almost uninhabitable-- vast forests stretching in every direction. What invisible power caused this great metropolis to spring up amid such savage and forbidding conditions? It was the human mind. Therefore, nature and the effect of nature's laws were imperfect. The mind of man remedied and removed this imperfect condition, until now we behold a great city instead of a savage unbroken wilderness. Before the coming of Columbus America itself was a wild, uncultivated expanse

of primeval forest, mountains and rivers--a very world of nature. Now it has become the world of man. It was dark, forbidding and savage; now it has become illumined with a great civilization and prosperity. Instead of forests, we behold productive farms, beautiful gardens and prolific orchards. Instead of thorns and useless vegetation, we find flowers, domestic animals and fields awaiting harvest. If the world of nature were perfect, the condition of this great country would have been left unchanged.

"If a child is left in its natural state and deprived of education, there is no doubt that it will grow up in ignorance and illiteracy, its mental faculties dulled and dimmed; in fact, it will become like an animal. This is evident among the savages of central Africa, who are scarcely higher than the beast in mental development.

"The conclusion is irresistible that the splendors of the Sun of Truth, the Word of God, have been the source and cause of human upbuilding and civilization. The world of nature is the kingdom of the animal. In its natural condition and plane of limitation the animal is perfect. The ferocious beasts of prey have been completely subject to the laws of nature in their development. They are without education or training; they have no power of abstract reasoning and intellectual ideals; they have no touch with the spiritual world and are without conception of God or the Holy Spirit. The animal can neither recognize nor apprehend the spiritual power of man and makes no distinction between man and itself, for the reason that its susceptibilities are limited to the plane of the senses. It lives under the bondage of nature and nature's laws. All the animals are materialists. They are deniers of God and without realization of a transcendent power in the universe. They have no knowledge of the divine Prophets and Holy Books--mere captives of nature and the sense world. In reality they are like the great philosophers of this day who are not in touch with God and the Holy Spirit-- deniers of the Prophets, ignorant of spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the heavenly bounties and without belief in the supernatural power. The animal lives this kind of life blissfully and untroubled, whereas the material philosophers labor and study for ten or twenty years in schools and colleges, denying God, the Holy Spirit and divine inspirations. The animal is even a greater philosopher, for it attains the ability to do this without labor and study. For instance, the cow denies God and the Holy Spirit, knows nothing of divine inspirations, heavenly bounties or spiritual emotions and is a stranger to the world of hearts. Like the philosophers, the cow is a captive of nature and knows nothing beyond the range of the senses. The philosophers, however, glory in this, saying, "We are not captives of superstitions; we have implicit faith in the impressions of the senses and know nothing beyond the realm of nature, which contains and covers everything." But the cow, without study or proficiency in the sciences, modestly and quietly views life from the same standpoint, living in harmony with nature's laws in the utmost dignity and nobility.

"This is not the glory of man. The glory of man is in the knowledge of God, spiritual susceptibilities, attainment to transcendent powers and the bounties of the Holy Spirit. The glory of man is in being informed of the teachings of God. This is the glory of humanity. Ignorance is not glory but darkness. Can these souls who are steeped in the lower strata of ignorance become informed of the mysteries of God and the realities of existence while Jesus Christ was without knowledge of them? Is the intellect of these people greater than the intellect of Christ? Christ was heavenly, divine and belonged to the world of the Kingdom. He was the embodiment of spiritual knowledge. His intellect was superior to these philosophers, His comprehension deeper, His perception keener, His knowledge more perfect. How is it that He overlooked and denied Himself everything in this world? He attached little importance to this material life, denying Himself rest and composure, accepting trials and voluntarily suffering vicissitudes because He was endowed with spiritual susceptibilities and the power of the Holy Spirit. He beheld the splendors of the divine Kingdom, embodied the bounties of God and possessed ideal powers. He was illumined with love and mercy, and so, likewise, were all the Prophets of God." (‘Abdu’l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 309-312)

Perhaps His lengthiest discourse on this subject was at the Open Forum in San Francisco, which was witnessed by Mirza Mahmud Zarqani, who wrote about it as follows:

"Another meeting was held at the Open Forum in San Francisco. Although the audience was composed mostly of philosophers and professors, they were all humbled by the talk. The Master's profound words contrasted the philosophy of the East with that of the West, elucidated the power beyond nature and explained the inherent distinction between mankind and other creatures. He concluded with the assertion that if philosophers believed that the highest perfection was not to believe in abstract and spiritual truth, it would be preferable to go to the cow, who, without any formal training, already had this attribute. When the Master uttered these words, everyone burst into laughter. This kind of humor, delivered in such a light-hearted manner, is popular and accepted by the Americans and so brought smiles and joy to the audience. At the conclusion of the Master's talk, when a philosopher stood up, several were heard to say to one another that the cow takes the lead in not believing in intellectual thought."

[http://bahai-library.com/?file=zarqani_mahmuds_diary.html&chapter=8]

This is the transcript of the Open Forum talk rendered into English:

"Although I was feeling indisposed this evening, yet owing to the love I entertain for you I have attended this meeting. For I have heard that this is an open forum, investigating reality; that you are free from blind imitations, desiring to arrive at the truth of things, and

that your endeavors are lofty. Therefore, I have thought it expedient to discourse upon the subject of philosophy, which is alike interesting to the East and the West, enabling us to consider the analogies and differences between the philosophical teachings of the Orient and Occident.

"The criterion of judgment in the estimation of western philosophers is sense perception. They consider that which is tangible or perceptible to the senses to be a reality—that there is no doubt of its existence. For example, we prove the existence of this light through the sense of sight; we visualize this room; we see the sun, the green fields; we use our sense of sight to observe them. The opinion of these philosophers is that such perception is reality, that the senses are the highest standard of perception and judgment, in which there can neither be doubt nor uncertainty. In the estimation of the philosophers of the Orient, especially those of Greece and Persia, the standard of judgment is the intellect. They are of the opinion that the criterion of the senses is defective, and their proof is that the senses are often deceived and mistaken. That which is liable to mistake cannot be infallible, cannot be a true standard of judgment.

"Among the senses the most powerful and reliable is that of sight. This sense views a mirage as a body of water and is positive as to its character, whereas a mirage is nonexistent. The sense of vision, or sight, sees reflected images in a mirror as verities, when reason declares them to be nonexistent. The eye sees the sun and planets revolving around the earth, whereas in reality the sun is stationary, central, and the earth revolves upon its own axis. The sense of sight sees the earth as a plane, whereas the faculty of reason discovers it to be spherical. The eye views the heavenly bodies in boundless space as small and insignificant, whereas reason declares them to be colossal suns. The sense of sight beholds a whirling spark of fire as a circle of light and is without doubt as to it, whereas such a circle is nonexistent. A man sailing in a ship sees the banks on either side as if they were moving, whereas the ship is moving. Briefly, there are many instances and evidences which disprove the assertion that tangibilities and sense impressions are certainties, for the senses are misleading and often mistaken. How, then, can we rightly declare that they prove reality when the standard or criterion itself is defective?

"The philosophers of the East consider the perfect criterion to be reason or intellect, and according to that standard the realities of all objects can be proved; for, they say, the standard of reason and intellect is perfect, and everything provable through reason is veritable. Therefore, those philosophers consider all philosophical deductions to be correct when weighed according to the standard of reason, and 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. In

this way the philosophers of the East and West differ and disagree. 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 Persians --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 the human kingdom, or world of reason. "Man is distinguished above the animals through his reason. The perceptions of man are of two kinds: tangible, or sensible, and reasonable, whereas the animal perceptions are limited to the senses, the tangible only. The tangible perceptions may be likened to this candle, the reasonable perceptions to the light. Calculations of mathematical problems and determining the spherical form of the earth are through the reasonable perceptions. The center of gravity is a hypothesis of reason. Reason itself is not tangible, perceptible to the senses. Reason is an intellectual verity or reality. All qualities are ideal realities, not tangible realities. For instance, we say this man is a scholarly man. Knowledge is an ideal attainment not perceptible to the senses. When you see this scholarly man, your eye does not see his knowledge, your ear cannot hear his science, nor can you sense it by taste. It is not a tangible verity. Science itself is an ideal verity. It is evident, therefore, that the perceptions of man are twofold: the reasonable and the tangible, or sensible. "As to the animal: It is endowed only with sense perception. It is lacking the reasonable perception. It cannot apprehend ideal realities. The animal cannot conceive of the earth as a sphere. The intelligence of an animal located in Europe could never have planned the discovery of the continent of America. The animal kingdom is incapable of discovering the latent mysteries of nature--such as electricity--and bringing them forth from the invisible to the plane of visibility. It is evident that the discoveries and inventions transcend the animal intelligence. The animal cannot penetrate the secrets of genesis and creation. Its mind is incapable of conceiving the verity of ether. It cannot know the mysteries of magnetism because the bestowals of abstract reason and intellect are absent in its endowment. That is to say, the animal in its creation is a captive of the senses. Beyond the tangibilities and impressions of the senses it cannot accept anything. It denies everything. It is incapable of ideal perception and, therefore, a captive of the senses.

"Virtue, or perfection, belongs to man, who possesses both the capacity of the senses and ideal perception. For instance, astronomical discoveries are man's accomplishments. He has not gained this knowledge through his senses. The greater part of it has been attained through intellect, through the ideal senses. Man's inventions have appeared through the avenue of his reasonable faculties. All his scientific attainments have come through the faculty of reason. Briefly, the evidences of intellect or reason are manifest in man. By them he is differentiated from the animal. Therefore, the animal kingdom is distinct and inferior to the human kingdom. Notwithstanding this, the philosophers of the West have certain syllogisms, or demonstrations, whereby they endeavor to prove that man had his origin in

the animal kingdom; that although he is now a vertebrate, he originally lived in the sea; from thence he was transferred to the land and became vertebrate; that gradually his feet and hands appeared in his anatomical development; then he began to walk upon all fours, after which he attained to human stature, walking erect. They find that his anatomy has undergone successive changes, finally assuming human form, and that these intermediate forms or changes are like links connected. Between man and the ape, however, there is one link missing, and to the present time scientists have not been able to discover it. Therefore, the greatest proof of this western theory of human evolution is anatomical, reasoning that there are certain vestiges of organs found in man which are peculiar to the ape and lower animals, and setting forth the conclusion that man at some time in his upward progression has possessed these organs which are no longer functioning but appear now as mere rudiments and vestiges.

"For example, a serpent has a certain appendage which indicates that at one time it was possessed of long limbs, but as this creature began to find its habitation in the holes of the earth, these limbs, no longer needed, became atrophied and shrunk, leaving but a vestige, or appendage, as an evidence of the time when they were lengthy and serviceable. Likewise, it is claimed man had a certain appendage which shows that there was a time when his anatomical structure was different from his present organism and that there has been a corresponding transformation or change in that structure. The coccyx, or extremity of the human spinal column, is declared to be the vestige of a tail which man formerly possessed but which gradually disappeared when he walked erect and its utility ceased. These statements and demonstrations express the substance of western philosophy upon the question of human evolution.

"The philosophers of the Orient in reply to those of the western world say: Let us suppose that the human anatomy was primordially different from its present form, that it was gradually transformed from one stage to another until it attained its present likeness, that at one time it was similar to a fish, later an invertebrate and finally human. This anatomical evolution or progression does not alter or affect the statement that the development of man was always human in type and biological in progression. For the human embryo when examined microscopically is at first a mere germ or worm. Gradually as it develops it shows certain divisions; rudiments of hands and feet appear--that is to say, an upper and a lower part are distinguishable. Afterward it undergoes certain distinct changes until it reaches its actual human form and is born into this world. But at all times, even when the embryo resembled a worm, it was human in potentiality and character, not animal. The forms assumed by the human embryo in its successive changes do not prove that it is animal in its essential character. Throughout this progression there has been a transference of type, a conservation of species or kind. Realizing this we may acknowledge

the fact that at one time man was an inmate of the sea, at another period an invertebrate, then a vertebrate and finally a human being standing erect. Though we admit these changes, we cannot say man is an animal. In each one of these stages are signs and evidences of his human existence and destination. Proof of this lies in the fact that in the embryo man still resembles a worm. This embryo still progresses from one state to another, assuming different forms until that which was potential in it--namely, the human image--appears. Therefore, in the protoplasm, man is man. Conservation of species demands it.

"The lost link of Darwinian theory is itself a proof that man is not an animal. How is it possible to have all the links present and that important link absent? Its absence is an indication that man has never been an animal. It will never be found.

"The significance is this: that the world of humanity is distinct from the animal kingdom. This is the teaching of the philosophers of the Orient. They have a proof for it. The proof is that the animals are captives of nature. All existence and phenomena of the lower kingdoms are captives of nature; the mighty sun, the numberless stars, the kingdoms of the vegetable and mineral, none of these can deviate one hair's breadth from the limitation of nature's laws. They are, as it were, arrested by nature's hands. But man breaks the laws of nature and makes them subservient to his uses. For instance, man is an animate earthly being in common with the animals. The exigency of nature demands that he should be restricted to the earth; but he, by breaking the laws of nature, soars in the atmosphere high above it. By the application of his intellect he overcomes natural law and dives beneath the seas in submarines or sails across them in ships. He arrests a mighty force of nature such as electricity and imprisons it in an incandescent lamp. According to the law of nature he should be able to communicate at a distance of, say, one thousand feet; but through his inventions and discoveries he communicates with the East and with the West in a few moments. This is breaking the laws of nature. Man arrests the human voice and reproduces it in a phonograph. At most his voice should be heard only a few hundred feet away, but he invents an instrument which transmits it one thousand miles. In brief, all the present arts and sciences, inventions and discoveries man has brought forth were once mysteries which nature had decreed should remain hidden and latent, but man has taken them out of the plane of the invisible and brought them into the plane of the visible. This is contrary to nature's laws. Electricity should be a latent mystery, but man discovers it and makes it his servant. He wrests the sword from nature's hand and uses it against nature, proving that there is a power in him which is beyond nature, for it is capable of breaking and subduing the laws of nature. If this power were not supernatural and extraordinary, man's accomplishments would not have been possible.

"Furthermore, it is evident that in the world of nature conscious knowledge is absent. Nature is without knowing, whereas man is conscious. Nature is devoid of memory; man possesses memory. Nature is without perception and volition; man possesses both. It is evident that virtues are inherent in man which are not present in the world of nature. This is provable from every standpoint.

"If it be claimed that the intellectual reality of man belongs to the world of nature--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? For instance, is it possible for the drop to contain virtues of which the aggregate body of the sea is deprived? Is it possible for a leaf to be imbued with virtues which are lacking in the whole tree? Is it possible that the extraordinary faculty of reason in man is animal in character and quality? On the other hand, it is evident and true, though most astounding, that in man there is present this supernatural force or faculty which discovers the realities of things and which possesses the power of idealization or intellection. It is capable of discovering scientific laws, and science we know is not a tangible reality. Science exists in the mind of man as an ideal reality. The mind itself, reason itself, is an ideal reality and not tangible.

"Notwithstanding this, some of the sagacious men declare: We have attained to the superlative degree of knowledge; we have penetrated the laboratory of nature, studying sciences and arts; we have attained the highest station of knowledge in the human world; we have investigated the facts as they are and have arrived at the conclusion that nothing is rightly acceptable except the tangible, which alone is a reality worthy of credence; all that is not tangible is imagination and nonsense.

"Strange indeed that after twenty years training in colleges and universities man should reach such a station wherein he will deny the existence of the ideal or that which is not perceptible to the senses. Have you ever stopped to think that the animal already has graduated from such a university? Have you ever realized that the cow is already a professor emeritus of that university? For the cow without hard labor and study is already a philosopher of the superlative degree in the school of nature. The cow denies everything that is not tangible, saying, "I can see! I can eat! Therefore, I believe only in that which is tangible!"

"Then why should we go to the colleges? Let us go to the cow." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 355-361)

Shoghi Effendi upheld this interpretation of the origin of human beings:

We cannot prove man was always man for this is a fundamental doctrine, but it is based on the assertion that nothing can exceed its own potentialities, that everything, a stone, a tree, an animal and a human being existed in plan, potentially, from the very "beginning" of creation. We don't believe man has always had the form of man, but rather that from the outset he was going to evolve into the human form and species and not be a haphazard branch of the ape family.

You see our whole approach to each matter is based on the belief that God sends us divinely inspired Educators; what they tell us is fundamentally true, what science tells us today is true; tomorrow may be entirely changed to better explain a new set of facts.

When `Abdu'l-Bahá says man breaks the laws of nature, He means we shape nature to meet our own needs, as no animal does. Animals adapt themselves to better fit in with and benefit from their environment. But men both surmount and change environment. Likewise when He says nature is devoid of memory He means memory as we have it, not the strange memory of inherited habits which animals so strikingly possess.

These various statements must be taken in conjunction with all the Bahá'í teachings; we cannot get a correct picture by concentrating on just one phrase. (From a letter written on behalf of the Guardian, dated 7 June 1946; in Arohanui: Letters from Shoghi Effendi to New Zealand, #75)

Shoghi Effendi critiqued the general reliance of the West upon a “purely materialistic philosophy”:

"That the forces of irreligion, of a purely materialistic philosophy, of unconcealed paganism have been unloosed, are now spreading, and, by consolidating themselves, are beginning to invade some of the most powerful Christian institutions of the western world, no unbiased observer can fail to admit." (From a letter written by the Guardian and dated 11 March 1936 to the Bahá'ís of the West, published in The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters, pp. 180-81)

'Abdu'l-Baha praised the benefits accruing from the development of science and philosophy, what He called “material civilization”, but critiqued the development of material philosophy to the neglect of spiritual philosophy:

"No matter how far the material world advances, it cannot establish the happiness of mankind. Only when material and spiritual civilization are linked and coordinated will happiness be assured. Then material civilization will not contribute its energies to the forces of evil in destroying the oneness of humanity, for in material civilization good and evil advance together and maintain the same pace. For example, consider the material progress of man in the last decade. Schools and colleges, hospitals, philanthropic

institutions, scientific academies and temples of philosophy have been founded, but hand in hand with these evidences of development, the invention and production of means and weapons for human destruction have correspondingly increased. In early days the weapon of war was the sword; now it is the magazine rifle. Among the ancients, men fought with javelins and daggers; now they employ shells and bombs. Dreadnoughts are built, torpedoes invented, and every few days new ammunition is forthcoming." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 109)

"The teacher of material principles is limited. The philosophers who claimed to be the educators of mankind were at most only able to train themselves. If they educated others, it was within a restricted circle; they failed to bestow general education and development. This has been conferred upon humanity by the power of the Holy Spirit.

"For example, Christ educated and developed mankind universally. He rescued nations and peoples from the bondage of superstition and idolatry. He summoned them all to the knowledge of the oneness of God. They were dark, they became illumined; they were material, they became spiritual; earthly they were, they became heavenly. He enlightened the world of morality. This general, universal development is not possible through the power of philosophy. It is only attainable through the pervading influence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, no matter how far the world of humanity advances, it fails to attain the highest degree unless quickened by the education and divine bestowals of the Holy Spirit. This ensures human progress and prosperity." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 205-206)

"It is my hope that you may be the means of changing this wild jungle of materialism into a fruitful orchard, this thorny thicket into a rose garden. May Europe become the divine university wherein heavenly sciences and divine arts are taught and learned!

"By heavenly sciences I mean divine philosophy and spiritual teachings; by the songs and fragrances of the rose garden I mean the mysteries of the kingdom of kingdoms, the secrets of the degrees of existence and the knowledge of the results of human life.

"This universe is not created through the fortuitous concurrences of atoms; it is created by a great law which decrees that the tree bring forth certain definite fruit. Verily, this universe contains many worlds of which we know nothing.

"Is the materialistic philosophy of this Europe, so much praised by contemporary agnostics and atheists, a philosophy to be admired? Are these people wooers of the spirit? Nay, they have drowned that capacity and are out of touch with the kingdom of reality. Is this an enviable goal to which humanity may aspire? Is this a system of philosophy through which

people may become glorified? No, by God, the philosophy of glory needs no scholastic curriculum.

"Strive so that these people may be released from their nature worship and become like sons of wisdom from the city of light. We speak one word and by it we intend one and seventy meanings." (Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, pp. 139-141)

I have quoted a number of passages which refer to divine sciences, spiritual sciences and divine philosophy. But what do these terms mean? The material sciences and material philosophies are well known to us, but how are we to identify the other wing? 'Abdu'l-Baha helps us by describing divine philosophy in some of His talks:

"Some one has asked this question, "What are the proofs through which one can establish the existence of God?"

"Humanity is divided into two classes:—one is satisfied with the knowledge of divinity through its attributes and the other strives to understand the mysteries of divinity and be informed of the fundamental principles of divine philosophy. I will speak to you of the scientific proofs which establish the existence of God and I will not quote the scriptural proofs from the Old and New Testaments, or the Koran, with which you are more or less familiar." (Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, pp. 103-104)

"Material virtues have attained great development, but ideal virtues have been left far behind. If you should ask a thousand persons, "What are the proofs of the reality of Divinity?" perhaps not one would be able to answer. If you should ask further, "What proofs have you regarding the essence of God?" "How do you explain inspiration and revelation?" "What are the evidences of conscious intelligence beyond the material universe?" "Can you suggest a plan and method for the betterment of human moralities?" "Can you clearly define and differentiate the world of nature and the world of Divinity?"—you would receive very little real knowledge and enlightenment upon these questions. This is due to the fact that development of the ideal virtues has been neglected. People speak of Divinity, but the ideas and beliefs they have of Divinity are, in reality, superstition. Divinity is the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, the manifestation of spiritual virtues and ideal powers. The intellectual proofs of Divinity are based upon observation and evidence which constitute decisive argument, logically proving the reality of Divinity, the effulgence of mercy, the certainty of inspiration and immortality of the spirit. This is, in reality, the science of Divinity. Divinity is not what is set forth in dogmas and sermons of the church. Ordinarily when the word Divinity is mentioned, it is associated in the minds of the hearers with certain formulas and doctrines, whereas it essentially means the wisdom and

knowledge of God, the effulgence of the Sun of Truth, the revelation of reality and divine philosophy." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 326)

"But according to the evidence of present world conditions divine philosophy—which has for its object the sublimation of human nature, spiritual advancement, heavenly guidance for the development of the human race, attainment to the breaths of the Holy Spirit and knowledge of the verities of God—has been outdistanced and neglected. Now is the time for us to make an effort and enable it to advance apace with the philosophy of material investigation so that awakening of the ideal virtues may progress equally with the unfoldment of the natural powers. In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us...The attainment of these virtues, both material and ideal, is conditioned upon intelligent investigation of reality, by which investigation the sublimity of man and his intellectual progress is accomplished. Forms must be set aside and renounced; reality must be sought. We must discover for ourselves where and what reality is. In religious beliefs nations and peoples today are imitators of ancestors and forefathers. If a man's father was a Christian, he himself is a Christian; a Buddhist is the son of a Buddhist, a Zoroastrian of a Zoroastrian. A gentile or an idolator follows the religious footsteps of his father and ancestry. This is absolute imitation. The requirement in this day is that man must independently and impartially investigate every form of reality...

"The purport of our subject is that, just as man is in need of outward education, he is likewise in need of ideal refinement; just as the outer sense of sight is necessary to him, he should also possess insight and conscious perception; as he needs hearing, at the same time memory is essential; as a body is indispensable to him, likewise a mind is requisite; one is a material virtue, the other is ideal. As human creatures fitted and qualified with this dual endowment, we must endeavor through the assistance and grace of God and by the exercise of our ideal power of intellect to attain all lofty virtues, that we may witness the effulgence of the Sun of Reality, reflect the spirit of the Kingdom, behold the manifest evidences of the reality of Divinity, comprehend irrefutable proofs of the immortality of the soul, live in conscious at-one-ment with the eternal world and become quickened and awake with the life and love of God." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 326-327, 328)

While 'Abdu'l-Baha honors the contributions of all philosophers, He also sets forth the limitations of philosophy:

"The influence of the wisest philosophers, without this Spirit Divine, has been comparatively unimportant, however extensive their learning and deep their scholarship.

"The unusual intellects, for instance, of Plato, Aristotle, Pliny and Socrates, have not influenced men so greatly that they have been anxious to sacrifice their lives for their teachings; whilst some of those simple men so moved humanity that thousands of men have become willing martyrs to uphold their words; for these words were inspired by the Divine Spirit of God! The prophets of Judah and Israel, Elijah, Jeremiah, Isaiah and Ezekiel, were humble men, as were also the apostles of Jesus Christ." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 164)

"The greatest philosophers without this Spirit are powerless, their souls lifeless, their hearts dead! Unless the Holy Spirit breathes into their souls, they can do no good work. No system of philosophy has ever been able to change the manners and customs of a people for the better. Learned philosophers, unenlightened by the Divine Spirit, have often been men of inferior morality; they have not proclaimed in their actions the reality of their beautiful phrases.

"The difference between spiritual philosophers and others is shown by their lives. The Spiritual Teacher shows His belief in His own teaching, by Himself being what He recommends to others." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 165)

"The will of every sovereign prevaleth during his reign, the will of every philosopher findeth expression in a handful of disciples during his lifetime, but the Power of the Holy Spirit shineth radiantly in the realities of the Messengers of God, and strengtheneth Their will in such wise as to influence a great nation for thousands of years and to regenerate the human soul and revive mankind. Consider how great is this power! It is an extraordinary Power, an all-sufficient proof of the truth of the mission of the Prophets of God, and a conclusive evidence of the power of Divine Inspiration." (Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to August Forel, pp. 27-28)

"In reality they are like the great philosophers of this day who are not in touch with God and the Holy Spirit—deniers of the Prophets, ignorant of spiritual susceptibilities, deprived of the heavenly bounties and without belief in the supernatural power. The animal lives this kind of life blissfully and untroubled, whereas the material philosophers labor and study for ten or twenty years in schools and colleges, denying God, the Holy Spirit and divine inspirations. The animal is even a greater philosopher, for it attains the ability to do this without labor and study. For instance, the cow denies God and the Holy Spirit, knows

nothing of divine inspirations, heavenly bounties or spiritual emotions and is a stranger to the world of hearts. Like the philosophers, the cow is a captive of nature and knows nothing beyond the range of the senses. The philosophers, however, glory in this, saying, "We are not captives of superstitions; we have implicit faith in the impressions of the senses and know nothing beyond the realm of nature, which contains and covers everything." But the cow, without study or proficiency in the sciences, modestly and quietly views life from the same standpoint, living in harmony with nature's laws in the utmost dignity and nobility." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 311-312)

"Teachers are of two kinds: universal and special. The universal Instructors are the Prophets of God, and the special teachers are the philosophers. The philosophers are capable of educating and training a limited circle of human souls, whereas the holy, divine Manifestations of God confer general education upon humanity." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 400-401)

"The philosophers of old had the strongest resolve to improve human morals and strove to the utmost in this regard, but at most they succeeded in refining their own characters, not the virtues of all mankind. Refer to history and you will find that this is clear and evident. But the power of the Holy Spirit brings forth the universal virtues with which man is potentially endowed, illuminates the human world, bestows true exaltation, and trains all people. Thus, the well-wishers of the world must endeavor to attract by this attractive power the confirmations of the Holy Spirit." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Lawh-i-Tanazu'-i-Baqa; published in Khitabat, pp. 711-713; translated by Keven Brown and posted to: <http://bahai-library.com/provisionals/tanazu.baqa.html>)

"...The Bible and the Gospel are most honored in the estimation of all the Bahais. One of the spiritual utterances of his holiness Christ in his sermon on the mount is to me preferable to all the writings of the philosophers. It is the religious duty of every Bahai to read and comprehend the meanings of the Old and New Testaments." (July 19, 1914, in Diary of Mirza Ahmad Sohrab; in Star of the West, VII:4, 27)

Baha'u'llah considers those philosophers who believe in God to be superior to those who do not:

"Verily, the philosophers have not denied the Ancient of Days. Most of them passed away deploring their failure to fathom His mystery, even as some of them have testified. Verily, thy Lord is the Adviser, the All-Informed." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 145)

"The majority of the truly wise and learned have, throughout the ages, as it hath been recorded by the Pen of Glory in the Tablet of Wisdom, borne witness to the truth of that

which the holy Writ of God hath revealed. Even the materialists have testified in their writings to the wisdom of these divinely-appointed Messengers, and have regarded the references made by the Prophets to Paradise, to hell fire, to future reward and punishment, to have been actuated by a desire to educate and uplift the souls of men." (Baha'u'llah, *Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah*, p. 157)

While 'Abdu'l-Baha praises both kinds of philosophy, He favors the conclusions of the divine philosophers over those of the material philosophers:

"Now concerning philosophers, they are of two schools. Thus Socrates the wise believed in the unity of God and the existence of the soul after death; as his opinion was contrary to that of the narrow-minded people of his time, that divine sage was poisoned by them. All divine philosophers and men of wisdom and understanding, when observing these endless beings, have considered that in this great and infinite universe all things end in the mineral kingdom, that the outcome of the mineral kingdom is the vegetable kingdom, the outcome of the vegetable kingdom is the animal kingdom and the outcome of the animal kingdom the world of man." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Tablet to August Forel, pp. 13-14)

"...some of the philosophers of Europe think that one species evolves into another species. For example, that the animal evolved until it became a human being. But the prophets teach that this theory is unacceptable, as we have explained already in the book 'Some Answered Questions'." ('Abdu'l-Baha, Commentary on Lawh-i-Hikmat; in Ma'idiy-i-Asmani, II, pp. 68-70; Amr va Khalq, Volume I, pp. 168-169; translated by Keven Brown; published in *Journal of Baha'i Studies* 2:3 (1989-1990), p. 28)

"The philosophers of the world are divided into two classes: materialists, who deny the spirit and its immortality, and the divine philosophers, the wise men of God, the true illuminati who believe in the spirit and its continuance hereafter...The divine philosophers proclaim that the spirit of man is ever-living and eternal, and because of the objections of the materialists, these wise men of God have advanced rational proofs to support the validity of their statement. Inasmuch as the materialistic philosophers deny the Books of God, scriptural demonstration is not evidence to them, and materialistic proofs are necessary. Answering them, the men of divine knowledge have said that all existing phenomena may be resolved into grades or kingdoms, classified progressively as mineral, vegetable, animal and human, each of which possesses its degree of function and intelligence." ('Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 240)

"Consequently, the materialistic philosophers consider the criterion of the senses to be first and foremost.

"But in the estimation of the divine philosophers this proof and assurance is not reliable; nay, rather, they deem the standard of the senses to be false because it is imperfect." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 253)

"The materialists hold to the opinion that the world of nature is complete. The divine philosophers declare that the world of nature is incomplete. There is a wide difference between the two. The materialists call attention to the perfection of nature, the sun, moon and stars, the trees in their adornment, the whole earth and the sea—even unimportant phenomena revealing the most perfect symmetry. The divine philosophers deny this seeming perfection and completeness in nature's kingdom, even though admitting the beauty of its scenes and aspects and acknowledging the irresistible cosmic forces which control the colossal suns and planets." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 329)

"The philosophers of the East consider the perfect criterion to be reason or intellect, and according to that standard the realities of all objects can be proved; for, they say, the standard of reason and intellect is perfect, and everything provable through reason is veritable. Therefore, those philosophers consider all philosophical deductions to be correct when weighed according to the standard of reason, and 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. In this way the philosophers of the East and West differ and disagree. 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 Persians—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 the human kingdom, or world of reason." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 356-357)

"Some men and women glory in their exalted thoughts, but if these thoughts never reach the plane of action they remain useless: the power of thought is dependent on its manifestation in deeds. A philosopher's thought may, however, in the world of progress and evolution, translate itself into the actions of other people, even when they themselves are unable or unwilling to show forth their grand ideals in their own lives. To this class the majority of philosophers belong, their teachings being high above their actions. This is the difference between philosophers who are Spiritual Teachers, and those who are mere philosophers: the Spiritual Teacher is the first to follow His own teaching; He brings down into the world of action His spiritual conceptions and ideals. His Divine thoughts are made manifest to the world. His thought is Himself, from which He is inseparable. When we find a philosopher emphasizing the importance and grandeur of justice, and then encouraging a rapacious monarch in his oppression and tyranny, we quickly realize that he belongs to the

first class: for he thinks heavenly thoughts and does not practise the corresponding heavenly virtues.

"This state is impossible with Spiritual Philosophers, for they ever express their high and noble thoughts in actions." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, p. 18)

"Consequently, the great divine philosophers have had the following epigram: All things are involved in all things." (Abdu'l-Baha, in Foundations of World Unity (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), pp. 51-52; in Letters, 1992 June 08, Gaia Concept, Nature, p. 5)

"Is the materialistic philosophy of this Europe, so much praised by contemporary agnostics and atheists, a philosophy to be admired? Are these people woosers of the spirit? Nay, they have drowned that capacity and are out of touch with the kingdom of reality. Is this an enviable goal to which humanity may aspire? Is this a system of philosophy through which people may become glorified? No, by God, the philosophy of glory needs no scholastic curriculum.

"Strive so that these people may be released from their nature worship and become like sons of wisdom from the city of light. We speak one word and by it we intend one and seventy meanings." (Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, pp. 116-141)

Why would 'Abdu'l-Baha favor divine philosophers and philosophers of the East over material philosophers and philosophers of the West? Does He regard all philosophers of the West to be materialists? Shoghi Effendi pointed out that this was not the case in a letter written on his behalf:

"We must not take many of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements as dogmatic finalities, for there are other points which when added to them round out the picture. For instance, when He calls Aristotle and Plato philosophers of the East, He is obviously placing them in that category because He believes they belong more correctly to Eastern culture than to Central European and the New World cultures of the West. When He calls the philosophers of the West materialistic this does not for a moment mean He includes all Western philosophers for, as you truly point out, many of them have been very spiritual in their concepts...."
(From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, dated 7 June 1946; published in Arohanui - Letters to New Zealand, p. 88)

'Abdu'l-Baha likewise asserted that the revelation of Baha'u'llah is a higher and more complete standard of truth than that which has been discovered and promulgated by scientists and philosophers:

"Bahá'u'lláh says, "The universe hath neither beginning nor ending." He has set aside the elaborate theories and exhaustive opinions of scientists and material philosophers by the simple statement, "There is no beginning, no ending." The theologians and religionists advance plausible proofs that the creation of the universe dates back six thousand years; the scientists bring forth indisputable facts and say, "No! These evidences indicate ten, twenty, fifty thousand years ago," etc. There are endless discussions pro and con. Bahá'u'lláh sets aside these discussions by one word and statement. He says, "The divine sovereignty hath no beginning and no ending." By this announcement and its demonstration He has established a standard of agreement among those who reflect upon this question of divine sovereignty; He has brought reconciliation and peace in this war of opinion and discussion." (‘Abdu'l-Baha, The Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 220)

Baha'u'llah proclaimed the existence of this higher standard in Kitab-i-Aqdas:

"Say: O leaders of religion! Weigh not the Book of God with such standards and sciences as are current amongst you, for the Book itself is the unerring Balance established amongst men. In this most perfect Balance whatsoever the peoples and kindreds of the earth possess must be weighed, while the measure of its weight should be tested according to its own standard, did ye but know it." (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Aqdas, #99)

No, not all Western philosophers are materialists...but those Western philosophers who have adhered to the standard of the senses, to empiricism are limited in the scope of their awareness of reality, for reality has spiritual as well as material dimensions, dimensions which can not be perceived by the senses as well as dimensions which can be perceived by the senses. What do divine philosophers, philosophers from the East have access to which material Western philosophers deny? Consider the origins, the foundations, the fundamentals, the essentials of divine philosophy, as described by Baha'u'llah and 'Abdu'l-Baha:

"The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge from the Prophets, inasmuch as the latter were the Exponents of divine philosophy and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 144-145)

"The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 145)

"...the theories put forward by the Father of Philosophy regarding the mysteries of creation as given in his chrysolite tablets..." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Hikmat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 147)

"The first person who devoted himself to philosophy was Idris. Thus was he named. Some called him also Hermes. In every tongue he hath a special name. He it is who hath set forth in every branch of philosophy thorough and convincing statements. After him Balinus derived his knowledge and sciences from the Hermetic Tablets and most of the philosophers who followed him made their philosophical and scientific discoveries from his words and statements..." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh al-Basit al-Haqiqah; cited in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, Note 1, p. 148)

In keeping with the principle set forth in Lawh-i-Hikmat, that "the essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets", the Guardian reiterates that point, writing, "Nor should a review of the outstanding features of Bahá'u'lláh's writings during the latter part of His banishment to 'Akká fail to include a reference to the Lawh-i-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom), in which He sets forth the fundamentals of true philosophy..." (Shoghi Effendi, God Passes By, p. 219)

The "essence and fundamentals" of divine philosophy in the Baha'i Dispensation and Cycle may be considered therefore to have "emanated from" Baha'u'llah and His chosen ones. In Kitab-i-Iqan, Baha'u'llah referred to the principle of progressive revelation and applied it to His own Book:

"That city is none other than the Word of God revealed in every age and dispensation. In the days of Moses it was the Pentateuch; in the days of Jesus the Gospel; in the days of Muhammad the Messenger of God the Qur'án; in this day the Bayan; and in the dispensation of Him Whom God will make manifest His own Book—the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme." (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, pp. 199-200)

In another of His Tablets He wrote:

"Weigh it with the just Balance that ye possess, the Balance of the testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, p. 281)

If the "Book of God", the "testimony of the Prophets and Messengers of God" is the "most perfect Balance", the "just Balance" then surely the Book of Baha'u'llah, "the Book unto which all the Books of former Dispensations must needs be referred, the Book which standeth amongst them all transcendent and supreme" is the superlative Balance. Hence, we may look to His Book as the source for the divine philosophy of the present and future alike. As was cited above, the Guardian indicated that Bahá'u'llah "sets forth the fundamentals of true philosophy" in Lawh-i-Hikmat.

Baha'u'llah indicates that the Prophets of God "**speak a twofold language**" (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 254).

"One language, the outward language, is devoid of allusions, is unconcealed and unveiled; that it may be a guiding lamp and a beaconing light whereby wayfarers may attain the heights of holiness, and seekers may advance into the realm of eternal reunion." (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, pp. 254-255)

While this "**outward language**" prescribes specific counsels and commandments meant to serve as the foundations of human belief and behavior, "**the other language is veiled and concealed**" (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 255) and no one "**apprehendeth the meaning of these utterances except them whose hearts are assured, whose souls have found favour with God, and whose minds are detached from all else but Him. In such utterances, the literal meaning, as generally understood by the people, is not what hath been intended.**" (Baha'u'llah, Kitab-i-Iqan, p. 255) Furthermore, "**if the Sun of Truth were suddenly to reveal, at the earliest stages of its manifestation, the full measure of the potencies which the providence of the Almighty hath bestowed upon it, the earth of human understanding would waste away and be consumed; for men's hearts would neither sustain the intensity of its revelation, nor be able to mirror forth the radiance of its light. Dismayed and overpowered, they would cease to exist.**" (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XXXVIII, p. 87)

"It hath been decreed by Us that the Word of God and all the potentialities thereof shall be manifested unto men in strict conformity with such conditions as have been foreordained by Him Who is the All-Knowing, the All-Wise. We have, moreover, ordained that its veil of concealment be none other except its own Self. Such indeed is Our Power to achieve Our Purpose. Should the Word be allowed to release suddenly all the energies latent within it, no man could sustain the weight of so mighty a Revelation. Nay, all that is in heaven and on earth would flee in consternation before it.

"Consider that which hath been sent down unto Muhammad, the Apostle of God. The measure of the Revelation of which He was the bearer had been clearly foreordained by Him Who is the Almighty, the All-Powerful. They that heard Him, however, could apprehend His purpose only to the extent of their station and spiritual capacity. He, in like manner, uncovered the Face of Wisdom in proportion to their ability to sustain the burden of His Message. No sooner had mankind attained the stage of maturity, than the Word revealed to men's eyes the latent energies with which it had been endowed—energies which manifested themselves in the plenitude of their glory when the Ancient Beauty appeared, in the year sixty, in the person of Ali-Muhammad, the Báb." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, XXXIII, pp. 76-77)

The revelation of truth is gradual correlated with the development of humankind, and while the overall process of that development is progressive and inexorable, the pace of the unfolding is not. Baha'u'llah wrote:

"We now perceive that veils thicker than the ones We have already torn asunder have intervened, obstructing the vision and causing the light of understanding to be obscured."

(Baha'u'llah, Tarazat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 41)

"It was intended that at the time of the manifestation of the One true God the faculty of recognizing Him would have been developed and matured and would have reached its culmination. However, it is now clearly demonstrated that in the disbelievers this faculty hath remained undeveloped and hath, indeed, degenerated." (Baha'u'llah, Tajalliyat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 52-53)

"This humble servant is filled with wonder, inasmuch as all men are endowed with the capacity to see and hear, yet we find them deprived of the privilege of using these faculties." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Maqsud, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 171)

"Methinks people's sense of taste hath, alas, been sorely affected by the fever of negligence and folly, for they are found to be wholly unconscious and deprived of the sweetness of His utterance. How regrettable indeed that man should debar himself from the fruits of the tree of wisdom while his days and hours pass swiftly away." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Maqsud, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 173-174)

The Guardian reiterated this principle in one of his letters:

"Yet, if we but call to mind the practice generally adopted by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, we cannot fail to perceive the wisdom, nay the necessity, of gradually and cautiously disclosing to the eyes of an unbelieving world the implications of a Truth which, by its own challenging nature, it is so difficult for it to comprehend and embrace.

"It was He, our beloved 'Abdu'l-Bahá, our true and shining Exemplar, who with infinite tact and patience, whether in His public utterances or in private converse, adapted the presentation of the fundamentals of the Cause to the varying capacities and the spiritual receptiveness of His hearers. He never hesitated, however, to tear the veil asunder and reveal to the spiritually ripened those challenging verities that set forth in its true light the relationship of this Supreme Revelation with the Dispensations of the past. Unashamed and unafraid when challenged to assert in its entirety the stupendous claim of Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'ís, whether laboring as individuals or functioning as an organized community, feel certain that in the face of the apathy, the gross materialism, and the superficiality of society

today, a progressive disclosure of the magnitude of the claim of Bahá'u'lláh would constitute the most effective means for the attainment of the end so greatly desired by even the staunchest and most zealous advocate of the Faith." (Shoghi Effendi, Bahá'i Administration, p. 125)

This application of the divine teachings revealed by the Prophets of God to the problems and questions that perplex humanity is hence not a process fixed in time and reserved for the Prophets and their chosen ones alone. 'Abdu'l-Baha describes the process whereby the spiritually attuned in divine philosophy in the Islamic Dispensation were able to solve the problems posed to them:

"They divided Divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges. The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

"This Society of Friends increased greatly in Persia, and up to the present time their societies exist. Many books and epistles were written by their leaders. When they assemble in their meeting-house they sit silently and contemplate; their leader opens with a certain proposition, and says to the assembly 'You must meditate on this problem'. Then, freeing their minds from everything else, they sit and reflect, and before long the answer is revealed to them. Many abstruse divine questions are solved by this illumination.

"Some of the great questions unfolding from the rays of the Sun of Reality upon the mind of man are: the problem of the reality of the spirit of man; of the birth of the spirit; of its birth from this world into the world of God; the question of the inner life of the spirit and of its fate after its ascension from the body.

"They also meditate upon the scientific questions of the day, and these are likewise solved.

"These people, who are called 'Followers of the inner light', attain to a superlative degree of power, and are entirely freed from blind dogmas and imitations. Men rely on the statements of these people: by themselves—within themselves—they solve all mysteries.

"If they find a solution with the assistance of the inner light, they accept it, and afterwards they declare it: otherwise they would consider it a matter of blind imitation. They go so far as to reflect upon the essential nature of the Divinity, of the Divine revelation, of the

manifestation of the Deity in this world. All the divine and scientific questions are solved by them through the power of the spirit.

"Bahá'u'lláh says there is a sign (from God) in every phenomenon: the sign of the intellect is contemplation and the sign of contemplation is silence, because it is impossible for a man to do two things at one time—he cannot both speak and meditate.

"It is an axiomatic fact that while you meditate you are speaking with your own spirit. In that state of mind you put certain questions to your spirit and the spirit answers: the light breaks forth and the reality is revealed.

"You cannot apply the name 'man' to any being void of this faculty of meditation; without it he would be a mere animal, lower than the beasts.

"Through the faculty of meditation man attains to eternal life; through it he receives the breath of the Holy Spirit—the bestowal of the Spirit is given in reflection and meditation.

"The spirit of man is itself informed and strengthened during meditation; through it affairs of which man knew nothing are unfolded before his view. Through it he receives Divine inspiration, through it he receives heavenly food.

"Meditation 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. To illustrate this, think of man as endowed with two kinds of sight; when the power of insight is being used the outward power of vision does not see.

"This faculty of meditation frees man from the animal nature, discerns the reality of things, puts man in touch with God.

"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; through it governments can run smoothly. Through this faculty man enters into the very Kingdom of God.

"Nevertheless some thoughts are useless to man; they are like waves moving in the sea without result. But if the faculty of meditation is bathed in the inner light and characterized with divine attributes, the results will be confirmed.

"The meditative faculty is akin to the mirror; if you put it before earthly objects it will reflect them. Therefore if the spirit of man is contemplating earthly subjects he will be informed of these.

"But if you turn the mirror of your spirits heavenwards, the heavenly constellations and the rays of the Sun of Reality will be reflected in your hearts, and the virtues of the Kingdom will be obtained.

"Therefore let us keep this faculty rightly directed—turning it to the heavenly Sun and not to earthly objects—so that we may discover the secrets of the Kingdom, and comprehend the allegories of the Bible and the mysteries of the spirit.

"May we indeed become mirrors reflecting the heavenly realities, and may we become so pure as to reflect the stars of heaven." (Abdu'l-Baha, Paris Talks, pp. 173-176)

Baha'u'llah left it to the various ranks³ of the House of Justice to respond to the specific requirements of the times and situations in which the people of the future would exist:

"Inasmuch as for each day there is a new problem and for every problem an expedient solution, such affairs should be referred to the Ministers of the House of Justice that they may act according to the needs and requirements of the time." (Baha'u'llah, Bisharat and Ishraqat, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 27)

"Unto the Most Holy Book every one must turn, and all that is not expressly recorded therein must be referred to the Universal House of Justice." (Abdu'l-Baha, The Will and Testament, p. 19)

Shoghi Effendi expresses confidence that Baha'is will solve problems posed to them the specific answers for which are not found in the Writings of the Faith:

"We must turn aside from these vain imaginings and suppositions and philosophizings of the world, and fix our eyes upon the clear stream of the Teachings of Bahá'u'lláh. Out of these Teachings, and the society which they will create on this planet, will come a solution to all of the problems of men. Gradually, greater scholars, more deeply spiritual thinkers, will be able to answer from a Bahá'í standpoint many of these questions. It is not necessary that they should be in the divine text; they can be studied and learned in the future; but at present we have not had time to evolve the Bahá'í scholars who can deal with these subjects in detail, and take upon themselves to answer the abstruse points and the many unfounded doctrines which are advanced by modern philosophers." (From a letter dated 22 April 1954 written

on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer; published in Letters, 1999 Dec 13, Two Compilations on Scholarship - 1979 and 1983)

"As to correlating philosophy with the Bahá'í teachings: this is a tremendous work which scholars in the future can undertake. We must remember that not only are all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still come to light which are at present owned privately." (From a letter dated 15 February 1947 written on behalf of the Guardian to an individual believer; published in Letters, 1999 Dec 13, Two Compilations on Scholarship - 1979 and 1983, p. 2)

The field of divine philosophy is not synonymous with the study of metaphysical questions in the Jewish yeshiva, the Christian seminary, the Muslim madrasa. It is a field of knowledge that has its antecedents, going back to the philosopher Idris/Hermes/Enoch, to Empedocles and Pythagoras, Socrates, Hippocrates, Plato and Aristotle, according to Baha'u'llah in the Lawh-i-Hikmat and Lawh al-Basit al-Haqiqa. It is a field of knowledge associated by 'Abdu'l-Baha with the Persian Islamic philosophers, which included the forerunners of the Bab, Shaykh Ahmad-i-Ahsa'i and Siyyid Kazim-i-Rashti. And it is also a field renewed and redefined by none other than the Founder and Expounder of the Baha'i Revelation, and hence reborn in this new Age and Cycle.

It is clear that Baha'u'llah did not wish His followers to be preoccupied with the philosophical musings of past or contemporary philosophers, particularly those famous Persian philosophers whom He described as follows:

"The Great Being saith: The learned of the day must direct the people to acquire those branches of knowledge which are of use, that both the learned themselves and the generality of mankind may derive benefits therefrom. Such academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone have never been and will never be of any worth. The majority of Persia's learned doctors devote all their lives to the study of a philosophy the ultimate yield of which is nothing but words." (Baha'u'llah, Lawh-i-Maqsud, in Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, p. 169)

Those familiar with the Writings of the Bab have observed that He was severely critical of both Mulla Sadr al-Din al-Shirazi (Mulla Sadra), the most outstanding philosopher of the School of Isfahan, and Muhammad Ibn 'Ali Ibnu'l-'Arabi (Ibn 'Arabi), the most famous and influential Islamic mystical writer. Baha'u'llah strongly critiqued the leading exponent of Iranian philosophy of His own day, Haji Mulla Hadi Sabzivari, writing:

"The sage of Sabzivar hath said: 'Alas! Attentive ears are lacking, otherwise the whisperings of the Sinaic Bush could be heard from every tree.' In a Tablet to a man of

³Local, Intermediate, International.

wisdom who had made enquiry as to the meaning of Elementary Reality [Lawh al-Basit al-Haqiqah], We addressed this famous sage in these words: 'If this saying is truly thine, how is it that thou hast failed to hearken unto the Call which the Tree of Man hath raised from the loftiest heights of the world? If thou didst hear the Call yet fear and the desire to preserve thy life prompted thee to remain heedless to it, thou art such a person as hath never been nor is worthy of mention; if thou hast not heard it, then thou art bereft of the sense of hearing.' In brief, such men are they whose words are the pride of the world, and whose deeds are the shame of the nations." (Baha'u'llah, Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 61)

Nor did Baha'u'llah focus His critique upon selected individuals alone:

"Each sect hath picked out a way for itself and is clinging to a certain cord. Despite manifest blindness and ignorance they pride themselves on their insight and knowledge. Among them are mystics who bear allegiance to the Faith of Islam, some of whom indulge in that which leadeth to idleness and seclusion. I swear by God! It lowereth man's station and maketh him swell with pride. Man must bring forth fruit. One who yieldeth no fruit is, in the words of the Spirit [Jesus Christ]⁴, like unto a fruitless tree, and a fruitless tree is fit but for the fire⁵." (Baha'u'llah, Kalimat-i-Firdawsiyyih, in Tablets of Baha'u'llah, p. 60)

"Do thou beseech God to enable thee to remain steadfast in this path, and to aid thee to guide the peoples of the world to Him Who is the manifest and sovereign Ruler, Who hath revealed Himself in a distinct attire, Who giveth utterance to a Divine and specific Message. This is the essence of faith and certitude. They that are the worshipers of the idol which their imaginations have carved, and who call it Inner Reality, such men are in truth accounted among the heathen. To this hath the All-Merciful borne witness in His Tablets." (Baha'u'llah, Gleanings from the Writings of Baha'u'llah, CLX, p. 338)

The Baha'i principle of the agreement of science and religion has been widely understood by believers to indicate that they are in exact agreement about everything. Some even cite isolated statements attributed to 'Abdu'l-Baha in support of regarding science as the standard whereby religious truth can be discerned and distinguished from superstition and religious fundamentalism and fanaticism. In other words, the way to tell if religious teachings are true is to determine if they are in harmony with science. What is undeniable, regardless of what position one takes, is that there are many conflicts between the Baha'i teachings and contemporary scientific consensus. For example, there is a consensus among psychologists,

⁴Gospel of Matthew 3:10, 7:19, 13:40

⁵Baha'u'llah, Suriy-i-Haykal, in The Summons of the Lord of Hosts, p. 70; Kitab-i-Aqdas, Q&A, #105, p. 139; Tablets of Baha'u'llah, pp. 60, 257; Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha, p. 223; 'Abdu'l-Baha on Divine Philosophy, p. 110]

psychiatrists, neurologists and medical doctors that homosexuality is natural and hence not abnormal and of any concern. Likewise, there is wide agreement among scientists that the moderate imbibing of wine is not harmful, along with the moderate usage of marijuana, moderate practice of masturbation, moderate engagement in pre-marital sex with consenting partners of the same age and of either gender, and that gender can be changed without damage to the psyche of the person. There is a consensus amongst most scientists that abortion is not comparable to murder, because a fetus is not a human being. All of these instances of scientific consensus are in conflict with the religious teachings of many religions, including those of the Baha'i Faith. Does that imply that religion must change, that the Baha'i teachings that are in conflict with these scientific findings are outdated and must be abandoned in favor of what scientists agree to be true?

The answer is an unequivocal "no". Revelation reveals a more comprehensive truth than science, because it includes the metaphysical dimension of reality that empirical science cannot verify and therefore cannot affirm as true. The Manifestation of God knows more and with more accuracy than any human being or group of human beings...every computer, every artificial intelligence. Hence, the true meaning of the harmony of science and religion is not what many of us think. It affirms that when science is in harmony with religion, and vice versa, when each domain takes account of the other, agreement can be arrived at. The bridge from science, which 'Abdu'l-Baha often calls material philosophy to religion is divine philosophy. This is the intermediate reality, the correlation between earth and heaven, matter and spirit, rational analysis of empirical data and intuitive perception of spiritual realities. It is this bridge that will ultimately make it possible for humanity to develop both materially and spiritually in a balanced and mutually supportive fashion. However, this is not an absolute equality. Even as divine philosophy is the sister of prophethood, so material philosophy is the servant of divine philosophy. If material philosophy is not dedicated to the best of outcomes for all of humanity, it has and will continue to do great harm. It is undeniable that the inordinate and irresponsible dumping of human waste products, many of them highly toxic to all living things, has corrupted and burdened the natural order of our planet, and that it will only get much worse if we do not listen to the teachings of divine philosophy, and transform waste into food. Everything has to be recycled and nothing harmful to the planet should be utilized. 'Abdu'l-Baha has stated that if humanity does not place equal or greater emphasis on divine philosophy and religion as it does on material philosophy and its outcomes, it will be increasingly difficult to live on planet earth, and there is no other home for us in the known universe. We learn to live here in harmony with each other and nature, or we become extinct, we commit suicide. Do we want life or death? If it is death then we can continue to value material philosophy, science, technology over divine philosophy, religion and living in harmony with the earth, sky and water. If it is life then we need to subordinate science to religion, not to suppress it but to guide it in the right direction.

‘Abdu’l-Baha wrote:

"O thou son of the Kingdom! All things are beneficial if joined with the love of God; and without His love all things are harmful, and act as a veil between man and the Lord of the Kingdom. When His love is there, every bitterness turneth sweet, and every bounty rendereth a wholesome pleasure. For example, a melody, sweet to the ear, bringeth the very spirit of life to a heart in love with God, yet staineth with lust a soul engrossed in sensual desires. And every branch of learning, conjoined with the love of God, is approved and worthy of praise; but bereft of His love, learning is barren — indeed, it bringeth on madness. Every kind of knowledge, every science, is as a tree: if the fruit of it be the love of God, then is it a blessed tree, but if not, that tree is but dried-up wood, and shall only feed the fire." (Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Baha, #154)