

The Kingdom of Existence

(Malakút-i-Vujúd)

*Some thoughts on 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet
addressed to Dr. Auguste Henri Forel*

By

Dr. 'Alí-Murád Dávúdí

Compiled and edited by
Dr. Vahid Rafati

*“We regard knowledge
and wisdom as the
foundation of the pro-
gress of mankind”.*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá



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Tablet addressed to Dr. Auguste Henri Forel

By: Dr. ‘Alí-Murád Dávúdí

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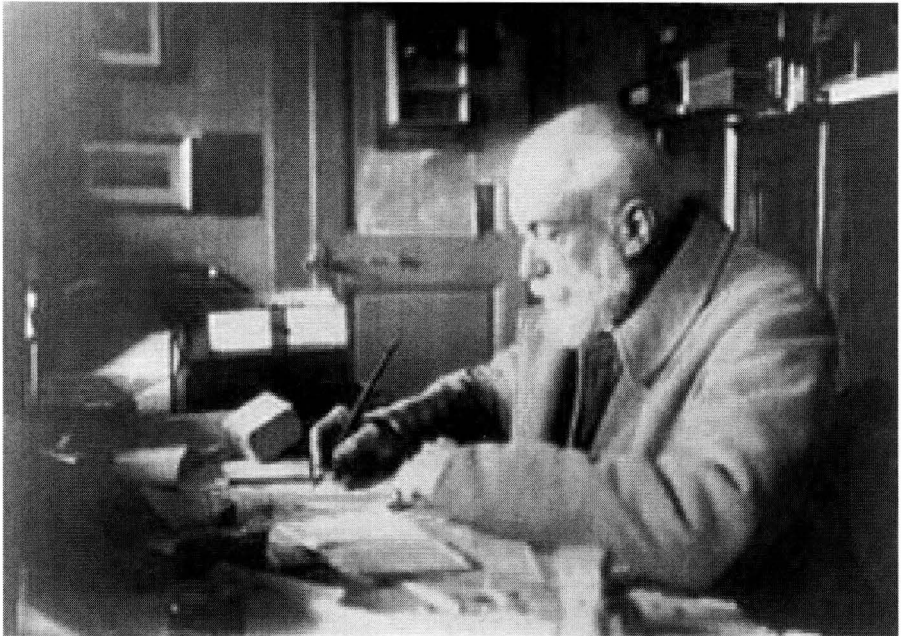
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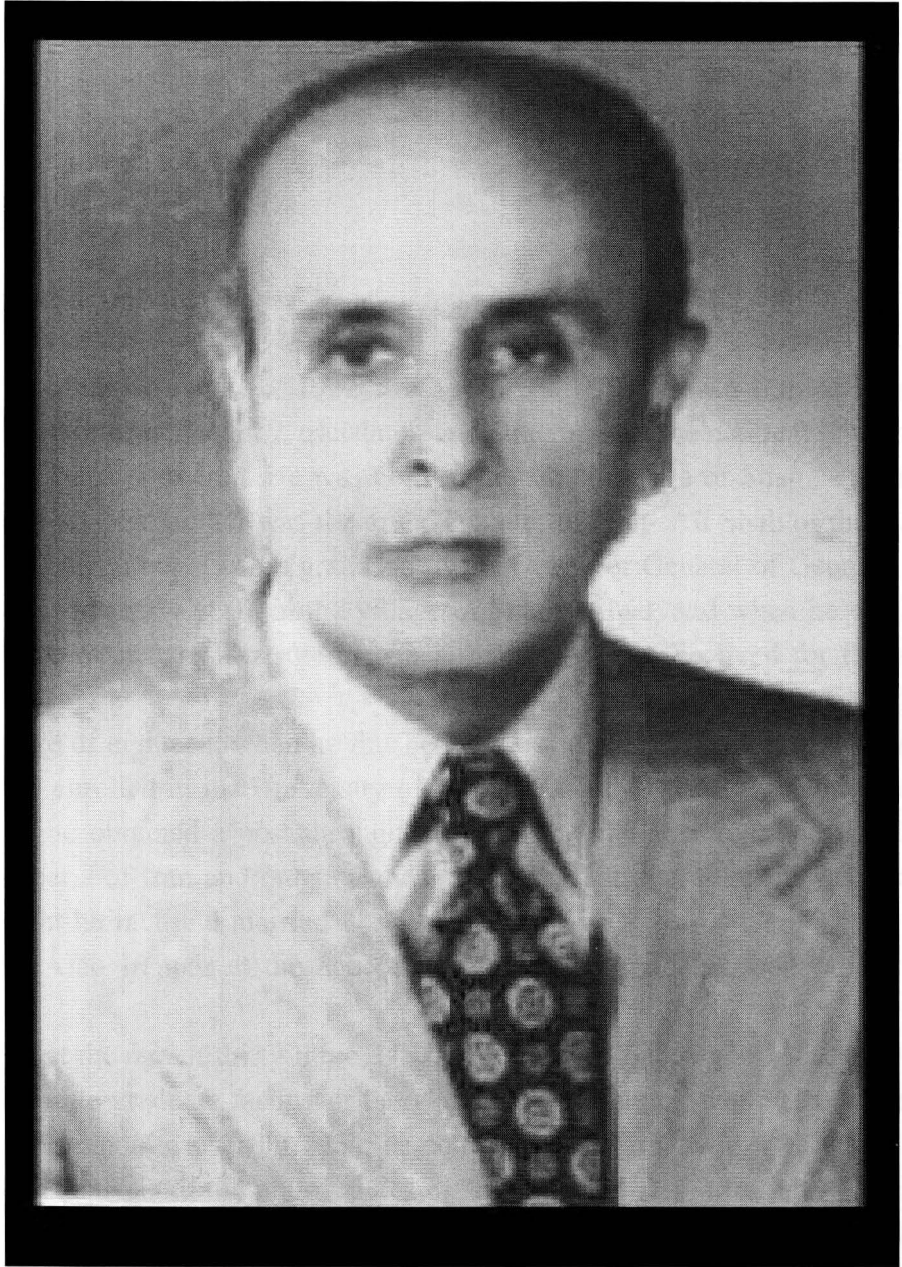
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Dr. Auguste Henri Forel

1848 – 1931



Dr. 'Alí Murád Dávúdí

1921 - 1979

‘Alí Murád Dávúdí¹

Dr. ‘Alí Murád Dávúdí (c. 1922 - disappeared 1979) was an Iranian Bahá’í, writer, professor of philosophy, translator, and a member of the national governing body of the Bahá’ís of Iran. He was born in the small village of Shams-Ábád, in north-west Iran. His mother was the granddaughter of Fath-‘Alí Shah of the Qajar dynasty, and his father was the grandson of the Governor General of Georgia. Dr. Dávúdí spent his early years in the village of Shams-Ábád, and when he was ten years old, he went to Tabriz, the provincial capital, where he lived for the next eight years.

At the age of eighteen, when he finished high school in Tabriz, Dávúdí went to Tehran, and enrolled in the University of Tehran to study Persian literature. After graduating, he obtained a post through the Ministry of Education, and travelled to various parts of Iran and taught Persian language and literature. It was during this time that he met and married

Malikih Áfáq Íránpúr at the age of thirty-one; they had two sons and three daughters.

In 1955, at the age of thirty-three, Dr. Dávúdí moved once again to Tehran and registered in the graduate faculty at the University of Tehran, while also working full-time as a schoolteacher. In 1964, he completed his Ph.D. with a thesis on the comparative analysis of the philosophies of Aristotle and Descartes, and was then invited to join the University of Tehran’s Faculty of Literature and Humanities as a professor. This assignment ushered his life into a new phase, during which he devoted more time to his research, studies, and writings. His principal interests were Eastern philosophy, French literature, Cartesian thought, and of course,

¹ Excerpts taken and adapted from a biography written by Dr. Fariborz Davoudi, as well as an article in Bahaipedia

Bahá'í studies. Dr. Dávúdí studied French at University as a second language, but then he fell so much in love with French philosophers such as Descartes that he felt the need to master his French language skills in order to read the writings of French philosophers in their original language. Hence, he made significant efforts throughout his life to upgrade his knowledge of that language, which he later used to translate French philosophical texts. He was fluent in Persian and in Turkish, as well as being fluent in reading and writing in Arabic.

Dr. Dávúdí's works can be broken down into the two categories of Bahá'í and non-Bahá'í writings: It was during his academic career that his most impressive non-Bahá'í works were produced, among which are his writings on Greek and Islamic philosophy, with articles published in the Journal of the Faculty of Literature and Humanities at Tehran University. These writings earned him a solid reputation within elitist Iranian intelligentsia. Hossein Nasr, a well-known Iranian professor of Islamic studies at George Washington University in the United States regarded Dr. Dávúdí among a small number of first-rate philosophers in Iran. His name also ranked high in major publishing houses for the translations of philosophical works from French to Persian, and he soon became recognized as the most competent and professional translator of French philosophical writings into Persian. Among his translations from French to Persian, the translation of L. Meynard's work "La Connaissance", the two first volumes of Emile Bréhier's works on The History of Philosophy: The Hellenic Age, and The Hellenistic and Roman Age, all figure prominently. Perhaps, his most important translation and one of his most well-known publications in Iran was his translation of E. Gilson's work called The Spirit of Medieval Philosophy.

Dr. Dávúdí's Bahá'í writings consisted of short articles that were published in Bahá'í circulars for internal use within the community, as well as in Bahá'í journals in Iran. He wrote numerous articles on a wide range of topics. Some of his writings on Bahá'í themes, such as the Station of Bahá'u'lláh and Divinity and Oneness focus on some of the religion's fundamental teachings. He also wrote essays on the Bahá'í beliefs on life after death; the meaning of freedom; freewill and determinism; the station of man; prayer; the soul; philosophy; the study of history; science and religion; and non-involvement in politics.

Dr. Dávúdí gave regular Bahá'í study classes to the Bahá'í youth in Tehran and in summer schools across the country. He would also regularly go to the recording studio, where he would tape lectures to be distributed through cassettes to the Bahá'í community. The following story told by Mr. H. Mahmoodi, who was in

charge of the Bahá'í recording studio, highlights Dr. Dávúdí's rare gift for public speaking and his presence of mind:

“The evening prior to one of the recording sessions, he (Mr. Mahmoodi) called Dr. Dávúdí to inform him that he was to talk about love. Upon Dr. Dávúdí's arrival to the studio, Mr. Mahmoodi told him that the Bahá'í Publishing Committee has changed the topic, and that he was instead to speak about materialism. Dr. Dávúdí agreed, but he had to wait for a while, as the equipment was not functioning. After about an hour, when everything was ready to proceed, Mr. Mahmoodi received a call from the Publishing Committee to the effect that he should ask Dr. Dávúdí to speak about Spirit. Again, Dr. Dávúdí agreed, and within minutes of notice he delivered a competent lecture on the topic. Later on, Mr. Mahmoodi used to comment on how amazed he was about the responsiveness of Dr. Dávúdí's mind.”

In 1973, Dr. Dávúdí was elected to the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of Iran, the governing body of the Bahá'í community. One year later, he became the secretary of that body, which necessitated travel throughout the country and left him little time for his academic work. In addition to his administrative work, he served on the Bahá'í national publishing committees, and also helped establish the Institute for Advanced Bahá'í Studies in 1976 to promote Bahá'í scholarship and research. Dr. Dávúdí developed much of the Institute's curriculum, which included classes on philosophy and mysticism with an emphasis on the study of primary texts rather than commentary.

After the Iranian Revolution in 1979, the Society of Muslim Students declared Dr. Dávúdí as “anti-Islamic” and “anti-revolutionary”; members of militant Islamic groups regularly gathered outside his home, and as such, he found that he could not continue to work as a professor and resigned from his post. After the Iranian Revolution, the persecution of Bahá'ís escalated, and the National Spiritual Assembly sought to defend the rights of its members to the government. As secretary of that Assembly and one of its most visible members, Dr. Dávúdí regularly interacted with the Bahá'í community through letters and talks, encouraging members of the community to be patient through the persecution, and co-ordinating the relief efforts. His relatives, fearing for his life, asked him to leave the country. Though aware of the dangers he was facing, Dr. Dávúdí refused, stating that the Bahá'í community in Iran needed him.

On 11 November 1979, while he was walking alone in a park near his home in Tehran, Dr. Dávúdí was kidnapped and was never seen again. The Liberation Front newspaper wrote the headline “Dr. Dávúdí, University Professor is Kidnapped”. While the Iranian government denied any involvement, three revolutionary guards later admitted that Professor Dávúdí had been kidnapped on the order of the government. He has been presumed dead.

Table of Contents:

Translator's Note	11
Prologue.....	13
Letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Dr. Forel	39
'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel.....	43
Transcripts of the Talks of Dr. 'Alí Murád Dávudí	
• Section One - A General Study of the Contents	
of the Tablet to Dr. Forel	59
• Section Two - The Mind and its Relation	
to the Human Spirit.....	69
• Section Three - Proofs of the Existence of God	87
The Philosophers of Broad Vision ²⁷	105
Glossary of Terms	121
Notes.....	215

Translator's Note

The contents of this book, originally compiled in Persian by Dr. Vahid Rafati and published in 1998, consist of four distinct areas of focus:

- A *Preface* providing information on the circumstances surrounding the Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel, as well as historical information on the life of the Swiss scientist, written by Dr. Rafati;
- The Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to Dr. Forel;
- The transcripts of four talks by Dr. ‘Ali-Murád Dávúdí;
- A section entitled *A Glossary of Terminologies*, prepared by Dr. Rafati.

Every effort has been made to remain totally faithful to the original text, so that the English and Spanish translations can be the replicas—in another language—of the version that was published in Persian. A few points in this respect should be mentioned:

- The translation into English of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel was taken from *The Bahá’í World*, Vol. XV, pp. 37–43. The translation into Spanish has been approved by the International Panel for the translation of Bahá’í Literature in Spanish [*El Panel Internacional de Traducción de Literatura Bahá’í al Español*].
- An English translation of the letter written by Dr. Forel to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, published in Peter Muhlschlegel’s book, “*Auguste Forel and the Bahá’í Faith*” (Oxford: George Ronald, 1979, pp. 1–5), as well as the Spanish translation of that letter, have been included in this edition.
- The *Preface* and the *Glossary of Terminologies* include a number of previously unpublished or untranslated Bahá’í Texts. The translations of these Passages provided here are of a provisional nature, and have been marked as such in every case.

- Following the publication of the revised English translation of *Some Answered Questions* in 2014, the passages cited from that book have been updated. The chapter numbers remain the same, but the pages differ from the earlier editions. The Spanish translations of the relevant passages have also been updated accordingly, with references made only to the chapter number.
- References to sources have often been added as footnotes rather than endnotes.
- In the translation of the entries in the *Glossary of Terminologies*, a couple of subject matters that would be well known and clear to the Western reader have been omitted, and alternatively, at times, an additional explanation, marked as a translator's note, [T.N.], has been provided in the footnotes.
- The original Persian book includes a bibliography, and an index. Both are excluded from the translation.

The translators would like to express their sincere gratitude to Bahíyyih Nakhjavání for the meticulous assistance she provided in the revision of the provisional translations of the passages from the Bahá'í Writings that appear in this book. Acknowledgement and gratitude are also due to Mark Freehill for his indispensable review and editing of the English text.

It is the hope of the translators that the English and Spanish versions of the book, while falling short of befittingly reflecting the original work, will succeed in transmitting, even if to a small degree, the beauty and depth of the original.

Prologue

The Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, authorized Interpreter of the works of Bahá’u’lláh and known as the ‘Master’, addressed to the renowned Swiss scientist Dr. Auguste Henri Forel, and cited in full in the opening chapter of this book, is one of His most significant and detailed works. This Tablet that must be regarded as the last major work on metaphysical matters issued by the indefatigable pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is dated 21 September 1921, exactly 67 days prior to the Author’s passing. Its contents mark it as one of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s most comprehensive treatises covering the very core issues of theology and metaphysics, such as the nature of existence, the station of the human soul and the proofs of the existence of God, while, at the same time, presenting the most fundamental Teachings of the Bahá’í Faith. It is as if in the last days of His earthly life, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá laid bare the quintessence of His thoughts and views on the questions most pivotal to the concept of existence.

The choice to address Dr. Forel was likewise significant. He was prominent and distinguished as one of Europe’s most illustrious scientists and researchers. Cognizant of the scope and depth of the scientific and intellectual faculty of the personage to whom He was addressing, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá used the language of the experts of that field, presenting the topics with such clarity and coherence that would be pleasing to a brilliant mind of one such as Dr. Forel, and that the eloquence and range of subjects contained therein would serve to greatly influence him.

As far as the present author has been able to ascertain, the Tablet to Dr. Forel was first printed in volume 3 of *Makátib-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, (pp.

474-491) on 18 April 1922—seven months after it was written. It was later published in Cairo by Faraju'lláh Zakíyya'l-Kurdí on 1 July of that same year, as part of a 144-page compilation of the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, entitled *The Reply to the German Professor Dr. Forel, and some other Tablets*. The publisher's introduction states that: "The reply to Dr. Forel was written and sent to me as instructed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá to be printed and published. I, Faraju'lláh Zakíyya'l-Kurdí, have exerted the utmost effort in its correct printing and publication."

In April 1923, exactly one year after its first publication, the Tablet was published in the Persian section of the Bahá'í magazine *Star of the West*.^{*} It was re-printed in Cairo as a separate undated pocket-size publication in 39 pages, and again in Tíhrán in *Khaṭábát-i-Mubárakiyi Haḍrat-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*.[†] The entire Tablet was transcribed by Mírzá 'Alí Akbar Mílání and published in 16 pages through gelatine printing. Excerpts were published on numerous occasions in various Bahá'í books.

An English translation of the Tablet, by Dr. Zia Baghdadi in 1922 and published in *Star of the West*[‡] was superseded in early 1923 by the translation into English by Shoghi Effendi, the Guardian, later published in volume XV of *The Bahá'í World* (1968-1973).[§] The Tablet has been translated into Italian (1958), French (1974), German (1975), Swedish (1977), Hungarian (1979), Russian (1980), and Bulgarian (1988).

The reader may find the following explanations useful to clarify some potential ambiguities:

* Volume 14, issue 1, April 1923, pp. 30-32; and issue 2, May 1923, p. 62.

† Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Europe and America (in Persian), pp. 18-29; known as the Fatheazam Publication of *Khaṭábát*, published in 99 B.E. (1943). 294 pages, with a 15-page index.

‡ Volume 13, issue 8, November 1922, pp.195-202.

§ Volume XV, pp. 37-43.

1. The extant copy of Dr. Forel's letter is dated 28 December 1920,¹ while at the beginning of His Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to: "...*Thy letter dated 28 July 1921 ...*" To understand the reason for the discrepancy in dates, it should be noted that Dr. Forel's original letter was written in French and he posted it to 'Abdu'l-Bahá from Germany in January 1921. It remained unanswered for some time perhaps due to a postal delay, or the time needed for its translation into Persian required by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, or simply as a result of His other pressing tasks and occupations. Consequently, Dr. Forel wrote a second letter dated 28 July 1921 which he sent to Egypt to be forwarded by Áqá Muḥammad Taqí Isfahání. These facts are inferred from a brief Tablet by 'Abdu'l-Bahá dated 17 October 1921 to Áqá Muḥammad Taqí Isfahání in Egypt:

Egypt Marjúsh

Áqá Muḥammad Taqí Isfahání

*O thou who art steadfast in the Covenant! The letter of Dr. Forel that thou hast forwarded, he himself had already sent me a copy. A reply hath been written, it will be dispatched, and I shall also send thee a copy of it. The Glory of Glories rest upon thee. Haifa - 17/10/1921**

The words... *The letter of Dr. Forel that thou hast forwarded...* most probably refer to the letter from Dr. Forel dated 28 July 1921. The phrase: *he himself had already sent me a copy...* would refer to the first letter from Dr. Forel dated 28 December, the copy of which is extant. *A reply hath been written...* refers to the Tablet from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to Dr. Forel dated 21 September 1921. It is noteworthy that in His Tablet, 'Abdu'l-Bahá makes no reference to the first letter from Dr. Forel dated 28 December 1920 and merely mentions the receipt of the second letter dated 28 July 1921. The contents of the Tablet, however, imply that the Master was replying to and expanding upon the points raised in the first letter from Dr. Forel dated 28

* Provisional translation.

December 1920. Further, Dr. Forel himself appears to consider the Tablet as a reply to the letter from him dated 28 December 1920.²

The original Persian Tablet, along with English and French translations, were sent to Dr. Forel, accompanied by a letter from the Guardian dated 27 February 1922.³

2. At the beginning of his letter, Dr. Forel mentions that he is seventy-two years old,⁴ whereas ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the opening section of the Tablet states: *...praised be the Lord, thou art as yet young, and searchest after truth...*

Clearly, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was not referring to Dr. Forel’s physical age but rather his rational abilities which remained so creative and brilliant at the age of seventy-two, and was considering his youthful mind set and eager attitude to comprehend scientific realities. The subject of outward physical advancement in years and youthfulness of the mind and soul, are themes reflected in ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s other Writings. For example, in a Tablet addressed to Jináb-i-Hájí Báqir, He writes:

To N. J. Jináb-i-Hájí Báqir

He is God.

O thou who art advanced in years yet in the prime of youth! Whilst old age doth outwardly assail the body and weakness taketh over, yet, if the heart be quickened, youth’s features shall reappear and the springtime of life be manifest. Strength and vigour will be revealed once more. The eye will be solaced, the heart cheered, the body revived, and one’s very nature stirred. The soul will rejoice, the face become freshened, the powers of confirmation and of victory will emerge. Therefore, O heavenly youth, seek thou to flourish and to bloom, exert all thine efforts to give joy and fervour to the friends, and to stir rapture and ecstasy.

Jináb-i-Amín hath greatly praised thee and extolled the friends in that land. Our hope is that the signs of that praise may be soon

Prologue

*abundantly manifest, and that blessed village be enkindled with the fire of love. The glory of God rest upon thee and upon all.**

Also, in a Tablet addressed to Ustád Ḥusayn ‘Amú Zaynal, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

Through Jináb-i-Khájih Rabí’

To Jináb-i- Ustád Ḥusayn ‘Amú Zaynal

He is God. O my dear friend of old! Thou art ever in my mind and always present in the company of the ardent lovers. Thy past as well as future services are well accepted at the Threshold of the Blessed Beauty, and bear testimony to thy steadfastness in the Covenant. Think not that thou art advanced in years and frail in strength; nay rather, know that thou art still active and in the prime of life. For age doth not depend on the body, but on the soul; and strength is not of mire and clay, but cometh from the heart. Thy heart is lively, thy soul vigorous; thus, art thou in the vanguard of the youthful ones, a mighty champion in the arena. I cherish the utmost affection for thee in my heart, and my soul rejoiceth whenever I call thee to mind, for thou art steadfast in the service of the Blessed Beauty and a sincere servant of the Greatest Name. The Glory of Glories rest upon thee....

O my dear one, O ‘Amú Zaynal! Thy sincere love, thy pure heart and thy meekness have made thee so very dear to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Be happy, be joyful, be free!†

In another Tablet He writes:

O thou who art young in spirit! Thy sugar-shedding words, and the traces of thy musk-laden pen were perused and recited. Thy sweet letter brought joy and gladness and opened the portals of

* Provisional translation.

† Provisional translation.

*delight. Praised be God that thou who art youthful in spirit though advanced in physical years, art inebriated with spiritual ecstasy, and dost spend thy days and nights in the remembrance of the eternal Beauty. It is due to this fresh vigour, this youthful beauty of thy soul that thou dost yearn to unravel the inner mysteries and seek after meanings...**

3. Early in his letter, Dr. Forel refers to a number of very interesting letters from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to “Frau Dr. F. ”. In the footnote to the first page of his book, Dr. Mühlischlegel suggests that this could be Mrs. Fallscher, the family doctor of the Master’s household. However, at the beginning of His Tablet to Dr. Forel, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: *Numerous copies of the epistle I had written to Dr. Fisher are spread far and wide...*, making it evident that Abdu’l-Bahá understood the *Dr. F.* mentioned in Dr. Forel’s letter to be Dr. Fisher and not Dr. Fallscher.⁵
4. In his letter, Dr. Forel expressed his profound surprise and marvel at the fact that a few years prior to the start of the First World War, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá had written about the imminent occurrence of such a conflict. Dr. Forel asks:

Is it really true that you had sent those letters in 1910, and prior to the start of the war? If so, your perception and insight in these precise predictions are a source of great wonder and astonishment to me...⁶ In reply, Abdu’l-Bahá writes: Numerous copies of the epistle I had written to Dr. Fisher [which includes the predictions regarding the occurrence of the War] are spread far and wide and every one knoweth that it hath been revealed in the year 1910.⁷

The Epistle addressed to Dr. Fisher, mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in the Tablet to Dr. Forel has been published in *Makátib-i-‘Abdu’l-*

* Provisional translation.

Prologue

Bahá.^{*} In it, the Master refers to the efforts of the nations in accumulating and piling up weapons of war:

...The peoples and kindreds of the world, like unto the crawling insects and grovelling worms of the depths of the earth, exert all their efforts and by the aid of science, devise strange and bizarre mechanisms, in order to appropriate abodes and dwelling places for themselves. Strive thou that these wretched worms may become even as birds, soaring to the heights...^{8†}

After referring to His Epistle addressed to Dr. Fisher, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states in His Tablet to Dr. Forel: Apart from this, numerous epistles have been written before the war regarding the same theme...

The Master refers here to other Tablets besides the one to Dr. Fisher that He had written prior to the start of the First World War, in which He had alluded to the start of an imminent combat. Among them is a Tablet addressed to a number of believers in California written around September 1908:

O spiritual assemblage! We hear that ye have held a meeting and organized a gathering... O friends! The peoples and the tribes, the religions and congregations in every land are engaged in producing arms and piling up armaments. They are labouring to create ruinous weapons of war. O ye Bahá’is! Faced by such tyranny and oppression, open ye the portals of love and fellowship. In response to such cruelty and hostility, unlock the gates of unity and freedom before all who dwell on earth. Be ye as an ocean of peace and tranquillity before the fire of war, and dispel the darkness of injustice and transgression with the light of love

^{*} Volume 3, pp. 449-451.

[†] Provisional translation.

*and devotion. Arise ye in such wise as to quench and extinguish that deadly fire. The Glory of Glories rest upon you.**

In another Tablet dated early October 1914, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

London. To the friends of God and the maidservants of the Merciful—the Glory of Glories rest upon them!

He is God! O ye that stand fast and firm in the Covenant! Your letter hath been received and the contents were noted. Fifteen months ago, a communication was sent to Tíhrán. It was published there, widely distributed throughout Persia and is now in the hands of all (the friends). Here is the text:

O thou servant of the Sacred Threshold! Thou hadst complained about the decline in trade. This year, misfortunes, financial losses and corruption have enveloped all regions, and the evidence is clear and apparent to everyone. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá raised the call of the kingdom throughout the cities of Europe and America, and proclaimed the Faith of Bahá’u’lláh in numerous assemblies and churches. He established shining testimonies and expounded conclusive proofs everywhere. Indeed, many of these addresses were published in newspapers and universally available, so no excuse whatever remained for any soul. Notwithstanding this, the peoples of the earth have continued to ignore the truth. They have remained fast asleep in their heedlessness, pursuing every illusion and turning away from reality. They are so caught up in their selfish desires that even the trumpet blast of the Seraph of God hath not awakened them. There can be no doubt that such negligence, such a forfeiture of favours and such heedlessness must result in toil and trouble, and will lead to hopelessness, to war and bloodshed, to loss and clear ruin in the end. Dire peril awaiteth the peoples of the world, unless they set their faces

* Provisional translation.

Prologue

towards the Most Great Name. The hope I cherish for the friends is that through the manifestations of divine grace, their affairs may be exempt from the general rule. The Glory of Glories rest upon thee...

This letter, anticipating the afflicting events of the present hour, was written fifteen months ago. Notwithstanding this, my prayer and ardent supplication to His Threshold is that the horizon of the world may be purged from the dark clouds of conflict and war. The Glory of Glories rest upon you. [signed] *abdul Baha abbas* [sic]*⁹

A communication sent to Persia, warning of the outbreak of great peril is also reflected in yet another Tablet of the Master dated October 1914:

O thou who art firm in the Covenant! Thy letter to Jináb-i-Ḥaydar-‘Alí hath been received. It breathed spiritual fragrance, imparting the sweet savours of the rose from the garden of the heart, that is to say—steadfastness in the Cause of God.... As to the distribution of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s letter amongst high and low: God willing, it may yield boundless results. Briefly, five years ago, as my body could no longer bear the intense vicissitudes, diverse ills and pains resulted. Yet, despite this, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá travelled throughout all regions for four years, traversed mountains and deserts, crossed cities and oceans, carrying the glad tidings of the advent of the Kingdom of God to all the countries of the West. The proofs were made manifest to all people and the blessed Teachings were openly promoted in large assemblies and in great churches. I plainly warned them that unless these Teachings be diffused and observed, a desolating affliction would follow, that all the countries of Europe were like unto an arsenal filled with explosives ready for ignition, and that one spark alone

* Provisional translation. T.N.: An earlier translation of this Tablet is published in *Star of the West*, volume 5, number 15 (12 December 1914), page 242.

*would set all aflame. Also, a [similar] letter was written and sent a year and a half ago to Persia. It was published by Áqá Mirzá Ali Akbar-i-Milání and distributed across all regions, explaining clearly that the world was in great danger. The events of this present hour were explicitly recorded in that letter which thou hast surely read. Despite all this, the peoples have not taken heed....**

In a Letter addressed to the Sixth International Congress of Religious Liberals held in Paris 16-22 July 1913, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá wrote:

...As these man-made ideas differ from each other they cause dissension which breeds strife and ends in war and bloodshed; the blood of innocent people is spilled, their possessions are pillaged and their children become captives and orphans.†

In the *Şawt-i-Salám-i-‘Ámm*‡ written by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in ‘Akká on 1 October 1914, and sent to the major newspapers in Europe and America, He states:

In all the gatherings [of Europe and America] I called out, exclaiming: O men of insight! O great thinkers of the West! O wise ones on earth! A dark cloud is spreading over the horizon of the world, and awaiteth you. A fierce storm is breaking up the vessels of men’s lives and doth follow in your wake. Erelong a torrential flood shall engulf the cities and regions of Europe. Wherefore, be ever wakeful, be watchful! ... The leaders of men have vainly imagined that the building up of battalions and the accumulation of arms would ensure the protection of peace and tranquillity. I stated plainly that it was not so. The day would inevitably arrive when these large armies would rush into the battlefield, and these

* Provisional translation.

† *Star of the West*, year 4, issue 16, p. 2 of the Persian section. T.N.: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Divine Philosophy*, p. 161.

‡ T.N.: The Call for Universal Peace.

*incendiary arms, liable to ignite at a single spark, would suddenly explode, setting the whole earth on fire. And yet, owing to their blindness and the limitations of their minds, they heeded not these words, until the Balkan states erupted from this spark. At the outbreak of that war, some notable men asked whether this Balkan war was in fact a world war. In reply, I told them that it would indeed become a world war in the end...**

These repeated references in the Tablets and Talks by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá leave no doubt that His emphatic warnings of the imminent outbreak of a terrible conflict prior to the eruption of the flames of the First World War in the summer of 1914 were widely reflected in His Works. Time and again the Master strongly stressed the dangers and damages caused by war and the need to hold fast unto world peace.¹⁰

5. Early in the Tablet to Dr. Forel, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: ... reference, too, hath been made to these questions in the Journal of the San Francisco University, the date whereof is known beyond any doubt... The journal mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá was the newspaper also known as the Daily Palo Alto Times that published the English translation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Talk delivered at Stanford University at 10:15 a.m. on 8 October 1912. The talk was printed on page 7 of its Monday 14 October 1912 edition. Two weeks later, on Friday 1 November 1912, this same talk and another commentary on the Bahá’í Faith and the life of the Master, were published in issue 43 (year 10) of the weekly journal of The Palo Altan. A slightly varied English text of the Talk cited above was published in the book *The Promulgation of Universal Peace* (pp. 348-355). The original text in Persian was also made available in the *Star of the West* journal.[†] In this significant and historic Talk, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá speaks emphatically and in detail of the need for putting an end to war and bloodshed and establishing universal peace and the abolition of national, racial and ethnic prejudices.

* Provisional translation: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Majmú’iy-i Khatábát*, pp.719-720.

† *Najm-i-Bákhhtar*, Year 5, volume 1, pp. 1-4.

References have been made to this Talk in other Works of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. For example, in the fourth of the *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, dated Saturday 1 April 1916, He writes:

*During my stay in America, I cried out in every meeting and summoned the people to the propagation of the ideals of universal peace. I said plainly that the continent of Europe had become like unto an arsenal and its conflagration was dependent upon one spark, and that in the coming years, or within two years, all that which is recorded in the Revelation of John and the Book of Daniel would become fulfilled and come to pass. This matter, in all probability, was published in the San Francisco Bulletin, October 12, 1912. You may refer to it, so that the truth may become clear and manifest...**

In a Tablet with the opening verse: O my God, O my God! Thou knowest my utter helplessness and my extreme lowliness...,† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

Gracious God! I spoke openly of this grievous situation while in America and Europe. I warned that a great danger layeth ahead and the flames of a fierce war were to follow, that the continent of Europe had become an arsenal of explosives and its conflagration depended upon a single spark, causing its flames to blaze sky high, and all prophecies recorded in the Book of Daniel would come to pass. These [words] were stated in great assemblies and churches, and published four years ago in the San Francisco Journal in 1912. The text of that journal is as follows:

“During his visit to this country, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stayed in Montclair for a few weeks. While in San Francisco, he spoke

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá; *Tablets of the Divine Plan*, p. 22. By the *San Francisco Bulletin* is most possibly meant the *Daily Palo Alto Times*.

† Provisional translation.

of future events. His many followers are pondering and meditating upon those words. He came to San Francisco in 1912, and spoke at Stanford University. When introducing him, the University President said that we were in the presence of a person even as a Jeremiah and other of the Prophets of old. His talk warned of upcoming events in the following terms: 'We are at the eve of the Battle of Armageddon, that is to say a World War, referred to in the sixteenth chapter of the Revelation of John. Within two years, a mere spark will ignite the whole of Europe. Social unrest will ensue, inasmuch religious scepticism is increasing everywhere day by day. As anticipated in the Book of Daniel, a single spark will set all Europe ablaze. Let not man glory in this that he loveth his country, but rather in that he loveth his kind'".

*Briefly, these were the clear statements uttered in great assemblies and large synagogues. These were the counsels given: O respected congregations! A great peril is at hand. Make ye a mighty effort that haply this world-devouring fire may not be kindled; strive together to ensure that this fierce storm might not rage, and this great tremor might not uproot the nations of the earth. Now is the time for selflessness, now is the moment for nobility. The world shall, otherwise, find no tranquillity, [and] the earth shall be tinged with the blood of the youth. If those endowed with wisdom and influence exert all possible efforts to prevent this ferocious war, they might thwart this terrible upheaval. However, so destructive a flood cannot be stemmed except by the heavenly Teachings, and this blazing fire cannot be quenched but through divine Counsels and Exhortations. Human plans and provisions alone can bear no fruit. Only the power of the Word of God will deliver [mankind] from this peril...**

* Provisional translation.

The above is a brief study of some of the references contained in the Tablet to the illustrious Bahá'í scholar, Dr. Forel. A summary of his life, presented below, will be followed by a few essential points.

Dr. Auguste Henri Forel was one of the greatest scientific minds in Europe during a period spanning the last half of the nineteenth century and the first three decades of the twentieth. A detailed biography of the life, ideas and works of Dr. Forel is beyond the limited scope of this book which mainly consists of a study of some of the fundamental subjects contained in the Tablet addressed to him. Fortunately, there are various extensive studies on Dr. Forel's life available¹¹ so there is no need for a more detailed commentary beyond the brief following account of the principal events of his life:

Auguste Henri Forel was born into a religious family on 1 September 1848, in villa *La Gracieuse* near Morges on the shore of Lake Geneva in Switzerland. At an early age he became fascinated by the life of insects and started his research and study in that field. Throughout his eighty years of life his brilliant and curious mind never stopped searching, studying, discovering, teaching and writing about scientific truths. He was a highly specialized authority in a varied range of subjects such as medicine, law, philosophy, and especially entomology. He was by nature humanitarian, benevolent and noble. He strongly fought by every possible means against religious dogma, imitations and alcoholism. He diligently strove for the establishment of peace, social morality, and the improvement of international relations. He left this earthly world on 27 July 1931 in Yvorne in Switzerland.

Towards the end of his life, at age seventy-two, Dr. Forel learnt about the Bahá'í Faith. His daughter and son-in-law, Martha and Arthur Brauns, who lived in Ropieur, some eight kilometres from Karlsruhe the capital of the Baden province in Germany had already embraced the Faith through Dr. John Esslemont. In 1920, during Dr. Forel's visit and stay in their home, he became totally acquainted with the Bahá'í Faith,

became deeply interested its teachings and principles, and he too accepted the Bahá'í Faith.

Mr. 'Izzatu'lláh Dhabíh writes of his interview with Dr. Forel's daughter Martha Brauns, asking how her father had learnt about the Faith and accepted it.

“During my visit to Ropieur, I asked Martha Brauns: How did your father become a Bahá'í? She replied: When my father was staying with us in this same house, we used to go to Karlsruhe every Wednesday to attend the weekly Bahá'í meetings. My father noticed our regular absence every Wednesday and asked, ‘Where do you go every Wednesday and what do you do there?’ Martha Brauns continued: It was very difficult for me to answer my father's question. The reason being that throughout his life my father disagreed with all religions and faiths. To tell him that my husband and I were going to a religious gathering would have been very astonishing to his way of thinking. Yet, being Bahá'ís, we could not lie. So, disregarding the possible effect that our reply could have had upon the mind of our elderly father, we frankly said that we were going to Bahá'í meetings. My father asked, ‘What is a Bahá'í meeting?’ We gave him a brief description of the Bahá'í teachings. Being an open-minded man with an investigating and reasonable attitude, he asked us to give him a book about the Bahá'í Faith. We gave him a copy of the translation of ‘Bahá'u'lláh and the New Era’. Professor Forel read the book most attentively. A few days later he said, ‘This indeed is an important subject, worthy of attention and study. Would it be possible for me to write to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and ask him some questions?’ He was told that it was possible. So, he wrote a letter in French to ‘Abdu'l-Bahá and a short while later a lengthy Tablet was revealed in honour of my father. A French translation was enclosed. The study of this Tablet caused an incredible transformation in his thoughts--it revolutionized his mind. He clearly declared his belief and wrote a letter to the Guardian declaring his unconditional acceptance of the Faith. He then sent several communications to his great scientist colleagues and friends, as well as to the heads of the peace seeking societies, to socialist

leaders and proclaimed the Faith of God to them. In all those letters, he openly expressed his belief...”*

Dr. Forel embraced the Faith after receiving the Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In *God Passes By*, the Guardian wrote: ...The famous scientist and entomologist, Dr. Auguste Forel, was converted to the Faith through the influence of a Tablet sent him by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá—one of the most weighty the Master ever wrote...†

Dr. Forel’s life after declaring his belief in the Bahá’í Faith can be summarized by his services to the Cause of God. He held meetings about the Faith in the city of Lausanne; he published a monthly journal presenting the teachings of the Faith and describing the beliefs and ideologies of the Bahá’is; and he used any possible opportunity to proclaim the importance of these teachings, especially to the scholarly and to the scientists.

Among the significant documents addressed to prominent personalities by Dr. Forel, proclaiming the teachings of the Bahá’í Faith and inviting them to investigate its principles, is his letter dated 18 November 1927 to the leader of modern Turkey, Mustafa Kemal Atatürk:

*His Excellency Mustapha Kamal Pasha,
Ankara*

Your Excellency,

If I am being so audacious to write to you directly, it is because I read in our ‘Droit du Peuple’ a résumé of your splendid talk during six days, three hours each morning and each afternoon. This résumé fired me with enthusiasm. In addition, a progressive newspaper of Istanbul published, about two years ago, an impartial Turkish translation of an article, in German, which I had written in the ‘Neue Freie Presse’ about the Bahá’is who were even

* ‘Izzatu’lláh Dhabíh: *Professor Auguste Forel*, published in *Áhang-i-Badí*, year 15, issue 11 (Bahman 1339) [February 1961], serial number 168, pp. 354, 369.

† Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p. 307.

Prologue

praised. This is what encouraged me... to write to you. I am sending you herewith the 12 Bahá'í Principles. This religion was founded in Persia around 1852 and now has over one million followers... I draw your attention to the principles 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9. Thus, if you were to declare the Bahá'í Faith as an official religion of Turkey, in addition to Islam, you would make a great step towards progress and would give an example to all of Europe and even to all the nations of the world! And such an example would be followed. You have but to write to Shoghi Effendi in Haifa, or have someone write on your behalf. Amen.

*I hope your Excellency will excuse my forwardness and be assured of my respect and my admiration. (signed) Dr. A. Forel...**

Dr. Forel exerted loving and courageous efforts to defend the rights of the oppressed Bahá'ís in Persia via numerous letters to prominent newspapers and official centres, appealing for the restoration of the rights of the Bahá'ís in that country and explaining the aims and goals of the Bahá'í Faith. The Guardian referred to these endeavours in his letters, for example this letter dated 4 June 1926:

To the members of the Central Spiritual Assembly of Persia, care of the Secretary.

He is God.

I beseech at His sacred Threshold for fresh confirmations to be conferred upon the honoured members of the Central Spiritual Assembly in the blessed land of Persia, and pray for the protection and assistance of each and every one of you. Your recent letter dated 20 May arrived and was carefully perused. I have personally communicated the news of the distressing events which took place in Jahrum to all centres abroad; the details have immediately been published in a number of the major and widely-

*John Paul Vader, *For the Good of Mankind*, pp. 58-59.

known journals and newspapers, through the efforts of the wise, devoted, and loving friends in those regions. Furthermore, Dr. Forel, the celebrated and illustrious scholar in whose honour a weighty Tablet was penned by the Master towards the end of His earthly life, has lovingly arisen pleading for justice on behalf of the oppressed. He has written to the principal newspapers, official centres and leaders of the civilised world, in clear and unequivocal terms, has proclaimed the truth of the teachings, and explained the aims, principles and doctrines of the Bahá'is in three languages. It would therefore be most appropriate if your luminous Assembly would address a letter to that esteemed and honoured personage and convey your particular appreciation to him on behalf of all the Bahá'is in Persia. His mailing address is enclosed.

If the members of your Assembly learn of any consequences to these actions of the western believers and hear of any results to their communications with the representatives of foreign governments in Tíhrán, they must of course send me this information directly and in full. This is most necessary and is a matter of vital importance whose results will be made apparent in the future.

The list of Local Assemblies you published was safely received. The steadfast endeavours of those respected members has brought great joy and assurance to my heart. I also enclose for your information copies of certain foreign newspapers regarding the successive afflictions and intense sufferings of the oppressed believers in Persia in particular, and the friends in the East in general. Erelong, the consequences [of this suffering] shall become as clear as the midday sun. May God aid and assist you in uniting hearts, in guiding souls and in illuminating the minds in that land.

The servant at His Threshold, Shoghi

4 June 1926 *

In brief, Dr. Forel's conviction of the teachings and principles brought by Bahá'u'lláh gradually rose to such heights that in his book memorializing his wife's 65th birthday, entitled *True Socialism of the Future* (1926) he clearly wrote that the true future socialism is the real religion of 'social welfare' brought by Bahá'u'lláh.

Excerpts of the declaration made by Dr. Forel in his testament are quoted by the Guardian in his book, *God Passes By*. Shoghi Effendi thus immortalized that testimony by bringing it to the attention of the readers of his most mighty work.

In 1920, I learned at Karlsruhe of the supraconfessional world religion of the Bahá'ís, founded in the Orient seventy years ago by a Persian, Bahá'u'lláh. This is the real religion of 'Social Welfare' without dogmas or priests, binding together all men of this small terrestrial globe of ours. I have become a Bahá'í. May this religion live and prosper for the good of humanity! This is my most ardent desire... There is bound to be a world state, a universal language, and a universal religion... he, moreover has stated, The Bahá'í Movement for the oneness of mankind is, in my estimation, the greatest movement today working for universal peace and brotherhood.†

The Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel inspired the great Bahá'í scholar, Dr. 'Alí-Muḥammad Dávúdí to comment and expound on its main points during the course of a number of talks.¹² Exact information on dates, the mode of preparation and presentation of these talks is not available to the present author. Voice recordings left behind indicate that a brief biography of Dr. Forel was followed by the reading of some excerpts of the Tablet by Mr. Húshang Maḥmúdí. Dr. Dávúdí then

* Provisional translation.

† Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By*, p.375.

spoke about a number of the significant subjects introduced in the Tablet. The structure and method of presentation clearly imply that Dr. Dávúdí had written his discourse in a well-organized and coherent style, but he did not read it out. Rather, he presented and expounded on the subjects that he had in mind in an instinctive yet systematic manner.

Transcripts of these talks are published in three distinct chapters in this book, along with the transcript of another recorded talk by Dr. Dávúdí, included in a separate chapter, in which he speaks of the *Philosophers of Broad Vision* mentioned in the Tablet to Dr. Forel.

The talks by Dr. Dávúdí in Farsi were transcribed word for word. The utmost effort has been made to maintain the originality of the phrases and expressions while providing a lightly edited and fluent text for publication by eliminating repetitions. The present author has added notes at the end of each published talk with further information on the references and sources mentioned by Dr. Dávúdí during his discourse, in order to indicate to the reader the relevant Writings of the Faith required for fuller comprehension and further study. References of passages quoted from published Bahá'í Sacred Writings are stated, while extracts from unpublished documents are identified by the opening verse of the Tablet, including the addressee and the date (whenever available).

The Tablet itself and the talks by Dr. Dávúdí contain an abundance of philosophical, scholastic and mystical terminologies, as well as the names of personages, beliefs and religions. The present author has added a *Glossary of Terminologies* to assist with a more enlightening study experience. It must be stated, however, that a comprehensive description of the life, works or views of individuals such as Aristotle or Plato, or a detailed explanation of concepts such as 'existence', 'soul' and 'the rejection of the theory of infinite regress' are beyond the limited scope of these pages. The more modest aim of the *Glossary* is to provide a brief explanation and sufficient information for the reader to

better understand the contents of the Tablet and the talks. For further explanation, as needed, the reader is directed to reliable sources.*

The title of this book: *The Kingdom of Existence* [*Malakút-i-Vujúd*] was inspired by a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá cited below. It seemed befitting that the contents of the Tablet to Dr. Forel and the explanations of the principal theories of existence be aptly adorned with the designation *The Kingdom of Existence*, whereby the term ‘kingdom’, indicative of the spiritual concepts of glory, beauty, and perfection, may be combined with the common terminology of ‘existence’ that denotes all the various stages and levels of the world of being. The coming together of these two terms represents a token of both the spiritual as well as the material grandeur and splendour of the realm of creation fashioned by the omnipotent hand of the Almighty.

Jináb-i-Naşru’lláh Kh. A.; upon him rest the Glory of God!

He is the Most Glorious!

*O thou who art pondering upon **the Kingdom of Existence!** † Certain foolish souls in the world of being strive for keenness of vision with their gaze fixed firmly upon this contingent realm. They desire to discover the secrets of existence, unravel the mysteries of the universe and grasp the nature of the supernatural by digging and delving, and debating over creation. Alas for such folly! Alas for such idle fancies and vain imaginings! What is even more astonishing is that they consider these vain thoughts to be true science and regard this folly as wisdom, as the sagacity of the All-Knowing Who hath neither peer nor likeness. They seek force within the heart of matter, and search for the soul inside the body. And since their vision is confined to the material realm, they*

* T.N.: In the translation of the Glossary, certain entries, commonly well-known and clear to the western reader, have been omitted, while some additional explanations have been provided in footnotes.

† T.N.: Emphasis added.

*remain ignorant of the world of the spirit, and unaware of the Realm of the Best-Beloved. They look for the flourishing power of plant growth while trapped in the mineral kingdom. They long for the manifold tokens of physical sense while lingering in the vegetable kingdom. Then, caught within the confines of the animal kingdom, they desire to discover the reality of man and while defining themselves as beasts, hope to fathom the nature of the soul. Captives of the world of nature, they strive for the mysteries of the supernatural and confined in this cage below, they dream of soaring high. Having made their dwelling places in the midst of dust, they nevertheless long to attain a share and portion of the billows of the Most Mighty Ocean. With senses sorely congested, they still seek to inhale sweet fragrances, and grovelling like poor worms underground, they want knowledge of the realms above. How vain, how deluded are such actions. These souls have indeed descended into the pit of ignorance, have failed to recognize the mysteries of the transcendental realm, and remained veiled from beholding its most resplendent signs. Alas and woe! How pitiful they are! They have strayed far from discernment, from true comprehension and knowledge. They have remained bereft of real existence and life, and deprived of all that adorneth the reality of man.**

It is my utmost wish that the publication of these talks may prove useful in assisting the reader in gaining a deeper understanding of the contents of the Tablet to Dr. Forel.

Haifa

Vahid Rafati

February 1998

* Provisional translation.

Prologue

Très honore Monsieur ,

Je viens de lire d'admirables lettres que, selon M. Wilhelm Herrigel qui les a traduites en allemand, vous devez avoir adressées en 1910 à une dame, Frau Dr. F. Est-ce bien exact? Ces lettres ont-elles déjà été écrites en 1910, avant la guerre mondiale? Je suis dans ce cas stupéfait de votre perspicacité prophétique.

Mais j'ai une question très importante à vous poser. Je dois vous dire qu'agé maintenant de 72 ans j'ai toujours été passionné des vérités scientifiques. J'ai écrit, déjà en 1874, un gros livre sur les moeurs des fourmis, et, dès lors, des ouvrages sur l'anatomie du cerveau sur l'hypnotisme, sur les sensations des insectes, sur l'hygiène du système nerveux, sur la question sexuelle etc. De 1879 à 1898 j'ai été professeur de psychiatrie à l'université de Zurich, et directeur de l'asile des aliénés de cette ville. Vous comprendrez alors la raison de ma question ci-après.

J'ai lu en outre les statuts de la religion Bahai, ou plutôt ses Déclarations, ainsi que votre discours (traduit de l'anglais par Miss Goodall) contre la "Croyance des naturalistes sur Dieu" et l'entrevue du professeur Edw. C. Broowne avec Baha'o'llah à Akka en 1890. J'ai lu enfin en allemand le livre de Mirza Abul Fazl sur l'histoire de la religion bahai.

De ces lectures il semble résulter que vous accusez les naturalistes en général d'erreurs qui sont seulement le fait de certains fanatiques d'un matérialisme étroit qui, comme Oswald et Haeckel, font sans s'en rendre compte la "métaphysique de l'énergie ou de la matière". On perd son temps à disserter sur les atomes, l'entigie, l'infini, l'univers etc.; ce ne sont que des mots vides de sens. Pour ma part je suis ~~marxiste~~ moniste dans le sens suivant: je suis certain que les fonctions du cerveau et l'âme humaine ne font qu'un seul ensemble inséparable. Par conséquent

The first page of the letter of Dr. Auguste Forel to 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(in French)

The Kingdom of Existence

3

février 1921 à Yverne (Vaud) Suisse, où je demeure, je pourrai vous l'envoyer, si vous me répondez à cette adresse.

Agreez très honoré Monsieur l'expression de mes sentiments de sincère admiration

J. A. Forel

ancien professeur à l'université de Zurich.
Ruppurr près Karlsruhe 28/III 20, Baden, Allemagne.

Auerstrasse 24

P. S. Pour motiver ma question, je m'ai fait et essayé que débattre les points que je crois différents entre la religion Bahá'í et une croyance, en jugeant d'après Herivel etc. Pour savoir le réel, reviens au point de vue de la morale ou éthique humanitaire, de la paix universelle entre les peuples de toute race sur la terre et de la large tolérance accordée à toutes les croyances sur le globe, je ne puis que vous admirer et vous apprécier de toutes mes forces.

J. A. Forel

Last page of the letter of Dr. Auguste Forel to 'Abdu'l-Bahá
(in French)

Prologue



Dr. Forel's photograph printed on the highest denomination of Swiss Francs (1000 Francs; 6th series, issued in 1978) is an indication of the homage paid by the Swiss nation and state to this Bahá'í scientist.

Letter to 'Abdu'l-Bahá by Dr. Forel*

December 1920

Esteemed Sir,

I have just been reading some wonderful letters which, according to Herr Wilhelm Herrigel, who translated them into German, you sent to a lady, Frau Dr. F., in 1910. Is this true? Were these letters really written as early as 1910, before the war? If that is the case, I am quite astonished at the prophetic clarity of your vision.

But I have a very important question to put to you. I must tell you that, at the age of seventy-two. I am still enraptured by the truths of science. As early as 1874 I wrote an extensive book about the behaviour of ants, and since then I have written works on the anatomy of the brain, hypnosis, the sensory perception of insects, the hygienics of the nervous system, the sexual question, etc. From 1879 to 1898 I was Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Zurich and director of the mental asylum there. From all this, you will understand the background to the question I am about to ask.

In addition, I have read the principles of the Baha'i Faith, or rather interpretations of them, and furthermore your treatise (translated from the English of Miss Goodall) "Against the Belief of the Naturalists Re-

* A translation from the French, published in "*Auguste Forel and the Baha'i Faith*" (Oxford: George Ronald, 1979, pp. 1-5.

garding the Essence of God”, and Professor Edw. G. Browne's conversation with Baha'u'llah in 'Akka in 1890. Finally, I have read, in German, Mirza Abu'l-Fadl's book on the history of the Baha'i Faith.

It seems to emerge from these writings that you accuse naturalists in general of the sort of errors that only certain fanatical adherents of a really strict materialism could be guilty of, materialists like Oswald and Haeckel, who propose a “metaphysics of energy, or of matter” without any real justification. It is a waste of time to debate learnedly on the atom, energy, the infinite, the universe and so on; such words are empty of meaning. For my part, I am a monist, in the following sense: I am convinced that the functionings of the brain and of the human mind [or soul] are simply an inseparable whole. It follows that I cannot believe that the individual soul survives after the brain has died. This monism belongs to the sphere of science and is proven inductively. In metaphysical matters, on the other hand, I declare myself a complete agnostic, like the philosopher Socrates or the great naturalist Darwin, which means that “God” for me is nothing but the Essence of the Universe, presumably absolute, but for man absolutely unknowable. It is accordingly absolutely useless to want to furnish Him with any attributes, or with any sort of purpose. “God”, that is, the supposed metaphysical absolute, is the source of what is good and what is bad, for us as well as for every other being. Why? We do not know, and every attempt at an explanation is useless, and indeed harmful. Whenever we try to fathom God, we just go round in vicious circles. For that reason I had already refused Christian “confirmation” at the age of sixteen. I do not belong to any creed.

In your debate with the advocates of materialism, however, you assert, according to Herrigeland other Baha'is, that God has self-consciousness, a will and the power of choice; that He is perfect. But self-consciousness, will and the power of choice are attributes of the human individual, and we have no notion of what perfection might be. Your God would be “personal”, in other words similar to a human being, an

idealized human being. Other passages in the writings of your wonderful international religion do not accord with a certain narrow-mindedness which comes through in the whole book by Mirza Abu'l-Fadl (who launches a veritable assault on the free-thinkers). Despite all my admiration for your human principles, I must confess that I do not understand your "Divine" principles. This, then, is my question:

May I, yes or no, belong to the Baha'i Faith with the agnosticism I have mentioned above, without deceiving myself and others?

In 1916 or 1917 I published an essay on what I called the scientific religion of the "Social Good", along the lines I have mentioned, but with similar characteristics to your religion. On 15 February 1921 I am returning to my home, Yvorne [Vaud], in Switzerland; if you reply to me there, I will be able to send you this essay.

Please accept, my dear Sir, the expression of my sincerest admiration.

(signed) Dr. A. Forel

Formerly Professor at the University of Zurich Ruppurr near Karlsruhe, Baden, Germany, Auerstrasse 24.

28 December 1920.

P.S. It is only in order to explain my question that I have above set forth exclusively those points at which I consider the Baha'i Faith deviates from my own belief, so far as I can judge from Herrigel, etc. For all the rest, particularly as regards morality or humanitarian ethics, and the all-embracing tolerance for all forms of belief on earth, I can only admire and whole-heartedly support you.

'Abdu'l-Bahá's tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel*

O revered personage, lover of truth! Thy letter dated 28 July 1921[†] hath been received. The contents thereof were most pleasing and indicated that, praised be the Lord, thou art as yet young, and searchest after truth, that thy power of thought is strong and the discoveries of thy mind manifest.

Numerous copies of the epistle I had written to Dr. F. are spread far and wide and every one knoweth that it hath been revealed in the year 1910. Apart from this, numerous epistles have been written before the war upon the same theme, and reference, too, hath been made to these questions in the Journal of the San Francisco University, the date whereof is known beyond any doubt[‡]. In like manner have the philosophers of broad vision praised highly the discourse eloquently delivered in the above-named University[§]. A copy of that paper is thus enclosed and forwarded. Thy works are no doubt of great benefit, and if published, send us a copy of each.

* Original Persian text first published Cairo 1922. This translation taken from *The Bahá'í World*, Vol. XV, pp. 37–43.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá is referring to the letter from Forel dated 28 December 1920.

‡ 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to His talk at Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, in 1912, which was published in the local newspaper and is also included in the collection of His talks in America, entitled *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*.

§ There 'Abdu'l-Bahá distinguishes the materialistic and empirical philosophy of the modern West from the standard rationalistic philosophy of the Greeks and Persians, and highlights the difference between theories of the essence of nature and of the origin of man.

By materialists, whose belief with regard to Divinity hath been explained, is not meant philosophers in general, but rather that group of materialists of narrow vision who worship that which is sensed, who depend upon the five senses only, and whose criterion of knowledge is limited to that which can be perceived by the senses. All that can be sensed is to them real, whilst whatever falleth not under the power of the senses is either unreal or doubtful. The existence of the Deity they regard as wholly doubtful.

It is as thou hast written, not philosophers in general but narrow-minded materialists that are meant. As to deistic philosophers, such as Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, they are indeed worthy of esteem and of the highest praise, for they have rendered distinguished services to mankind. In like manner we regard the materialistic, accomplished, moderate philosophers, who have been of service (to mankind).

We regard knowledge and wisdom as the foundation of the progress of mankind, and extol philosophers who are endowed with broad vision. Peruse carefully the San Francisco University Journal that the truth may be revealed to thee.

Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged. Consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not. For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole; and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body, whereas the soul dependeth not upon the body. It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas the soul is free from all agencies.

The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state. The mind, moreover, understandeth not whilst the senses have ceased to function, and in the embryonic stage and in early infancy the reasoning power is totally absent, whereas the soul is ever endowed with full strength. In short, the proofs are many that go to show that despite the loss of reason, the power of the soul would still continue to exist. The spirit however possesseth various grades and stations.

As to the existence of spirit in the mineral: it is indubitable that minerals are endowed with a spirit and life according to the requirements of that stage. This unknown secret, too, hath become known unto the materialists who now maintain that all beings are endowed with life, even as He saith in the Qur’án, ‘All things are living’.

In the vegetable world, too, there is the power of growth, and that power of growth is the spirit. In the animal world there is the sense of feeling, but in the human world there is an all-embracing power. In all the preceding stages the power of reason is absent, but the soul existeth and revealeth itself. The sense of feeling understandeth not the soul, whereas the reasoning power of the mind proveth the existence thereof.

In like manner the mind proveth the existence of an unseen Reality that embraceth all beings, and that existeth and revealeth itself in all stages, the essence whereof is beyond the grasp of the mind. Thus the mineral world understandeth neither the nature nor the perfections of the vegetable world; the vegetable world understandeth not the nature of the animal world, neither the animal world the nature of the reality of man that discovereth and embraceth all things.

The animal is the captive of nature and cannot transgress the rules and laws thereof. In man, however, there is a discovering power that transcendeth the world of nature and controlleth and interfereth with the laws thereof. For instance, all minerals, plants and animals are captives of nature. The sun itself with all its majesty is so subservient to nature

that it hath no will of its own and cannot deviate a hair's-breadth from the laws thereof. In like manner all other beings, whether of the mineral, the vegetable or the animal world, cannot deviate from the laws of nature, nay, all are the slaves thereof. Man, however, though in body the captive of nature is yet free in his mind and soul, and hath the mastery over nature.

Consider: according to the law of nature man liveth, moveth and hath his being on earth, yet his soul and mind interfere with the laws thereof, and even as the bird he flieth in the air, saileth speedily upon the seas and as the fish soundeth the deep and discovereth the things therein. Verily this is a grievous defeat inflicted upon the laws of nature.

So is the power of electrical energy: this unruly violent force that cleaveth mountains is yet imprisoned by man within a globe! This is manifestly interfering with the laws of nature. Likewise man discovereth those hidden secrets of nature that in conformity with the laws thereof must remain concealed, and transfereth them from the invisible plane to the visible. This, too, is interfering with the law of nature. In the same manner he discovereth the inherent properties of things that are the secrets of nature. Also he bringeth to light the past events that have been lost to memory, and foreseeeth by his power of induction future happenings that are as yet unknown. Furthermore, communication and discovery are limited by the laws of nature to short distances, whereas man, through that inner power of his that discovereth the reality of all things, connecteth the East with the West. This, too, is interfering with the laws of nature. Similarly, according to the law of nature all shadows are fleeting, whereas man fixeth them upon the plate, and this, too, is interference with a law of nature. Ponder and reflect: all sciences, arts, crafts, inventions and discoveries, have been once the secrets of nature and in conformity with the laws thereof must remain hidden; yet man through his discovering power interfereth with the laws of nature and transfereth these hidden secrets from the invisible to the visible plane. This again is interfering with the laws of nature.

In fine, that inner faculty in man, unseen of the eye, wresteth the sword from the hands of nature, and giveth it a grievous blow. All other beings, however great, are bereft of such perfections. Man hath the powers of will and understanding, but nature hath them not. Nature is constrained, man is free. Nature is bereft of understanding, man understandeth. Nature is unaware of past events, but man is aware of them. Nature forecasteth not the future; man by his discerning power seeth that which is to come. Nature hath no consciousness of itself, man knoweth about all things.

Should any one suppose that man is but a part of the world of nature, and he being endowed with these perfections, these being but manifestations of the world of nature, and thus nature is the originator of these perfections and is not deprived therefrom, to him we make reply and say: the part dependeth upon the whole; the part cannot possess perfections whereof the whole is deprived.

By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with the other. For these diverse realities an all-unifying agency is needed that shall link them all one to the other. For instance, the various organs and members, the parts and elements, that constitute the body of man, though at variance, are yet all connected one with the other by that all-unifying agency known as the human soul, that causeth them to function in perfect harmony and with absolute regularity, thus making the continuation of life possible. The human body, however, is utterly unconscious of that all-unifying agency, and yet acteth with regularity and dischargeth its functions according to its will.

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. The consummation of this limitless universe with all its grandeur and glory hath been man himself, who in this world of being toileth and suffereth for a time, with divers ills and pains, and ultimately disintegrates, leaving no trace and no fruit after him. Were it so, there is no doubt that this infinite universe with all its perfections has ended in sham and delusion with no result, no fruit, no permanence and no effect. It would be utterly without meaning. They were thus convinced that such is not the case, that this Great Workshop with all its power, its bewildering magnificence and endless perfections, cannot eventually come to naught. That still another life should exist is thus certain, and, just as the vegetable kingdom is unaware of the world of man, so we, too, know not of the Great Life hereafter that followeth the life of man here below. Our non-comprehension of that life, however, is no proof of its non-existence. The mineral world, for instance, is utterly unaware of the world of man and cannot comprehend it, but the ignorance of a thing is no proof of its non-existence. Numerous and conclusive proofs exist that go to show that this infinite world cannot end with this human life.

Now concerning the Essence of Divinity: in truth it is on no account determined by anything apart from its own nature, and can in no wise be comprehended. For whatsoever can be conceived by man is a reality that hath limitations and is not unlimited; it is circumscribed, not all-embracing. It can be comprehended by man, and is controlled by him. Similarly it is certain that all human conceptions are contingent, not absolute; that they have a mental existence, not a material one. Moreover, differentiation of stages in the contingent world is an obstacle to understanding. How then can the contingent conceive the Reality of the absolute? As previously mentioned, differentiation of stages in the con-

tingent plane is an obstacle to understanding. Minerals, plants and animals are bereft of the mental faculties of man that discover the realities of all things, but man himself comprehendeth all the stages beneath him. Every superior stage comprehendeth that which is inferior and discovereth the reality thereof, but the inferior one is unaware of that which is superior and cannot comprehend it. Thus man cannot grasp the Essence of Divinity, but can, by his reasoning power, by observation, by his intuitive faculties and the revealing power of his faith, believe in God, discover the bounties of His Grace. He becometh certain that though the Divine Essence is unseen of the eye, and the existence of the Deity is intangible, yet conclusive spiritual proofs assert the existence of that unseen Reality. The Divine Essence as it is in itself is however beyond all description. For instance, the nature of ether is unknown, but that it existeth is certain by the effects it produceth, heat, light and electricity being the waves thereof. By these waves the existence of ether is thus proven. And as we consider the outpourings of Divine Grace we are assured of the existence of God. For instance, we observe that the existence of beings is conditioned upon the coming together of various elements and their non-existence upon the decomposition of their constituent elements. For decomposition causeth the dissociation of the various elements. Thus, as we observe the coming together of elements giveth rise to the existence of beings, and knowing that beings are infinite, they being the effect, how can the Cause be finite?

Now, formation is of three kinds and of three kinds only: accidental, necessary and voluntary. The coming together of the various constituent elements of beings cannot be accidental, for unto every effect there must be a cause. It cannot be compulsory, for then the formation must be an inherent property of the constituent parts and the inherent property of a thing can in no wise be dissociated from it, such as light that is the revealer of things, heat that causeth the expansion of elements and the solar rays which are the essential property of the sun. Thus under such circumstances the decomposition of any formation is impossible, for the inherent properties of a thing cannot be separated from it. The third

formation remaineth and that is the voluntary one, that is, an unseen force described as the Ancient Power, causeth these elements to come together, every formation giving rise to a distinct being.

As to the attributes and perfections such as will, knowledge, power and other ancient attributes that we ascribe to that Divine Reality, these are the signs that reflect the existence of beings in the visible plane and not the absolute perfections of the Divine Essence that cannot be comprehended. For instance, as we consider created things we observe infinite perfections, and the created things being in the utmost regularity and perfection we infer that the Ancient Power on whom dependeth the existence of these beings, cannot be ignorant; thus we say He is All-Knowing. It is certain that it is not impotent, it must be then All-Powerful; it is not poor, it must be All-Possessing; it is not non-existent, it must be Ever-Living. The purpose is to show that these attributes and perfections that we recount for that Universal Reality are only in order to deny imperfections, rather than to assert the perfections that the human mind can conceive. Thus we say His attributes are unknowable.

In fine, that Universal Reality with all its qualities and attributes that we recount is holy and exalted above all minds and understandings. As we, however, reflect with broad minds upon this infinite universe, we observe that motion without a motive force, and an effect without a cause are both impossible; that every being hath come to exist under numerous influences and continually undergoeth reaction. These influences, too, are formed under the action of still other influences. For instance, plants grow and flourish through the outpourings of vernal showers, whilst the cloud itself is formed under various other agencies and these agencies in their turn are reacted upon by still other agencies. For example, plants and animals grow and develop under the influence of what the philosophers of our day designate as hydrogen and oxygen and are reacted upon by the effects of these two elements; and these in turn are formed under still other influences. The same can be said of other beings whether they affect other things or be affected. Such pro-

cess of causation goes on, and to maintain that this process goes on indefinitely is manifestly absurd. Thus such a chain of causation must of necessity lead eventually to Him who is the Ever-Living, the All-Powerful, who is Self-Dependent and the Ultimate Cause. This Universal Reality cannot be sensed, it cannot be seen. It must be so of necessity, for it is All-Embracing, not circumscribed, and such attributes qualify the effect and not the cause.

And as we reflect, we observe that man is like unto a tiny organism contained within a fruit; this fruit hath developed out of the blossom, the blossom hath grown out of the tree, the tree is sustained by the sap, and the sap formed out of earth and water. How then can this tiny organism comprehend the nature of the garden, conceive of the gardener and comprehend his being? That is manifestly impossible. Should that organism understand and reflect, it would observe that this garden, this tree, this blossom, this fruit would in no wise have come to exist by themselves in such order and perfection. Similarly the wise and reflecting soul will know of a certainty that this infinite universe with all its grandeur and perfect order could not have come to exist by itself.

Similarly in the world of being there exist forces unseen of the eye, such as the force of ether previously mentioned, that cannot be sensed, that cannot be seen. However, from the effects it produceth, that is from its waves and vibrations, light, heat, electricity appear and are made evident. In like manner is the power of growth, of feeling, of understanding, of thought, of memory, of imagination and of discernment; all these inner faculties are unseen of the eye and cannot be sensed, yet all are evident by the effects they produce.

Now as to the infinite Power that knoweth no limitations; limitation itself proveth the existence of the unlimited, for the limited is known through the unlimited, just as weakness itself proveth the existence of power, ignorance the existence of knowledge, poverty the existence of wealth. Without wealth there would be no poverty, without knowledge no ignorance, without light no darkness. Darkness itself is a proof of the existence of light for darkness is the absence of light.

Now concerning nature, it is but the essential properties and the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things. And though these infinite realities are diverse in their character yet they are in the utmost harmony and closely connected together. As one's vision is broadened and the matter observed carefully, it will be made certain that every reality is but an essential requisite of other realities. Thus to connect and harmonize these diverse and infinite realities an all-unifying Power is necessary, that every part of existent being may in perfect order discharge its own function. Consider the body of man, and let the part be an indication of the whole. Consider how these diverse parts and members of the human body are closely connected and harmoniously united one with the other. Every part is the essential requisite of all other parts and has a function by itself. It is the mind that is the all-unifying agency that so uniteth all the component parts one with the other that each dischargeth its specific function in perfect order, and thereby co-operation and reaction are made possible. All parts function under certain laws that are essential to existence. Should that all-unifying agency that directeth all these parts be harmed in any way there is no doubt that the constituent parts and members will cease functioning properly; and though that all-unifying agency in the temple of man be not sensed or seen and the reality thereof be unknown, yet by its effects it manifesteth itself with the greatest power.

Thus it hath been proven and made evident that these infinite beings in this wondrous universe will discharge their functions properly only when directed and controlled by that Universal Reality, so that order may be established in the world. For example, interaction and co-operation between the constituent parts of the human body are evident and indisputable, yet this does not suffice; an all-unifying agency is necessary that shall direct and control the component parts, so that these through interaction and co-operation may discharge in perfect order their necessary and respective functions.

You are well aware, praised be the Lord, that both interaction and co-operation are evident and proven amongst all beings, whether large

or small. In the case of large bodies interaction is as manifest as the sun, whilst in the case of small bodies, though interaction be unknown, yet the part is an indication of the whole. All these interactions therefore are connected with that all-embracing power which is their pivot, their centre, their source and their motive power.

For instance, as we have observed, co-operation among the constituent parts of the human body is clearly established, and these parts and members render services unto all the component parts of the body. For instance, the hand, the foot, the eye, the ear, the mind, the imagination all help the various parts and members of the human body, but all these interactions are linked by an unseen, all-embracing power, that causeth these interactions to be produced with perfect regularity. This is the inner faculty of man, that is his spirit and his mind, both of which are invisible.

In like manner consider machinery and workshops and the interaction existing among the various component parts and sections, and how connected they are one with the other. All these relations and interactions, however, are connected with a central power which is their motive force, their pivot and their source. This central power is either the power of steam or the skill of the mastermind.

It hath therefore been made evident and proved that interaction, co-operation and interrelation amongst beings are under the direction and will of a motive Power which is the origin, the motive force and the pivot of all interactions in the universe.

Likewise every arrangement and formation that is not perfect in its order we designate as accidental, and that which is orderly, regular, perfect in its relations and every part of which is in its proper place and is the essential requisite of the other constituent parts, this we call a composition formed through will and knowledge. There is no doubt that these infinite beings and the association of these diverse elements arranged in countless forms must have proceeded from a Reality that could in no wise be bereft of will or understanding. This is clear and

proven to the mind and no one can deny it. It is not meant, however, that that Universal Reality or the attributes thereof have been comprehended. Neither its Essence nor its true attributes hath any one comprehended. We maintain, however, that these infinite beings, these necessary relations, this perfect arrangement must of necessity have proceeded from a source that is not bereft of will and understanding, and this infinite composition cast into infinite forms must have been caused by an all-embracing Wisdom. This none can dispute save he that is obstinate and stubborn, and denieth the clear and unmistakable evidence, and becometh the object of the blessed Verse: 'They are deaf, they are dumb, they are blind and shall return no more'.

Now regarding the question whether the faculties of the mind and the human soul are one and the same. These faculties are but the inherent properties of the soul, such as the power of imagination, of thought, of understanding; powers that are the essential requisites of the reality of man, even as the solar ray is the inherent property of the sun. The temple of man is like unto a mirror, his soul is as the sun, and his mental faculties even as the rays that emanate from that source of light. The ray may cease to fall upon the mirror, but it can in no wise be dissociated from the sun.

In short, the point is this, that the world of man is supernatural in its relation to the vegetable kingdom, though in reality it is not so. Relatively to the plant, the reality of man, his power of hearing and sight, are all supernatural, and for the plant to comprehend that reality and the nature of the powers of man's mind is impossible. In like manner for man to comprehend the Divine Essence and the nature of the great Hereafter is in no wise possible. The merciful outpourings of that Divine Essence, however, are vouchsafed unto all beings and it is incumbent upon man to ponder in his heart upon the effusions of the Divine Grace, the soul being counted as one, rather than upon the Divine Essence itself. This is the utmost limit for human understanding. As it hath previously been mentioned, these attributes and perfections that we recount of the Divine Essence, these we have derived from the existence and

observation of beings, and it is not that we have comprehended the essence and perfection of God. When we say that the Divine Essence understandeth and is free, we do not mean that we have discovered the Divine Will and Purpose, but rather that we have acquired knowledge of them through the Divine Grace revealed and manifested in the realities of things.

Now concerning our social principles, namely the teachings of His Holiness Bahá’u’lláh spread far and wide fifty years ago, they verily comprehend all other teachings. It is clear and evident that without these teachings progress and advancement for mankind are in no wise possible. Every community in the world findeth in these Divine Teachings the realization of its highest aspirations. These teachings are even as the tree that beareth the best fruits of all trees. Philosophers, for instance, find in these heavenly teachings the most perfect solution of their social problems, and similarly a true and noble exposition of matters that pertain to philosophical questions. In like manner men of faith behold the reality of religion manifestly revealed in these heavenly teachings, and clearly and conclusively prove them to be the real and true remedy for the ills and infirmities of all mankind. Should these sublime teachings be diffused, mankind shall be freed from all perils, from all chronic ills and sicknesses. In like manner are the Bahá’í economic principles the embodiment of the highest aspirations of all wage-earning classes and of economists of various schools.

In short, all sections and parties have their aspirations realized in the teachings of Bahá’u’lláh. As these teachings are declared in churches, in mosques and in other places of worship, whether those of the followers of Buddha or of Confucius, in political circles or amongst materialists, all shall bear witness that these teachings bestow a fresh life upon mankind and constitute the immediate remedy for all the ills of social life. None can find fault with any of these teachings, nay rather, once declared they will all be acclaimed, and all will confess their vital necessity, exclaiming, ‘Verily this is the truth and naught is there beside the truth but manifest error.’

The Kingdom of Existence

In conclusion, these few words are written, and unto everyone they will be a clear and conclusive evidence of the truth. Ponder them in thine heart. The will of every sovereign prevaieth 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 manhckind. 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.

The Glory of Glories rest upon thee.

Haifa, 21 September 1921.

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**Transcripts of the
Talks of
Dr. ‘Alí Murád Dávúdí**

Section One

A General Study of the Contents of the Tablet to Dr. Forel

The Tablet from the pen of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to Dr. Forel contains a wide range of subjects on divine philosophy presented comprehensively within a few pages, thus allowing for in-depth commentaries.

The Holy Writings—often in the form of letters—are literary and spiritual addresses of a style characteristic of the Prophets and the Messengers of God. Commentaries made or written on them, however, alter the style of a literary address, categorizing the subjects and imbuing them with a different character proportionate to the limited understanding and comprehension of man. In other words, such commentaries transform the language of Revelation into a language current amongst men, one that is within the grasp of human comprehension. Such a procedure undoubtedly destroys the fullness, completeness and especially the elegance and charm of those Writings, for the life of any entity depends on its remaining intact as a whole. Once the wholeness is broken into components and when those components in turn are disassembled and when each broken part is separately analysed in detail, the original life is extinguished. The end product may take on a simpler form comprehensible by and tangible to the senses, but it is tantamount to removing the petals of a flower and studying the petals or dissecting a bird and examining the organs and then trying to reassemble the parts in a

renewed combination. Such a process may well increase our limited understanding of the flower or the bird but, at the same time, it destroys the spirit of the life that had existed in each one. Neither the flower will ever be the original flower nor will the bird ever be the same bird that had once lived. Perhaps there is no other alternative and this is something we do in the context of study and analysis.

The central issue with respect to the Bahá'í Writings is that such a process must be only descriptive in nature and never take on an interpretative or expounding aspect. Considering the Tablet to Dr. Forel in such light discloses numerous subjects therein, each presented from a specific point of view and ultimately aiming to fulfil a precise objective: to demonstrate the spiritual aspects of existence, and to refute the notion that the world of existence can be reduced to and confined within the world of matter or nature. It is with this sole aim in mind that various topics are presented therein, in order to answer the questions and dissipate the doubts of this noble Swiss scholar who accepted the Bahá'í Faith by way of his study of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and the Tablets of the Master, and thus combined his scientific rank with spiritual exaltation.

The Tablet to Dr. Forel contains a number of subjects which eventually merge into a single subject. Among them is a reference to philosophy and wisdom, and a vital elucidation of the view presented in the Bahá'í Writings about this vast topic. Bahá'u'lláh, in His Writings, has encouraged the acquisition and study of those sciences conducive to the well-being of men and the production of good results. He further cautions His followers against those academic pursuits as begin and end in words alone, a lifetime dedicated to which would still attain nowhere;*

* T.N.: "What Bahá'u'lláh meant primarily with 'sciences that begin and end in words' are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth." (From a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi, 30 November 1932), and, "Philosophy... is certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-
../..

such as the practices of scholastic training whereby many lives were spent on the acquisition of theosophy* but with no productive fruits.¹³ Similarly, in some of His Talks ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions certain philosophical views and points out the flaws in them. Such references may lead to the erroneous assumption that the Bahá’ís scorn philosophy and philosophers or refute the science of metaphysical abstractions.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá, early in the Tablet to Dr. Forel, dissipates this possible misgiving. He addressed the misconceived idea that the Bahá’í Faith disdains philosophy and rejects philosophers, and further explains that the philosophers whose ideas are not accepted are the narrow-minded materialists. Open-minded philosophers are highly extolled, among them He names Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, whom He clearly considers worthy of esteem and the highest praise. While the naming of the above-mentioned philosophers could lead to the deduction that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá acknowledges only the deistic philosophers, rejecting materialistic philosophers, He clarifies that that is not the case. He extols the moderate materialistic philosophers whose criteria of knowledge are not confined solely to that which can be perceived by the senses, rather He adds that the world of humanity is in need of those great thinkers and their knowledge.

Another subject presented and that must be addressed coherently is the relationship between the senses, the mind and the soul. The question is whether our senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste or any other sensory perception are to be considered the only means of understanding and cognition, or if we can rely upon another faculty of perception apart from our senses as a means of comprehension.

At this stage ‘Abdu’l-Bahá presents the subject of the mind, defining its nature and its functioning. He emphasises that it is the mind that

splitting is meant, not a sound branch of learning like philosophy.” (Excerpt from a letter written in 1947 on behalf of Shoghi Effendi)

* *Hikmat* is translated at times as philosophy, as theosophy and also as wisdom. See Glossary.

discovers unknown realities. This same topic is also explained in *Some Answered Questions** where ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that the inherent property of the reasoning power of the human mind is the ability to use known realities to discover unknown truths—a power that all other beings are deprived of.¹⁴ By penetrating the mysteries of the unknown, the human mind gains knowledge of nature, understands its laws, and can thus control nature. With that understanding and use of the laws of nature itself, man controls and interferes with those laws. He alters nature, he gains mastery over nature; in the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: ...*he wresteth the sword from the hands of nature, and giveth it a grievous blow.*[†]

Given that the mind is described as an inherent property of the human soul, it remains to be seen what are the essential characteristics possessed by other beings—minerals, plants and animals—and the inherent properties attributed to them. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá then states the essential characteristics of each of these planes of existence and acknowledges the existence of a spirit and life proportionate to the requirements of each plane or level. In the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in this Tablet as well as His other Writings, that spirit is regarded as the motive power or animating principle for the properties inherent in each level of created things, and is the cause for the distinction of one plane from the other.¹⁵ While within the mineral, vegetable, and animal categories of beings, this animating principle might be described as nothing other than the organic composition constituting that being, in the case of humans, the power of the mind becomes manifest, a power that must be regarded both as abstract and non-material.

Within the various planes of existence, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá considers the mind to be unique to the human spirit, and its distinguishing feature. He

* T.N.: Following the new English translation of *Some Answered Questions* in 2014, the excerpts quoted from that book have been updated accordingly.

† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel*, page 11.

draws attention to the distinction between mind and spirit, thereby clarifying any uncertainty or misconception with respect to the notion that mind and spirit are one and the same.

Clearly, the power of growth is not identical to the plant itself but rather is one quality or feature of the vegetable kingdom. Likewise respiration and alimentation are not tantamount to the plant but are two of the properties of the plant. Reproduction is not the same as the vegetable kingdom but is one of the properties and features of the plant. When we consider all these distinguishing yet inter-related features of the plant, the existence of an animating source for the plant must be acknowledged—a source that causes and produces the above distinctive qualities. This animating source is called vegetable spirit.

Following the same principle, it is meaningless to say that the animal is identical to sensation, or that animal is the same as movement; rather, we say that the animal is a being having senses and mobility. The all-unifying agency that links sensation and movement emanates from an animating source commonly called the animal or the animal spirit. At this point it is worth mentioning that unlike the power of the mind, the animated force or the “spirit” mentioned in relation to the vegetable and animal kingdoms is not deemed to be abstract or un-compounded.

Likewise, in man, mind and human spirit are not one and the same. The mind, like other qualities such as free will, love, and conscience, emanate from an all-unifying agency that serves as the motive power of these human distinguishing features. This motive power is called the human spirit.

The meaning of spirit is thus made clear. In effect, spirit is the animating power that brings forth and empowers those inter-related properties exclusive to a specific plane of existence.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that the minerals are also endowed with the spirit of life. He defines life to be the existence of interaction and cooperation among the constituent parts and members, resulting in the for-

mation of a visible entity with its own specific characteristics and qualities. In that sense all beings in the universe are to be regarded as endowed with spirit.

A further subject is the level of consciousness in the various planes of existence. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that each plane is endowed with its own different level of consciousness or awareness. An inferior level is incapable of comprehending the nature of the plane superior to it, that is to say, every lower realm is unable to fathom the nature and qualities of those above it.

Just as the mineral world is bereft of the ability to comprehend the vegetable kingdom, the latter, in turn, is incapable of comprehending the animal realm (here, the term 'comprehending' with respect to the mineral and the vegetable is used allegorically). In other words, the plant does possess mineral existence within it but the mineral does not possess vegetable life within it. Similarly, the animal possesses the characteristics of the vegetable kingdom within it, although the plant is bereft of the qualities of animal life. Furthermore, the animal is conscious of the vegetable kingdom, due to possessing the characteristics of the latter, but fails to grasp the nature of man. The animal simply possesses animal perception through its senses of sight, hearing, but is bereft of the reasoning power of the human mind which is man's distinguishing feature. Likewise, man is incapable of comprehending and understanding the reality above its own, that is, he cannot fathom the reality, the nature, the essence of God.

It is at this point where 'Abdu'l-Bahá objects to or, we can even say, refutes the views of materialists of narrow vision, defined as the philosophers who merely acknowledge the existence of the natural world exclusively perceived by the senses and regard all else as non-existent. For them, existence is synonymous with that which is perceivable, and they view existence as limited to that which can be perceived. Therefore, they recognize that nature exists because it can be perceived but see no reason to accept the existence of any phenomena beyond that which is not perceivable and cannot be experienced by the five senses.

The materialists of narrow vision whose theories are discarded by 'Abdu'l-Bahá consist of those philosophers whose criterion of knowledge is confined to that which can be perceived by the senses. 'Abdu'l-Bahá, explicitly states that any criticism of philosophical views is purely confined to the theories of this category of materialist philosophers.

Were we to limit existence only to that which can be sensed, we would find ourselves in a very difficult situation. All inner feelings would have to be denied and all conceptual and abstract notions rejected and all reasoning power discarded, even the intangible mind itself. Abstract and unperceivable universals would be refuted, and the existence of realities in nature which cannot be sensed but whose existence we affirm through the power of intellect would be denied.

Many elements of science are deemed to be part of natural matters although they are not perceivable by the senses or have not yet been discerned. Their existence, however, is posited through our knowledge of science which in turn derives from the reasoning power of the mind. These assertions, however, may change over time as the judgements made by the mind are reviewed. They may be overturned and rejected and replaced by new ones.

In brief, an essential quality of the mind is to discover universal unknowns through knowledge of certain known facts, without the particular unknown being perceived by the five senses. Scientists have always worked this way. For example, an ultraviolet cannot be seen but we assert its existence through a scientific judgement based on a logical reasoning of the mind. Through scientific reasoning we acknowledge that it must exist. We learn of the cause through its effects. The cause itself may be unperceivable by the senses but its effect can be perceived. Consider how in the past, to explain certain phenomena such as the transmission of light waves in space, scientists presumed the existence of ether. Ether itself was not perceivable by the senses but its existence was deduced as necessary to justify or rationalize certain phenomena. At a later stage, however, ether was found to be inadequate for validating another class of phenomena, so its existence was discarded.

The point is that acknowledging the existence of an unseen and unperceived source (be it ether or the likes of it) to rationalize and explain the existence of certain tangible phenomenon has always been necessary in science. Thus, in His Tablet, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá mentions the power of ether that was accepted by the science of that time. It is possible that such natural phenomena will be perceived by the senses in the future, and equally possible it will not. The main issue is that via the concrete, the existence of that which cannot be perceived is deduced, justified and comprehended. We thus conclude that mere reliance on the senses is inadequate, and he who limits himself thereby is of narrow vision and cannot be regarded as a competent model to follow.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá draws a clear distinction between narrow-minded and moderate materialistic philosophers, so it would be helpful here to define the boundaries of the material world or what we refer to as nature. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá twice describes nature and the boundaries thereof through a definition of nature in the Tablet to Dr. Forel: *By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things.** This definition represents what today’s philosophy and science call phenomenon.

Nature is the realm of phenomena (perceivable aspects or appearances). The inherent properties derived from the reality of a thing are not reality itself, but rather, are phenomena of that reality derived from it. These properties are inevitably inter-connected through certain necessary relations. Nature is the realm of these relations and science consists of their study, yet it has no access to the reality of these phenomena. The person who studies and comprehends nature is rendering a noble service, and the person who discovers the inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things and who then compiles scientific knowledge performs a magnificent task. Conversely, the person who asserts that all existence is simply confined to those necessary relations derived from the realities of things is a narrow-minded materialist, as such

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel*, p. 12.

assertion contradicts and diverges from the very basis of every kind of science, namely the principle of causality.

Every phenomenon must have a motive power. All inter-related inherent properties must have a cause. Were the principle of causality to be set aside, science itself would have to be discarded. Thus it is that 'Abdu'l-Bahá refers to the principle of causality in the Tablet to Dr. Forel. From this principle is derived the existence of the intangible realities which are the sources and causes of the essential and perceivable properties of concrete and tangible phenomena.

At this stage, the proof of the existence of God is presented to the dogmatic class of materialist philosophers. Broad-minded philosophers, even those who follow the materialist school of thought, do not require proof for the existence of God, as the inner and intuitive feeling is sufficient proof for them. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states that arguments and proofs for the existence of God are necessary for weak souls.¹⁶ He defines weak souls as none other than the dogmatic materialist philosophers who consider all existence to be limited to sensory perception.

'Abdu'l-Bahá presents certain proofs for the existence of God, stating the only three possible kinds of formation: accidental, necessary, and voluntary. His rational arguments lead to the conclusion that the integration of the various constituent elements of the world must be regarded as a product of the Will of God.

'Abdu'l-Bahá asserts that the attribute of 'Will' and all the other qualities ascribed to God are characteristics arrived at through analogy to His creation. Otherwise, His absolute perfections can never be determined. This is an essential facet of the Bahá'í belief.

'Abdu'l-Bahá then explains that the existence of any motion necessarily requires the existence of a prior motive force or cause. At the same time, He emphatically and explicitly asserts that this process of causation is not indefinite. In brief, every motion or effect necessarily requires a motive force, but the chain of prior occurrences is not indefinite. As such, a motive force not itself motivated by a prior cause must exist.

The Kingdom of Existence

‘Abdu’l-Bahá adduces the proof that everything in this world is limited, and that that limitation itself compels us to acknowledge the existence of an Infinite and Unconstrained Being. That is unless the mind rationally allows for the notion of infinity, the concept of limitation will be an unreasonable notion according to the logic current amongst men.

This was a summary analysis of the general topics contained in this lofty Tablet. If time allows, I hope we will have a chance to complement this section with two other sessions on the topics of ‘the mind and its relation to the human spirit’, and ‘the proofs of the existence of God’.

Section Two

The Mind and its Relation to the Human Spirit

In the previous session, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet to Dr. Forel was read, a brief description of the contents was given and it was decided that a couple of its themes be studied in more detail. Among the numerous topics treated in this Tablet, one that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá chose to discuss repeatedly throughout is the subject of nature, defining it as *“those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things”*.

Reflection upon this definition, reiterated in several of His other Writings,¹⁷ highlights several issues. First of all, by stating that nature consists of necessary relations or the properties derived from the realities of things, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá distinguishes nature from the reality of things. Moreover, upon applying the same definition to religion, He again separates and differentiates the nature of religion from its reality. As such, the above definition contains an aspect of religion often referred to as ‘Divine Law’ [*Shari`at*].¹⁸

The nature of a thing is derived from its reality, it is not the reality itself. Once the nature of an object is derived from and generated by the reality of that object, it becomes manifest in the form of the properties of that object. These properties become necessarily and essentially inter-related. Consequently, it is evident that nature is the realm of properties, and at the same time it is the realm of the relations among these properties. And though these necessary relations are diverse in their

character yet they are essentially and necessarily interrelated. The collection of these necessary relations form the sciences of the world. It must be noted, however, that the study of these relations, known as sciences, is itself confined within the boundaries of necessity and constraint, commonly referred to as ‘scientific determinism’.* This term may be inaccurate and ineloquent, with the term “necessity” perhaps being a more suitable choice, but we might better understand it if we say that ‘scientific determinism’ points to the existing necessity for relationships between the inherent properties of things which, in turn are derived from their realities. We can then conclude that the reality of a thing is not bound by such determinism. In the case of man and the human soul, this reality can even be combined with will power, for the necessity inherent to the relations derived from the reality of things does not imply that those realities are bereft of will or purpose. This is true especially with respect to Him Who is the Inmost Reality of all things, that may be regarded to be identical to His own Will.

This, in brief, is a definition of nature that leads to the concept of the supernatural, or that which transcends nature. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides a subtle description of the supernatural and the relativity of that term. After defining nature as “*the inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things*”, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that the reality of a plant can be considered to be supernatural or transcendental with respect to the physical qualities outwardly perceived in the plant. The colour of a plant, a property of the mineral world can be seen; moreover its fragrance, which is also a property of the mineral realm, can be sensed; the perceived height and width of a plant are also properties pertaining to the mineral kingdom. These outward properties that are all inter-related, form the ‘nature’ of the plant which is distinct from its reality, which in turn can be referred to as ‘vegetable life’ or ‘vegetable

* T.N.: *Jabr-i-‘Ilmí*: Also referred to as causal or nomological determinism: The notion that every event in nature is the result of and can be explained in terms of antecedent or pre-existing causes or conditions, i.e. that every event has a sufficient cause. This causal theory leads to the branch of determinism classified as scientific.

spirit'. Even if we do not choose to consider the vegetable life as an abstract entity, that is to say, if we simply regard it as the animating force that produces these qualities, that vegetable life or spirit would still be considered supernatural or transcendental, in comparison to the abovementioned physical or mineral properties manifest in the plant.

By the same logic, the qualities physically manifest in the animal constitute only the nature of the animal, not its reality. The reality of the animal spirit cannot be fathomed beyond the perceivable qualities which are in fact properties of the vegetable kingdom. In other words, the reality of the animal is hidden behind the veil of its nature and, as such, can be regarded as supernatural in comparison to the attributes discernible in the animal.

The same logic holds with respect to the human spirit in relation to the human body and with respect to the properties of the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms manifest within the human body. The human spirit, hidden beyond comprehension, can be regarded as a supernatural entity with respect to the body. Beyond that we arrive at the 'supernatural' in its absolute sense, and that exceeds all natures and transcends all realities. In other words, it is the innermost Essence and Reality of all realities.

To summarize, if the animal spirit is a reality from which outward properties, to which we assign the term 'animal nature', are derived then we can refer to that reality as one which transcends the animal nature, in other words, as the 'supernatural'. Similarly, if the human spirit is a reality beyond the physical properties we refer to as our human nature, then we can consider that spirit as a reality which transcends those physical properties, or refer to it as supernatural. Likewise, there is a single and universal reality beyond and above all these realities and from which all these others have acquired their share of reality. That Absolute Supernatural is the 'Word' that we regard as Infinite* and Limitless.

* *Infinite* here is meant absolute perfection. It does not imply infinity as a natural perceivable dimension for which we can imagine no limit to its continuation.

Thus we see how knowledge of nature and the inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things can lead to the knowledge of the existence of a reality above and superior to nature, namely, the supernatural.

At this stage, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá reasons that such a realization is based on the principle of causality—that is the rational principle, upon which science is based and by which we are compelled to attribute a cause to every event. Adherents of naturalism* typically pose questions, in the name of science, about the underlying cause and reason for the existence of things, because science necessitates a reason and a cause for every existence. Rejecting this principle is tantamount to rejecting and refuting all science. Any scientist, and particularly any adherent to the materialist school of naturalism, who claims to base his or her knowledge on scientific discoveries must inevitably accept the principle of causality as an outward reality and objective fact.

Philosophers regarded as idealists† (such as Immanuel Kant) reject the view that the principle of causality is merely a notion originating from our minds and rather regard causality as having an external existence and reality. Therefore, when they search for a cause and purpose for all things, and when they further acknowledge that essential relations exist between things, they cannot then deny the existence of a cause and purpose for essential relations. That is to say, if on the one hand they seek a cause for every effect and a reason for every phenomenon, and if they label these causal laws “science”, when faced with the ultimate question of the source of all those laws and relationships, they cannot reject the existence of an ultimate cause merely on the grounds that this would require the acknowledgement of an ‘intangible’ reality. This would be a refutation of the principle of causality which underlies all their logical reasoning. It is therefore evident that the scientific principle of causality

* T.N.: Naturalism: The idea that only natural laws operate in and govern the world.

† T.N.: Idealism: The belief that reality is fundamentally a mental and immaterial concept.

requires the acknowledgement of the existence of realities higher and beyond the nature of phenomena; these realities of course will vary according to differences in the stages or planes of existence.

Such variations of stages become evident upon the appearance of new properties in certain levels which did not exist at the inferior one. For example, when we advance from the mineral to the vegetable kingdom, we detect a new phenomenon in the plant known as life and we perceive its effects in growth, reproduction, respiration, and alimentation which did not exist in the mineral plane. Clearly beings vary according to the levels of their existence. The plant contains within it properties from an inferior stage, namely the mineral, while it contains new properties not existing in the mineral kingdom.

In a separate discourse¹⁹ on the subject of 'materialists', an explanation was given of their fundamental view proposing that this is that major and sudden change known as qualitative leaps in nature, whereby new properties appear within matter. This raised the question for them of whether these new properties had inherently existed in the inferior stage; and if so, had they been latent to suddenly appear when the propitious time and conditions came about. According to such a view, the mineral kingdom would have to be regarded as alive an animate, inasmuch as in the course of the stages of evolution, life itself, the reasoning power of the mind, and the soul, all gradually and progressively are manifested from that original existence. As such, we would have to acknowledge the mineral kingdom as a living entity consisting of a soul and a mind from the beginning, albeit a life, soul and mind latent and concealed within that mineral stage. As per Hegel's ideology, they would be dormant and hidden, as an idea or an intellect awaiting the necessary conditions and time to appear and materialize. Accordingly, materialism then transforms into idealism; but this is not the time and place to treat this subject in detail.

The topic relevant to our discussion today is the evident fact that certain properties will always appear in the higher plane or realm of

existence, which had not existed in the lower one. For example, properties and qualities such as voluntary movement and the senses exist in the animal but did not exist in the inferior vegetable realm. The intentional movement observed in the animal does not exist in the plant. Furthermore, in man, we see a quality not present in the lower realm, namely, the sum of the powers or abilities called collectively the rational faculty, also referred to as the reasoning or the discerning power.

These abilities, manifested through qualities such as understanding, volition, love and reason point to the existence of a reality above human nature. In relative terms, that reality may be referred to as transcendental or supernatural. That is, certain qualities or essentially related properties exist in man which inherently appear and become mutually connected, allowing for the emergence of certain characteristics. For example, the ability to infer and discover the unknown from a known concept is developed; the formation of notions; the passing of judgements and conceptualization; and actions which evince the existence of a reality above the nature of man. As mentioned earlier, these properties are non-existent in the inferior animal level. While animals do possess a certain kind of intellect or cognition in the ordinary sense of the word, especially in the higher species such as apes, it never rises to the ability to conceptualize, to reason deductively, or to extrapolate to the unknown from the known. The capacity to apply such cognition under general or specific circumstances is absent in the animal. Were we to consider that type of limited animal cognition to be the same as the reasoning power of the human mind, and were we to view the former as the seed that holds within itself the potentialities of the latter, then we would return to the same issue mentioned above, namely, acknowledgment of the existence of the soul in the animal, albeit in a latent and dormant phase. By the same logic, we would have to acknowledge the existence of latent senses and voluntary movement in the plant, even if not manifest. Similarly, we would have to admit to the existence of the qualities of life in the mineral kingdom. In short, we would have to re-

gard all created things as being endowed with life and intellectual consciousness. This is contrary to the explicit viewpoint of naturalists and they, of course, would never agree to such a notion.

Thus, we see that man possesses certain properties or characteristics with inherent inter-related relations manifested at a higher level. The combination of these essential relationships in man contains properties different from those existing in the animal. While the exigencies of man's animal nature would have caused him to remain a captive of the natural world and to have acted bounded by nature, these properties set man apart in a station and position above that of the world of nature, they allow him to rule over nature, to control and interfere with the laws of nature, and consequently, alter the course of nature. This is one of the characteristics of man, a trait totally absent in the animal.

It must be noted, however, that to say that man rules or has mastery over the natural world and he has the ability to interfere with the laws of nature, does not mean he disregards or ignores the natural world but rather, he sees nature clearly, studies it closely, understands it well and then by means of that knowledge and through the application of the laws of nature, partakes of its benefits. In other words, unlike the animal which must submit to nature, man is not passive, he does not wait to be acted upon according to the course of nature. Contrary to the animal, man understands the world of nature, he immerses himself in it, he comprehends the essential relations governing the reality of things —relations which in a sense form the world of nature. As such, he can alter the course of the relations so as to rule over nature. As stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, according to the laws of nature, man would have had to live and move on earth like the animal, yet by using natural laws, he forces nature to enable him to fly even as a bird, for example. He thereby liberates and frees himself from of the captivity of nature. This liberty is the result of the knowledge of nature and its rules which man can obtain via an ability manifested in him, enabling him to discover

the unknown through investigating the known. He is endowed with faculty to discover, to discern, to reason and draw conclusions based upon known elements which lead him to knowledge of the unknown.

Consequently, man's whole life consists of a series of developments resulting from his will power, which is the product of his mind. This new ('new' in comparison to previous levels of life) feature in man is a clear indication of the existence of a distinctive and evident reality within him. It indicates that beyond his perceivable nature (that is to say those characteristics manifest and discernible in him), there must exist an unperceived reality which is the source and cause of the expression of that outward nature. That hidden reality is referred to as the human spirit.

Of course every reality has its own expression and manifestation; especially when such reality is purely abstract. For example, vegetable life is not tangible yet its inter-related properties such as reproduction, growth, respiration and alimentation are tangible and perceivable. Based on these perceivable features, it can be deduced that a vegetable life or spirit exists, even though unperceivable to the senses other than by its outward properties. Such deduction is based on the principle of causality. Otherwise we could not conceive or visualize it and without conceptualization or visualization any philosophical question or answer would be futile. We thus conclude that vegetable life exists, even though we cannot perceive it in a tangible and visible form other than through its outward properties.

Similarly, upon perceiving movement and the power of the senses in the animal, we conclude that the animal is endowed with a reality which is the source and cause of those senses and voluntary movements. That hidden reality we call the animal spirit. To sum up, the animal spirit, despite being intangible and even though no sign of it can be perceived other than the senses or movements of the animal, exists. In light of the principle of causality and in view of the perceivable nature the existence of an intangible reality must be accepted. If the former is known as the animal nature, the latter must be referred to as the superior or higher

nature, more commonly known as supernatural or transcendental. We should not be apprehensive of being branded as irrational or even superstitious by the use of this word.

What convincingly proves the existence of the human spirit in man and leads us to deduce that a reality beyond his nature does exist, is that man can discover the unknown, rule over nature, resist or control the forces of nature, and use nature to build tools that overcome the rule of nature. Thus, in relative terms, man transcends nature.

The all-unifying agency that links together these perceivable essential relations in the human being is what we call the human mind. It is the power that discovers the unknown from the known, the power that forms universal abstract notions, in other words, the power that attends to matters in a way unattainable by the animal. The mind employs all the mineral, vegetable, and animal properties found within man to manifest that from which the reality of man's existence is derived. Therefore the mind is a bestowal emanating from the human spirit, with the ability to engage the characteristics of human life, by drawing on nature as well as all the inferior planes to that life.

In brief, we can say that the mind is what is referred to as the 'discerning faculty', also known as the 'power of discovery' (*quviyyih káshifih*), or in older terms as 'the power of comprehension of universals'. These terms represent the same concept, because discovering the unknown from the known requires a process of reasoning or deduction which itself is an abstract notion. That is, discovering the unknown through the things known to us can only take place if abstract concepts are formed in the mind. Universal or abstract concepts are an essential prerequisite to such a reasoning process which leads to the discovery of the unknown from the known.

While the term 'discerning faculty' used by 'Abdu'l-Bahá and the corresponding term 'power of comprehension of universals' used by early scholars, both refer to the mind, nevertheless, the expression 'discerning faculty' or 'power' is more comprehensive than 'knowledge of

universals' because the essential function of the mind is to reason and discover the unknown through the known, which is done through an abstract, uncompounded or 'simple'* process. The mind then analyses and evaluates this abstract concept and composes a structure through a variety of notions.²⁰ As such, the mind is one of the signs and evidences of the spirit. We may even say that it is the most comprehensive evidence of the existence of the human spirit and is conducive to other signs and evidences, most importantly it is one that relates and unifies all the others.

The mind is not the same as the human spirit, in the same way that neither sensation nor mobility were deemed to be the same as the animal spirit or animal life but rather they were viewed as signs and traces of that life. Similarly, we do not regard growth or respiration to be the same as the vegetative spirit or vegetable life but rather signs and evidences of that life. The principle of causality compels such an assumption. Likewise, we cannot regard matter to be the same as friction, nor can we deem matter to be the same as the colour perceived from it or the taste detected from it, rather these are all signs or phenomena indicating that a body or matter exists or, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá states it, they provide the evidence of the existence of physical life.

Evidently, to consider the reality of an entity—at whatever stage of existence that it may be—to be confined to the properties manifest within it, would necessitate the acceptance of the doctrine of phenomenalism[†] as set forth by the British philosopher, David Hume. Thereby, no existence other than the outward phenomena would be acknowledged, and no kind of reality would be admitted as the source of the existing phenomena. Not even materialists accept such a notion.

* T.N.: The term 'simple' here is used in the context of anything that has no proper parts or sub-sections (See Glossary).

† T.N.: 'Phenomenalism': The doctrine that all knowledge comes from sense perception, and that physical objects do not exist as things in themselves but only as perceptual phenomena.

Extending the same proposition to human life leads us to conclude that upon observing additional evidence and characteristics of a particular life in man, a distinct reality in him, a reality which is the motive power of this particular or specific human nature and the source of these inner qualities, must be acknowledged. This reality is called the human spirit.

For some, this specific human life, this particular quality emanating from the human spirit, the functions appearing from the human spirit, or the all-unifying agency of the spirit's varied functions, is what is called the 'mind' or 'human intellect'. As such, the mind or the intellect is different from the human spirit and the difference lies in this: The mind is the power of the human spirit, the mind is the function of the human spirit, and it is that which emanates from the human spirit. In the same way that sensation is derived from the animal spirit, the mind is derived from the human spirit and it functions through the senses.

Here a difference of interpretation may exist from that of the Peripatetic* philosophers of old, who believed that the human spirit, despite being incorporeal and abstract, functions through the body or through matter; but regarded both the mind and its functions as immaterial and abstract. The validity of this view depends on regarding the mind as a partial and finite entity, or simply as one of the many functions of the brain—one particularly apparent in the human spirit; it further depends on the assumption that as the mind functions through universal or abstract notions, it would not outwardly employ the senses. But the fact remains that the human spirit is endowed with all the properties of the inferior planes (vegetative and animal spirits). Furthermore, the human spirit appears in man as a separate and unique entity (distinguished by its rational faculty or the intellect). It therefore follows that the mind employs all the mineral, vegetative, and animal faculties including the human senses.

* T.N.: 'Peripatetic' belongs to a school of philosophy based on the teachings of Aristotle (See Glossary.).

The above statement is not necessarily at variance with the views of the early philosophers, because when the mind employs the senses it thereby imbues them with a specific characteristic, namely human sensation or feeling. In other words, via the agency of the mind, even the senses take on a different dimension. Human vision differs from an animal's vision, in that human vision is directed by the human mind. Similarly, what man hears is different from what an animal hears, again in that the perception is shaped by the mind. Thus the mind is the all-unifying power of all the conditions manifested in man, and this mind emanates from the spirit. Human spirit has features or characteristics other than the mind, such as the ability to love and a specific type of imagination that is absent in the animal.

As stated earlier, man's power of discernment discovers the unknown from the known. This power inevitably depends upon the comprehension of universal and abstract concepts and this is where the mind comes into the picture. The mind is not the spirit itself but rather is a function of the spirit. It is, furthermore, one of the proofs of the existence of the spirit, by virtue of the principle of causality. The rationale is: We see that certain qualities exist and it was established that whatever exists must have a cause. Therefore, functions of the human mind which appear in man (and are absent in the animal) must necessarily emanate from a reality which is the source or cause of those functions. Since that reality does not exist in the animal, neither can the source of such functions exist in the animal. If you ponder upon the all-unifying agency, as set forth in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet to Dr. Forel, the subject will become clear.

Stating that natural phenomena are interrelated through essential relations leads to the necessary acknowledgement of the principle of causal (also known as scientific) determination. Once we acknowledge the existence of these essential relations, the existence of an all-unifying power that brings together all these various properties will necessarily have to be acknowledged, for in the absence of such an agency or power, the relations would not be made manifest. Colour is not the same

as fragrance; aroma is distinct from taste; and flavour is different from sound. Unless these four phenomena possess an all-embracing and all-unifying agency, they can in no wise become inter-related. For example, it would be impossible for us to associate a certain melody with a specific colour, or to detect an essential link between a certain colour and a specific aroma, as occurs in cases where the appearance of a certain colour in nature is accompanied by a specific fragrance. Nor would we assume a particular kind of lightning to be inherently followed by a certain sound, as happens with the expectation of thunder after lightning. Here we are establishing an inherent relationship between sound and light, and we extend these essential and inherent relationships to the properties of all phenomena. Evidently, we acknowledge the existence of an all-unifying agency operating above these different phenomena, uniting and connecting them. It logically follows that as such inherent and essential relationships are perceived in man, we have no choice but to accept the undeniable existence of an all-unifying agency or power in man. This all-unifying agency, when directed towards the relationships between diverse phenomena, is called the 'mind' or 'intellect'; and when linking the mind to other characteristics such as volition or love; it is called the human spirit.

It becomes therefore essential to acknowledge the existence of an all-unifying power in nature, for to deny such a unifying agency would be to deny science. Obviously, those who deny the existence of God do not in fact intend to reject science, for they actually deny God in the name of science. Similarly, those who deny the existence of the spirit certainly do not intend to deny or reject science, as their denial is done in the name of science. In fact, science itself only exists in the light of the interrelation among seemingly different phenomena. In other words, the existence of science implies that all these phenomena are endowed with a unifying agency, despite their outward variance.

This is a point that 'Abdu'l-Bahá has emphasized in His Tablet, especially as it was directed to a scientist. He specifically notes that Dr. Forel must be aware of these facts as a result of his scientific

knowledge; for as a scientist, it would be impossible that Dr. Forel had not considered the existence of an all-unifying agency. For example, the existing interaction and co-operation between the constituent parts of the body of man cannot be disregarded. This interaction exists even in the vegetative and animal elements of the body, so much more in the human level. While such an interaction may outwardly appear as disparities, the existence of an all-unifying agency cannot be denied, even though it may be hidden and unperceivable. Denial of such an agency would generate irresolvable drawbacks that would eventually lead us to discard science. The intent and purpose of science is precisely to discover and verify these relationships and that, in turn, requires the acknowledgement of an all-unifying power. This is especially true if we admit that these relations are necessary and inherent—an undeniable fact based on the principle of causal or scientific determination.

Given the differentiation of stages in the contingent world, it must be borne in mind that the inferior stage or plane is incapable of containing or discovering the planes higher than its own, while the inverse is possible—that is to say, the plant contains within it the qualities of mineral life, and the animal has the characteristics of vegetable life within its own and man has the animal nature within himself, and the analogy of the deistic philosophers would require saying that God has man within Him. Accordingly, every higher plane contains within it the perfections of the preceding lower plane, as in the case with man who does possess elements of the mineral world, also aspects of the vegetable and animal domains and, of course, human attributes. Furthermore, as sensations are natural experiences, we have self-awareness, we know that we exist and are aware of ourselves. We are thus easily aware of levels inferior to our own.

Man's comprehension of lower levels or planes stems from his mind and his intellect, which is not the case for animals. As humans, we grow and are aware of that growth, we experience sensation and are aware of our senses and recognize them as a perception within us with no mediator. Such a feeling is direct and is part of our existence, it is readily

available to us, in the sense that we readily know what it means to see or to hear without any need for a description or an explanation, which, even if needed, might not be logically explicable. We instinctively experience sensations and can feel what it means to see, to hear, and to breathe. These sensations are perceived easily and with no extra effort or thought. As a result, conditions of the vegetative life such as respiration and nutrition, are conceivable and comprehensible to us because they exist within us. We can comprehend and discover the vegetable world because we have within our own beings the set of properties we call vegetative life. Therefore, it is easy for us to comprehend the vegetable kingdom and all that it physically consists of, even while its reality and nature remain unknown to us. The reality and nature of any phenomenon remains distinct and separate from the reality and nature of all other phenomena. Unless a reality of a thing is transformed or altered into another reality, it remains distinct from that other reality, and being distinct from it, it remains incomprehensible to the other.

In summary, the capacity to comprehend plant life is available to us humans because the qualities of vegetative life exist within us, similarly, we have awareness of animal life, because sensations and movement exist within us, so we can clearly be conscious of what it means to see, to hear, and to move. Consequently, we can understand the animal life as a collection of characteristics specific to the animal such as sensation and movement, combined with the inter-related features of a vegetative life, namely nutrition, respiration, growth, and reproduction, passed on from the vegetable to the animal kingdom and then of course to the human kingdom. This comprehension can be called 'animal cognition' since it also does exist in us.

But, that which does not exist in us is not comprehensible by our mind, its significance remains unapprehended. What is there that does not exist within us? Either that which surpasses and transcends our existence or that which must become manifest later. Examples from the lower planes will serve to illustrate this concept. Even if we were to imagine hidden faculties of comprehension to exist within a plant, it is

totally impossible for the plant to feel or to comprehend the animal faculties. Similarly, because the animal is bereft of the distinguishing qualities of man and cannot feel or sense them, it will always be impossible for an animal to comprehend man, and to fathom the distinct and special characteristics pertaining to human life. Man forever remains beyond the bounds of the animal's understanding and comprehension.

Obviously, a dog or a horse recognises his master but that recognition is of the same calibre as when an animal recognises another animal, that is to say that it is cognition through the senses of sight and hearing. An animal's recognition of a person is an animal awareness of that person perceived as another animal, a being with a specific voice which comes and goes. The awareness that an animal has of a man is an animal awareness. The qualities specifically confined to man which transcend his outward properties, the qualities by which we call him a human being, remain inconceivable to the animal, simply and precisely because they do not exist in the animal. If the animal were to fully and truly recognize man for what he is as a human being, a being capable of discovering inherent relations and the unknown, a being capable of forming abstract notions, and able to exercise free will, then the animal would be the same as man. For, if these functions were known and imaginable to the animal, then it could act upon them. By doing so, the animal would also be human, no different from a man.

So, we can conclude that the lower stage of existence cannot fathom the stage higher to its own. This general rule leads us to deduce that, as emphatically stated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, man cannot truly know or recognize God.²¹

There are of course other reasons presented for man's lack of ability to know and recognize God, but the topic relevant to our discussion here is based on the incapability of every inferior plane to recognize superior levels. Consequently, God will remain unknown to man. Naturally, in the same way that the animal's incapacity to surpass its own boundaries causes it to perceive man as another animal, man's knowledge or recognition of God is also confined to the perception available to him, that is

to say, to imagine God in the form of a person. Thus some form of anthropomorphism* lies hidden within man's expressions of his 'knowledge of God'.

The summit of belief in the unity of God attainable to man is his admission and testimony: "*We have not recognized Thee, O Lord, as befitteth Thy Lordship*".²² This is the acme of belief in the unity of God. In other words, for man to truly recognize that the concept of God formed in his mind is not really God, and to come to know that God is exalted above and sanctified from all human concepts. When man attains this level, he arrives at the station of recognition of the existence of the one true God while acknowledging that He remains exalted beyond the grasp of the minds of men. Such recognition, of one's powerlessness to fathom the mystery of His Existence is, in essence, the appropriate notion of God that man can be expected to have.

In brief, we have concluded in this session that man cannot know God, yet, he acknowledges His existence. This acknowledgment can be based on certain proofs set forth by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in His Tablet to Dr. Forel. And this will be the subject of our next session.

* T.N.: 'Anthropomorphism' is the attribution of uniquely human characteristics to non-human beings. In religion and mythology, anthropomorphism refers to the perception of a divine being or beings in human form, or the recognition of human qualities in these beings. (see Glossary).

Section Three

Proofs of the Existence of God

As stated earlier, in the Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá asserts that it is impossible for man to comprehend the Essence of God—a point emphasized in several of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Writings expounding on the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh. This statement follows the general principle that an inferior condition cannot comprehend the reality of a superior condition, and as such, man can in no wise comprehend the essence of Divinity. Whatever notion that the human mind can conceive is limited by man himself; that is to say, it necessarily contains human nuance and consequently, any such conceptualization would make God analogous to man.

Nevertheless, man acknowledges the existence of God, he feels His existence. He even adduces reasons and proofs for God’s existence. Thus there are two stages: *feeling* that God exists and *proving* His existence.

‘Feeling’ refers here to the inner spiritual feeling received and felt by the soul and perceived by the heart. The next stage, ‘proving’ the existence of God is attempted through reason. The essence of the whole process, however, is found in the first stage. In other words, the recognition of the existence of God arises when our spiritual sentiments and inner feelings lead us to feel His existence through our heart and soul. In the same way that the spirit is necessarily sensed through holy rapture and fervour. That is, there must be within us a sense capable of perceiving the spirit and perceiving God. This is the very root and essence of belief in

God; it is a condition attained by individuals with strong inner sentiments and faith. But souls that are lacking in that strength, those who are weaker in sentiments and faith are in need of the second stage, that is to say proving God through reason. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains in *Some Answered Questions* that arguments for the proof of the existence of God are adduced for weaker souls, but those endowed with inner perception can sense and perceive the existence of the soul and of God through the eye of the indwelling spirit. Such souls have no need for arguments and proofs.²³

The opening section of the Tablet to Dr. Forel casts light on the meaning of weak souls. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes: *We... extol philosophers who are endowed with broad vision...*, giving examples of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. He explains that it would be wrong to imagine that He commends only deistic philosophers, but rather He also extols those naturalists and materialistic philosophers whose vision is not narrow. More precisely, philosophers of narrow vision are the ones whose views are discarded, whether they be deistic or materialistic.

A philosopher of narrow vision is a dogmatic philosopher; that is, a philosopher who limits and confines himself, and struggles in the web he has spun and created by his own gossamer threads and makes no effort to be free of it. Such a philosopher aims to fit the world and all within it into the restraints of his thoughts and mind. He cannot conceive of any view outside the limits that he himself has created as being valid. Dogmatism leads to prejudice which in fact is the sign of a narrow vision.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá then asserts that materialists of narrow vision remain engulfed only in what can be perceived by the senses. That means they do not accept or postulate anything that cannot be perceived through the animal senses. As such, they should reject science itself, in that science depends upon the law of causality.

During the last session, it was shown that without the law of causality, science would not exist. Causality itself is a principle not perceivable by outward senses but understood rationally. Even when saying that

causality can be sensed, we would still be describing our mind's rationalization of certain perceptions. Based on the concept of causality, we accept that everything must be preceded by a cause, and consequently, we seek to rationalize the existence of God, as we have to seek a cause and reason for every existence.

Those who determine the relations between the concrete via causality, thus giving rise to the knowledge of sciences as the necessary relations governing the properties of things, cannot consider causality halted at this stage without violating their own first principles—principles by which it had been established that causality necessarily and rationally implies that all phenomena must necessarily have an all-unifying agency from which all originated, be it defined sometimes as spirit, or at times as God. Such an objection would characterize them as philosophers of narrow vision. In fact, this line of reasoning leads to the proof of the existence of God.

In the Tablet to Dr. Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá provides four proofs for the existence of God. His reasoning is an innovative interpretation of the divine philosophy of old where these points were presented differently by different philosophers. Although some had taken a different approach and used different terminologies, the foundation of all such reasoning was the principle of causality. This philosophical notion is the backbone of metaphysics and even physics. To reject the principle of causality is to discard metaphysics for only by applying causation can we make inferences about the realm of the intangible based on that which can be perceived in the realm of nature. Furthermore, employing causality leads to a series of rational proofs of the existence of God.

Among the reasons 'Abdu'l-Bahá adduces is the possible kinds of formation²⁴, a subject also discussed in the book *Khaṭábát*.^{*} Everything in the world of nature consists of composition and decomposition. As discussed earlier in this Tablet, nature consists of inherent properties

* T.N.: Talks of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

connected through necessary relations, a fact that inevitably leads to the subject of composition and decomposition. That is, elements come together and are composed via necessary relations and are then decomposed via those same relations. Consequently, elements may combine with other elements that had previously pertained to another object, and thus series of compositions and decompositions will continue. Philosophy and science agree that absolute non-existence cannot give rise to existence and nothing that exists can become non-existent. All existence is merely the result of changes which are the product of compositions and decompositions. Formation or coming to life is the composition of constituent elements, while death refers to their decomposition.

A ‘simple’* element is neither formed nor will it perish. This reference to simple or non-compound elements however does not refer to chemical simplicity. In chemistry, of course, matter is divided into simple and compound substances. Oxygen, for example, is known as a chemically simple element and water as compound. So, by saying that ‘a simple element is neither formed nor will it perish’, we are referring to simplicity in the universal and abstract sense. Even elements considered as simple by chemistry are in fact deemed compound by physics, because inevitably they occupy space, have dimensions and are divisible into homogenous particles which, at least in theory, can be further divided. Furthermore, those elements that are considered as ‘simple’ by chemistry can also be broken down into atoms which in turn can be broken down into their own constituent particles.

In contrast, when we say here that “a ‘simple’ element will neither be formed nor will it perish”, it is simplicity in the universal and abstract sense and the simplicity or singularity of which we speak has no subdivisions whatsoever, neither chemical, physical, geometrical, nor imaginable. That is, no breakdown into parts or components can be imagined. Only compound substances resulting from composition can be decomposed, consequently, it cannot be imagined that a ‘simple’ thing

* T.N.: Simple or un-compounded. See Glossary.

would decompose and perish. In composition, certain constituent parts come together and form a new substance. That new substance will only perish when it breaks down either chemically, physically, geometrically or in any other imaginable manner. To say that a compound object has perished is, in fact, to say that the constituent elements have changed form into another structure. The constituent elements have not perished. The continuance of such compositions and decompositions forms the world of nature.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá affirms that we can distinguish three kinds of formation. We can illustrate this by first saying that formation is of two kinds and then divide the second kind into two further branches. So, we that two kinds of formation can be observed in the world of nature.

The first kind of formation is the composition that results, in the terminology of the philosophers, as an inherent necessary constituent property of that being. By definition, the necessary inherent property of a thing can in no wise become dissociated from the thing itself. It therefore follows that the above-mentioned composition would inevitably always remain in the composed form. For example, if the inherent necessary property of the constituent tissues of the human body were for them to remain in this same form forever, the decomposition and the breakdown of the elements of such a body would be impossible. An inherent necessary property of any entity, according to its definition in philosophy, cannot be dissociated from the entity itself.

However, if formation is not one of the inherent necessary properties of the thing, another kind of formation can be conceived; namely, accidental formation. That means that the various constituent elements accidentally come together. This would imply that the world of being has come into existence by chance and there is no law governing such a formation. Accordingly, the world would not be subject to any law or regulation, for having simply appeared accidentally, it would be subject only to the laws of chance. As such, nothing that occurs would be based on any essential law or requirement. According to such a view, all that happens could equally have happened otherwise.

Acceptance of the theory of accidental formation implies that all we know as science would be meaningless. Consequently, it would make no sense to say that certain necessary relations exist within these events, relations we can study and know, what we call science, and through the aid of which we conquer nature. Under accidental formation, science itself is denied. Accordingly, we would have no alternative but to regard the world as futile, or as stated by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in this same Tablet, as ‘sham and delusion’. Followers of this theory inevitably arrive at the conclusion that the world is utterly pointless, that life in this world is meaningless, hollow and of no avail, that there is no value or worth to life nor, consequently, any assurance for anything. Any formation, from wherever cause, would be simply regarded as accidental and by chance, and it could as well not have come into existence at all as it might cease to exist at any moment. Under such a notion, all that we seek to explain and interpret in nature as necessary relations, and all the laws that govern these relations—which we consider worthy of investigation and call science—would all become delirious, meaningless, futile and hollow.

This is the position in which we would find ourselves were we to deny the existence of God, the same position the absurdist or the existentialist (in the old sense of the word) used to be in. During a certain period of his life, Jean Paul Sartre rejected the idea of an existing God. He considered the essential and sufficient requirement for the denial of God is to believe that everything in the world is futile and absurd and there is no cause for any existence. Such an idea would invalidate ethics as much as science. Naturally, in order to deny the existence of God, that is how the world would necessarily need to be viewed. Yet, it cannot be so viewed for even the naturalists endowed with broad vision do not accept such a notion.

An obvious reason for rejecting such a notion is the very fact that we regard science as valid. We cannot refute the validity of science because science forces its validity upon us and compels our submission through its effects and results. When an object approaches according to the laws

of science, we cannot turn aside and deny its existence. Science unavoidably imposes its existence upon us. Where science exists, the relations between natural events, by which changes and formations take place, also exist. Such relations are necessary and cannot be resisted or defied. They do exist. Consequently, the universe cannot be haphazard nor can the creation of the world be accidental or illusory, and as such one cannot deny the existence of God based on the theory of accidental formation, for a necessary requirement for denial of God is to regard the formation and creation of the world as an outcome of chance.

Separate from the followers of this school of thought are those from the second category and who do not consider the world to be the result of accident or chance but rather believe in the inevitable necessity of certain relationships in the world. What are those relationships? They are the relations inherent to the reality of things and, as mentioned in previous sessions, these inherent relations or properties are essentially connected and inter-related through inevitable bonds.

This second category in turn is divided into two sub-categories: The first holds the view that these inherent properties or relationships are essential to the realities of things, in the sense that a reality known as 'vegetable life' has always existed, and that such an existence is its necessary and inherent requirement.

'Necessity' here is a term employed by ancient philosophers referring to an inherent property of a thing: To state that a thing has always existed without having been created or been under any volition or plan, and that its essential inherent property or necessity requires it to exist and to possess the properties it possesses. In such a case, we would have a condition whereby those properties would be fixed without ever becoming able to be separated from the thing itself, because they are inherent and essential to the existence of the thing. Whereas we observe how both decompositions and new formations in these beings lead to separations and disassociations and changes appear in the properties of beings even though those changes might not have occurred through necessity.

The fact that even man can change properties with the aid of the scientific knowledge originated from his intellect shows that such properties cannot be essential to the reality of a thing. Nowadays, scientists do not talk of the essential properties of the reality of things, such a terminology belongs to the philosophy of the past, when they used to believe inherent properties to be part of the nature of a thing. For example, they used to say that an essential property of earth's soil was to move downwards and this property could never be divested from it. They believed that soil always moves downwards and fire always soars upwards and air always ascends above water. An inherent or essential property of a thing was assumed to be the essential requirement of the nature of that thing unless an external factor was imposed. If this were so, it would of course be impossible for an inherent property to be separated or disassociated from the thing itself. According to the interpretation of ancient philosophers, it would be impossible for inherent properties to undergo any change or alteration, in which case the contingent world would have always existed and came into being as an essential property of elements, and that essential property is an inseparable part of their nature.

This takes us to the subsequent division of the second category, the third kind of the three possible formations. This view is that the necessary relations derived from the reality of a thing are not the essential properties of its reality, rather, the reality of a thing causes those properties to appear and creates a necessary connection between these properties and relations. Accordingly, nature consists of a series of necessary properties which come together according to certain necessary laws and are further separated and decomposed according to other necessary laws, without the involvement of a factor known as the essential property of the reality of the thing.

Of course, there are certain phenomena derived from the realities of things and inter-connected through necessary relations. Such connections are changeable through the necessary relations, and these are the changes that make science possible. We therefore conclude that things did not come into being through chance or by accident, but rather in

obedience to necessary laws. Nor do these laws originate from their own essential nature, that is, they are not inherent and inseparable. The essential requirement is that some kind of necessary laws and regulations must govern the universe, laws that contain secondary and subsidiary divisions. As such, the substances themselves obey laws in the process of their own formation and decomposition. The world, consequently, is formed of properties which are necessarily inter-related.

Such a necessity is discernible by the intellect. Such inter-related connections cannot be violated since they are bound by necessity. Such relations do not deviate from the rules and regulations that govern them, and it is through such relations that substances are formed and come into being. The formation of beings simply implies the composition of their elements and such a formation is bound by those rules that govern the relations.

These same rules also annihilate beings, for annihilation or death refers to dissociation or decomposition of the constituent elements, which process is bound by those same regulations.

So consider: We finally reach the conclusion that there are laws and principles which govern the world, and we can refer to these laws as the world-governing Intellect or the all-pervasive Will or Purpose. This is the third type of formation, and the one validated by 'Abdu'l-Bahá. That is, necessary relations govern beings and as the formation and extinction of beings are governed by these necessary relations that can in no wise be transgressed or digressed from, it follows that beings depend upon and function under these relationships that in turn are bound by and dependent on the laws and principles that guide the universe.

Consequently, the world functions according to laws which are directed by a Reality that is the all-unifying Agency of all relations. That Reality we call God or divine Will, or we can refer to it as the 'divine Intellect', a term synonymous with 'voluntary formation' or 'intelligible formation'—terminologies employed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

Regarding the attributes and perfections of divine Reality, we cannot separate His 'Will' from His 'Intellect'. We ascribe these attributes to God through assessing our own selves. Since we consider our willpower as something different from our intellect, and as we imagine God to be like us, we consequently attribute will, wisdom, knowledge, and power to Him. Whereas, in fact these attributes we attribute to the universal Reality are meaningful only in order to deny His imperfections. In truth, all divine attributes are one and the same as His Essence, they mean one single thing, for the divine Essence cannot be broken down into separate parts. In other words, all the designations that we may choose such as the 'all-unifying power that reigns and governs over these necessary relations', the 'intellect concealed in nature', the 'intellect that pervades nature', or the 'will that guides nature' are valid since there are no multiple meanings in the different attributes we ascribe to God. They are all one and the same with His Essence. So now, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's intention in stating that the only possible formation that remains is the voluntary one becomes clear.

There are some, of course, who have their doubts, and set 'will' against 'intellect', thus creating the possibility of a further category of formation. Such a formation is claimed to be the same as the 'necessary formation' and governed by the same rules that are collectively called the intellect. They say it is needless to deduce that this third kind of formation is voluntary; yet, they neglect the fact that by saying so, God, Will, and the Intellect are thereby all equally and immediately denied. Whether one calls it 'intellect', 'knowledge', or 'will', by recognising the existence of an order in the world, one is acknowledging that the inherent properties of things are governed by necessity or certain necessary relationships. Based on the principle of necessity, science becomes consequently meaningful, leading to the unavoidable acknowledgement that the world is dependent on an 'Intellect'. Also, the principle of causality leads to the acceptance of the existence of an intelligent, all-knowing and all-wise Being endowed with will and purpose that can assure and secure the necessity of the rules governing nature.

Another proof mentioned by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is related to the principle of causality or the causal chain, and the fact that every movement requires a motive force which, in turn depends on another animating power for its movement. This reasoning continues until, by way of the principle of the ‘impossibility of the indefinite continuation of the process of causation’, we arrive at a primary motive Power and an original Cause. This, of course, is a well-known proof.

The first philosopher who addressed this subject was Aristotle.²⁵ Every motion needs a motive force which, being a motion itself, requires another motive power, which in turn must have a further animating force, and so on. All motions thus require a motive force until we reach a motive force which was not motivated or animated by anything else. This argument is valid only under the premise that the causal chain is not an infinite process [*butlân-i-tasalsul*]. Since causation cannot go on indefinitely, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that we reach a point where we accept the existence of a primary Cause which was not itself motivated or caused.

Much has been said regarding the causal chain, why it cannot continue infinitely, and what the conditions are for the invalidity of its infinite continuation. Obviating extensive detail here, it suffices to say that a series of entities that are conjoined (meaning things that exist simultaneously, without one replacing another) and are consequential (one resulting from and following the other) cannot continue indefinitely. The reason is that the chain has to stop at some point, which is assumed to be the starting point of the process.

The rejection of indefinite continuation of the causal chain is a rational ruling, for it is our reasoning that logically discards the infinite continuation of such a process. The reasoning power of the mind seeks rational arguments going from premise to conclusion, which, in turn, becomes a new premise for a subsequent conclusion. This process continues until we reach a premise that is accepted as axiomatic. Without such a process, it would be impossible to make any deduction.

A perfect example of deduction is seen in mathematics: A conclusion is derived from a certain theorem or premise, which is the starting point of that conclusion but is itself a conclusion derived from an earlier theorem which, in turn, was a conclusion from an even earlier theorem. This continues until we reach a first premise or hypothesis accepted as axiomatic. Without acceptance of axiomatic hypotheses, it is evidently impossible to make any deductions. In actual fact the reasoning power of our mind must inevitably begin with an axiom or a starting point which does not require to be deduced from an earlier premise.

Asking for a 'logical reason' for the existence of God means acceptance of the process of logic and deduction. The necessary requirement for any deduction is an axiom that serves as the starting point for reasoning. Trying to demonstrate the validity of anything without consideration of the required axiom will never lead to any proof or deduction. This is what is meant by 'the causal chain cannot continue indefinitely'. The essential prerequisite of deduction is to start with a hypothesis which is accepted as self-evident and true rather than a conclusion deduced from another premise.

As such, if we do not consider the world as an entity planned by reason, we would have to simply return to that first kind of formation and to say that the world came into being as a result of an accident. But such an argument cannot be logically valid. If we regard the world as an inter-connected and ordered existence based on reason, following the process of logical deduction, it can only be based on reason if it has started with an axiom that is based on and undisputable by reason. Otherwise the deduction process would be impossible.

Accordingly, were we to not consider the world as an entity planned by reason, we would have to simply return to that first kind of formation and to say to say the world came into being as a result of an accident. But it was established earlier that such an argument is not logically valid. Furthermore, for a deduction process to be possible, any conclusion based on reason needs to start with a reasonable and indisputable axiom. So, if we then regard the world as inter-connected and ordered

existence based on reason, we would have to acknowledge that the world inevitably had to begin from a starting point or reality not deduced from anything else. In other words, we can either propose that the world is not rational nor controlled, and consequently absurd and void of purpose; or that it is rational and controlled, in which case it would logically need to have begun with a starting point not preceded by anything else. At this stage we add that reason cannot accept an indefinite process of causation, and as such, it examines the chain of causes and effects and arrives at an original cause that is not the effect of any earlier cause. That starting point and ultimate cause is regarded as the origin of the world. Starting from that initial cause the world is viewed as a chain of logical, interrelated and controlled events and things.

Naturally, we can choose not to regard the world in this manner. But then, we would not only have to deny the existence of God, but also the existence of science. Further, we would have to deny belief in the power of thought and philosophy, as well as to deny the existence of the necessary essential relations between the inherent properties of things. Such ideology results in this world ending up in sham. This is the very notion that 'Abdu'l-Bahá states in this Tablet: That such a view would lead to the denial of God and regarding this infinite universe as a delusion and utterly without meaning. The notion of regarding everything as meaningless and absurd was, in fact, a contemporary point of view in recent times.

One of the great writers in the nineteenth century, Dostoyevsky, concluded: 'if God does not exist, everything is permitted'. Why would he say that everything was permitted? The reason is that in the absence of God, nothing would have a proper meaning or notion to be limited by. A matter ceases to be rendered permissible only when there exist rules and principles governing its acceptability. This can only hold true when the existence of God is acknowledged, for otherwise, the world would be irrational and futile and even materialistic ideologies would lose their validity.

Another proof presented by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and also mentioned in the works of classical philosophers (who had been influenced by the teachings of the Prophets), is that every limitation indicates the existence of a limitless entity. As all created beings are limited to some degree, we must seek the limitless elsewhere.

It must be clarified here that when we speak of limitations and the Absolute Infinite, we are not referring to limits and the concept of infinity in the biological, natural or mathematical sense. Rather it is meant in general terms, referring to defects and perfections. By limited we mean imperfect, and the infinite or limitless implies the state of perfection.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá presents this proof in *Some Answered Questions*, and explains it in terms of perfections and imperfections. That is, when we perceive the contingent world, we also assess the imperfections in all we perceive. This is known as ‘the sense of evaluation’ developed in human consciousness and culture and which leads to the formation of values. It is not simply about the perception of a thing but also the evaluation of its worth.

When perceiving an object, its charm, beauty, and excellence are acknowledged but its flaws are likewise evaluated. For example, we praise a person’s knowledge and at the same time are aware that their knowledge is incomplete. Similarly, we commend a person’s patience and yet are conscious that their patience is not boundless. We admire the will power of an individual and even identify streaks of perfection in it, yet we can recognize deficiencies in that will power. The reason by which we can identify imperfections in these attributes stems from the practice of weighing all things against something else. It would be impossible to recognize beauty unless it is weighed against other beauties, regarding some as better or worse.

Even as certain qualities are praised and elements of perfection are acknowledged, flaws are equally recognized. Those who believe that recognition of imperfection is purely the result of comparing one thing

with another overlook the fact that comparing things only provides one with the knowledge of differences between them and is not an indication of comparative imperfection and perfection. Upon comparing two faces, the differences between them are what really attract your attention. One may have a bigger nose, the other fuller lips, one has the round eyes while the eyes of the other person may be almond shape or slanted. The comparison identifies the apparent differences of these two faces. But, the judgement that one is more beautiful than the other is not merely based on the differences, but rather on a further criterion of the mind about the concept of beauty, and it is against that measure that the faces are assessed. Recognition of flaws in the beauty of all things perceived, implies that the notion of perfect beauty needs to have stemmed from beyond the things themselves.

When you see differences in all things with respect to their fineness,* you do not judge them by comparing one with the other but rather you compare them with a notion of fineness in your mind, your standard of values. Accordingly, you deem some things to be less fine than others and you conclude that despite the excellence of any object or person, they are unavoidably relatively imperfect.

To say that a matter is correct or incorrect, or to judge that a person possesses or lacks a certain value, is to make a comparative evaluation which depends on the criteria we have in mind. If the criteria are changed and replaced with other notions, the judgement will also change. So, whatever one's judgement may be, it is only valid from one certain point of view, and that validity is also imperfect in the sense that it can be improved upon.

Validity is not an absolute external reality but is only recognised when comparing objects with each other. The validity of a judgement

* The fineness or goodness of a thing has no meaning inherent to the thing itself, but rather with respect to the differences of how the concept is manifested in things.

depends upon the criterion that one has chosen. Things are then assessed against that chosen criterion regarded as a standard, and consequently, some are considered to be more and others as less perfect.

When we look at the world around us, we acknowledge imperfections, we recognise limitations. We see that nature and everything else lacks the element of perfection which would make it flawlessly beautiful, precise, and good. The conception of beauty, precision and goodness we have in our minds is the standard for comparison, whereby we find imperfections and flaws.

Unless we can conceive a notion of the absolute that is limitless and perfect, our evaluations would be void of value. If there were no standard for beauty, then the arts would be meaningless. Equally, science would be futile in the absence of a criterion for precision and with no measure for right or wrong, ethical standards would not exist. What would remain of man stripped of arts, science, and ethics? In order for a person to be an artist, scientist or ethical human being, they must necessarily acknowledge the concept of the limitless and accept the existence of a flawless perfection, perfection of beauty, precision, goodness and other qualities. All other things can then be placed at different levels by comparison against that perfection. This is the stage at which the world acquires a specific human value.

Such a concept of the world is analogous to an individual human life, which can also reflect beauty, goodness, and integrity. These qualities, manifested to the highest degree of excellence, compose what we refer to as absolute perfection. By comparison with this absolute perfection all things in nature are shown to be deficient and imperfect. This is the reality of existence. We acknowledge the existence of perfection in comparison with which the flaws become apparent. The existence of such absolute and limitless perfection is deduced via the existence of flawed and limited beings. Such a conclusion is based on the theory of causality which guides us from one premise to another. As mentioned before, this is the backbone of metaphysics.

This has been a commentary on ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s explanation from His Tablet addressed to those souls who need reasons and proofs for the existence of God and whom ‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to as weaker souls. These are proofs to which a person turns his attention during the fragmentary stage of his knowledge and understanding. When he passes beyond that stage he reaches a point at which his heart and soul depend on his belief in God.

Reality manifests itself through its own existence. In the same way everything can be seen through the rays of light, yet light itself can only be seen when it is present—for everything but light is darkness and darkness is an impediment to sight. Similarly, reality can only be proven through its own existence, not by way of anything but itself. Anything but reality is simply falsehood and reality cannot be proved through falsehood. Thus, Absolute Reality manifests itself only by its own Self. This indeed is the meaning of the verse: *He Himself is testimony to His own Self.*²⁶

The Philosophers of Broad Vision²⁷

The subject of wisdom^{*} is a prevalent topic within the Bahá'í Writings, in all its theoretical discourses, and even in discussions related to the adoption of concrete measures. The observance of wisdom is also amongst the terminologies used by Bahá'ís in relation to the practical aspects of proclamation and teaching. Such adherence to wisdom, other than being one of the prerequisites for the propagation of the Cause, is one of the two pillars for it, or even better said, it is one of the two hosts for teaching one's faith and rendering assistance to the Cause. In one of His statements, Bahá'u'lláh affirms that an upright conduct[†] is the leader and chief commander that can render the Cause victorious, and that such a commander summons to his aid the two hosts of wisdom and utterance²⁸. That is to say that an upright conduct gives the command, then wisdom and utterance carry forth that command in the path of rendering assistance. And since our duty and privilege is assisting in the promotion of the Cause, we should carry it out with the aid of wisdom and utterance, on condition that they both be subject to an upright conduct. It is not sufficient to be righteous alone, but it is the most vital requisite. It is not enough to be wise, nor is it adequate to be only eloquent, but rather they are both needed. So, first and foremost among the qualities required of a Bahá'í who has the bounty of promoting the Cause is the condition of piety, and then follow wisdom and eloquence.

* T.N.: *Hikmat*: Wisdom; also referred to as theosophy and philosophy – see Glossary.

† T.N.: The term '*taqvá*' translated as 'upright conduct', 'righteousness', and 'piety' has been also translated in certain passages as the 'fear of God'.

No other way is possible, practical, or desirable for rendering the Cause victorious.

Wisdom has a common as well as a specific meaning. In common usage, it refers to knowledge in the sense of 'know-how'. It implies an ability to discern a course of action, to identify a task and to know how to employ the mind to carry out that task. This meaning of wisdom is different from that of scientific knowledge where the latter also involves knowing but in a more specific sense. Not all knowledge can be categorised as wisdom. In this particular sense, wisdom also differs from philosophy. The reason I am distinguishing between the two is that the two words, philosophy [*falsafih*] and wisdom [*hikmat*], are often used interchangeably, and when reference is made to philosophers or sages, the terms are used synonymously. If we want to be exact about it, however, we should remember that wisdom and philosophy are two different concepts.

One of the functions of philosophy is to define the station and position of man within the world of existence. It is employed to turn man's attention towards the reality of things, and to endow him with a world embracing view. But it can be regarded as wisdom if and only when the view and world embracing vision that it creates, and the station that it defines provide guidelines in conformity with man's life. A sage or a man of wisdom [*hakim*] is not simply one who strives or manages to comprehend the mysteries of the world from a philosophical point of view, but rather, a sage is one who can use the knowledge of mysteries to guide man. Unless one reaches this station, one cannot be called a sage. For this very reason, many of the academics do not use the terms philosopher and sage synonymously, inasmuch as the implications of philosophy, science, and wisdom in fact differ. As the majority, or as the greatest of the philosophers have tried to offer their findings and discoveries as a guide for humanity, they are referred to as sages, or men of wisdom.

A sage is, therefore, one who guides man to the path of life in the fields of science, deeds, morals, arts, advancement towards beauty,

goodness, and integrity, and consequently to the path towards perfection; and he does this through his intellect and not through divine inspiration. I say 'not through divine inspiration' because, in such a case, the sage would have to be a Prophet or a Manifestation of God. Whereas, in the case of a man of wisdom, he presents the path through his own intellect or zeal or a mixture of the two—depending on his disposition and belief.

Wisdom is used in yet another and even more specific sense, namely, when it refers to one's ability to immediately match the required action to any particular case. By this is meant that we do not simply act according to a general rule, but rather, in every specific case, the course of the necessary action would be quickly and wittingly identified, recognised, and carried out. The requirement for this is to consider every situation and its surrounding circumstances, and to assess its conditions in such wise that the required action may be performed in a manner that would lead to success. This is the meaning of the term 'to observe wisdom' or to act wisely. In such a case, we are talking about prudence, that means being moderate and to have regard for the whole situation. It refers to the attention one pays to detail and to the various aspects of any given situation while, at the same time, being attentive to the time and place and the conditions imposed upon us. These are the factors that affect and influence both our abstract and discrete thoughts. It is this very concept that, unless heeded, can lead to the loss of many sound ideas. For this reason, many sensible views of experts bore no results. As at the time of action, the particular or even trivial conditions that controlled the case were overlooked, the work of those experts was consequently lost in vain, and not having gained results, they even lowered their rational position. Under such circumstances, the original idea appeared as wrong, although such a conclusion would be totally unfair, and even cruel. The above-mentioned concept is also referred to as wisdom, although if interpreted inaccurately, it can seem to imply conceal-

ment, disguise, or camouflage. A more accurate or positive interpretation would be to call it moderation or prudence. But the best way to convey it is through the term stated by Bahá'u'lláh: to call it wisdom.

When educating your young child, or for example, when aiming to guide him back to the correct path from which you feel he is deviating, you might do so without directly conveying it to him. If the child were to discern your aim—that is naturally contrary to his own wishes—he would of course object or try to prevent it. Therefore, with regard to his best interests, you would choose a course of action that would lead him to pay attention to what you know is correct for him. One might say that this strategy is a concealed or a disguised course of action. But such a terminology is not suitable, inasmuch as the motivation behind concealment or disguise always carries an element of deceit or cowardice, while such an action was not done with the intention of dishonesty. Therefore, we will not use the terms ‘concealment’ or ‘disguise’, but rather, we could say ‘prudence’ or even ‘rationality’, but above all we can use the term ‘wisdom’. That implies a consciousness of how to act correctly when accomplishing a goal.

In order to attain a goal, it is not sufficient for our aim to be lofty, but the means for achieving the ends should also be lofty, since an incorrect approach, albeit in the path of attaining a lofty goal, would lead to the wrong result. As such, the theory ‘the end justifies the means’ is not acceptable. When the means of reaching an end, in terms of correctness, rectitude and dignity are not suitable to the end itself, the end result would be rendered fruitless. As such, proper means should be devoted towards lofty ends. This is the intention by saying that wisdom is necessary for teaching the Faith. It never implies that we should feel afraid or we need to hide or conceal the facts, but rather, it is to know how to begin and how to proceed for an accurate communication of facts. This is the specific connotation of wisdom that is used in our everyday affairs and especially within our administrative services.

Furthermore, the term ‘wisdom’ in the context of science and philosophy also refers to the same specific sense mentioned earlier. That is

to say a philosopher who is endowed with a world-embracing view discerns the conditions surrounding man, and is aware of man's position in the world. He can present his view about who man is, how he is, what is his standpoint, where is he heading to, or where should he be heading to. Once he determines these facts, he is called a philosopher. And further, when a philosopher manages to harmonize these facts to the circumstances governing the life of man, and when he manages to guide him forward on the path ahead, then he can be called a 'sage' or a man of wisdom. The question is how to regard this aspect of 'wisdom' that is often used synonymously or interchangeably with philosophy. In other words, do we consider such an aspect of 'wisdom' as a desirable and acceptable one or not. This point in fact returns to the specific notion of philosophy itself, and to see in what instances it can be referred to as wisdom.

A question often posed by Bahá'ís concerns the exhortation found in the Writings regarding the acquisition of the knowledge of such sciences that can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words²⁹: Does philosophy fall into the category of merely words; and thus, should it be set aside, or not? What is the viewpoint of a Bahá'í regarding philosophy and philosophers? Should one regard a philosopher as a person whose work starts and ends with words? Should that be considered as something of no practical benefit, or rather, should we become aware of the station and worth of a philosopher, to recognize it, to value it, and even strive to study the subject?

The answer is of course obvious, and the intention has never been to create a dichotomy of practically useful and useless sciences. Any science in general can be divided into these two groups. This means that one can consider and acquire the knowledge of any science in a manner that would be profitable to others. Likewise, one can employ any science in a way that would not yield any beneficial results, or as one might say, would start with words and end with words. For example, a knowledge of supreme significance is the study of divine law, generally

referred to as theology that conveys the duties entrusted to man through religious principles. It is the knowledge of the religious duties of every believer: how to pray, how to fast, how to act, what to abstain from, what should be regarded as lawful and what should be prohibited. Within any religion, and for any believer, such a knowledge is regarded as highly essential. Yet, we see how this very knowledge has been transformed into something that yields nothing but a waste of time and life.

Rather than paying attention to the spirit of religion, and instead of examining the true intention of its Founder, people entered into futile discussions about minute and trivial details. They broke up those duties into fragments, they produced numerous subdivisions, and dissected each one into yet further segments in such ways that one of the subsidiary laws related to an act of worship that was in itself a religious minutiae turned into a subject with never-ending debates. For instance, there have been infinite arguments on the subject of ablutions and the details concerning them; debates as to how should they be performed, how should water be poured over the hand, how much water would be sufficient, from what angle should one pour the water, and so on and so forth. Obviously, any subject, no matter how brief, can become wearisome when split into so many subsections. This is true of discussions on any topic within religion such as ablutions, impurity, lawful or unlawful foods, or discussions about the quality of cleanliness. So, we can see how the most noble and praiseworthy of sciences, namely the subject of divine Revelation —a subject ordained by God to guide man, has been turned into something that yields no results other than the waste of time and lives. This is how such a topic can fall into the category of sciences that should really be branded as invalid, and as stated by the Báb, should even be eliminated and effaced³⁰. In other words, we should put an end to such brawls, and to do away with all this dispute and fuss: to do away with the mere words that destroy the life of the spirit, and to end the syllables that mutilate the inner meaning.

Therefore, it is not that sciences can be divided into valuable and futile; it is not that some sciences should be regarded as fruitless and be

set aside, and some others be considered beneficial and pursued; but rather, any science can be turned into one of these two kinds. The same is true about philosophy. It can become a subject of pure debate in words, as it did during the Middle Ages and in the time of the Scholastic period. During those days, philosophy consisted of a series of never-ending debates about the minute details of subjects that branched off from more general ones. These were further divided into subsections for even more detailed explanations. Margins were added, books were summarised and those summaries were commented upon, further margins and footnotes were added, and lifetimes were spent and wasted in this manner. When one contemplates upon the precise attention given to those debates, one is filled with such a sense of pity to imagine that minds capable of functioning with such precision would attend to subjects that cannot ‘fatten nor appease the hunger’*. These are subjects that the more prolonged they become, the more futile they prove to be, and their negative effect on life, time and effort becomes more evident. When such a facet of ‘wisdom’ enters the subjects of *kalám*[†] (theology), *fiqh* (religious jurisprudence), *uṣūl* (doctrine, or sources of religious jurisprudence), *ṣarf va naḥv*[‡] (grammar and language structure), the one who is learned in sciences would say: *Wash away the scrolls, if it be thy wish to learn with us*[§].

Mention was made of *ṣarf va naḥv*. The term refers to language structure in general, and specifically to Arabic grammar. What science can be more praiseworthy than one that teaches man how to speak correctly? Such a science contains features that are fully sufficient for a correct speech and script³¹. Yet, consider the disputes that were raised on the style of its syntax, and look at the examples and rules that were

* Qurán (Rodwell translation): 88:7

† T.N.: *Kalám*: The Islamic philosophical discipline of seeking theological principles through dialectic.

‡ T.N.: *Ṣarf va naḥv*: Theological lexicology.

§ T.N.: A verse from ode number 162, by the Persian poet Hafez.

created—examples that would never occur in real life conversations, and rules that people would never have to use. Of course, it might happen, once in lifetime, when one is confronted with an infinitesimal detail that would prompt one to delve into a subject as analysed by a certain scholar. Even in such a case, scholars may have held views contrary to one another, leading to the eruption of huge clashes and rows.

So, it seems that the more comprehensive scientific vision remains in its scope, and the less involved it becomes with insignificant details, the more efficient it will be. It must be added here that by the term ‘science’ mentioned above, is only meant those sciences that relate to the conditions of man, by which we mean philosophy and wisdom. Otherwise, in exact or quantitative sciences, such as mathematics, physics, chemistry and medicine, it is evident that discussing details is part of the scientific analysis, and scrutiny in each step of such an analysis is not only useful, but beneficial. The opposite holds true in philosophy and wisdom. The wider the spectrum of the concept, the more praiseworthy and effective it is, and its perfection, and lustre become more manifest. The beauty of wisdom, and the accuracy of philosophy lie in this very principle.

There are times, however, when philosophical discourse is seen to aim at directing the scientific, practical, and intellectual aspects of man’s life. That is when it seeks to assign duties in the specifics of life, in other words, it attempts to carry over the religious law into the realm of philosophy and wisdom. This is where its vision and view inevitably becomes a narrow one and leads the listener or reader into difficulties. This is a stage that imposes a great threat to philosophy, and whenever it has appeared, has led to its decline. This threatening hazard is dogmatism, that turns philosophy into a series of dogmas or doctrines that have to be taken and accepted as they are; any revision, any update or modernization would be considered as heresy. When philosophy reaches such a state, the instrument that had stemmed from the critical and free analysis of the human mind, becomes a framework of dogmas or philosophical religious codes. It confines the thoughts of man to that

dogmatic framework, and orders man to 'think in the way that I tell you and in the manner that I want'. This can at times happen in religion if the type of conviction is dictated to people. But religious conviction differs from a philosophical ideology. If religious belief tries to assume the characteristics of philosophical ideology, religion will go astray.

The same is true about philosophical theories. If philosophical thinking tries to portray concepts resulting from human reflection as religious conviction (that is to expect people to believe in something without it having been divinely inspired, the latter being the source of a religious belief), it leads to dogmatism. It is surprising that some of the leading dogmatists, with belief in the absolute and unconditional validity of their own sayings, declare themselves to be opposed to religion. They first proscribe and rule out religion, and even brand it as dogmatic, and then create a concept that is in no way less harsh and dogmatic than the one that they had initially rejected. This is where these philosophers confine their minds and views to the restraints of trivialities, creating patterns for everything, and defining every idea in detail. This means that they devise channels for human thought, and outline detailed particularities. They define the pathway and dictate the course in which thoughts and beliefs may flow. This is comparable to a situation where water is being poured down from a height. When the water reaches the soil, it will inevitably create a duct to flow through, the shape of which, in turn, is proportionate to the amount of water that was poured down, as well as to its speed, and the ups and downs resulted from its contact with the soil. This is what these philosophers do with the human mind. Similar to the water that has to flow over ground and has to follow and adhere to the highs and lows of the pathway created in the soil, the mind too, becomes moulded and shaped, its free flow is halted, and is then either crystallised or finally solidified. Why is that? Because the person in authority presented his view in such manner that whoever wants to accept it is bound by a certain framework. That leads to the same dogmatism that afflicted the human minds during the Middle Ages, and led to a millennium of darkness in the life of humanity.

Let us not imagine for a moment that the scholars and philosophers of the Middle Ages lacked intelligence, or that they were not gifted thinkers. During the Middle Ages of Christianity, as well as that of Islam, one sees the emergence of remarkable minds and talents; yet, they became captives of the kind of dogmata that created a constrained bondage and subjugation within philosophy, applying enforced submission to trivial details. And so, during that period, there were individuals who arose against those so-called philosophers, turned away from them, saw the 'schools' as centres of conflict, and regarded the places that should be the centres of knowledge, as the centres of ignorance. Why did that happen? Because talent was extinguished, intellect was eclipsed, love was concealed, knowledge was obliterated, and an end was put to the broadness of vision. This whole process results from the limited vision of a philosopher. The process starts when such a philosopher has an idea, a notion, and uses that notion to build a framework. He constrains his idea within the boundaries of that framework, and then joins that structure with other frameworks, and thus gradually creates a network of thoughts (just like a spider's web that is woven to protect it). He believes that the thoughts of men should only fit into those contexts, and must be contained there. It is evident that such a condition destroys any progress, and without progress, the very essence of life is lost. That is the type of philosophy that is in fact the essence of affliction, that is the type of philosophy that is fallacy, it engages into hair-splitting, it is misleading and uses false reasoning, and that is the type of knowledge which is indeed ignorance.

As such, demonstrating that, far from opposing knowledge and wisdom, the Cause of God actually highly lauds them, Bahá'u'lláh praises those sciences and commends the scholars in those fields with these words:

...Verily We love those men of knowledge who have brought to light such things as promote the best interests of humanity, and We aided them through the potency of Our behest, for well are

*We able to achieve Our purpose. Beware, O My loved ones, lest ye despise the merits of My learned servants whom God hath graciously chosen to be the exponents of His Name 'the Fashioner' amidst mankind...**

and in His Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá affirms: *We... extol philosophers who are endowed with broad vision.*[†]

What does 'broadness of vision' mean in the context of philosophy and wisdom? It implies that the one endowed with such vision would never try to stop the flow of thought and the progress of the mind. The leading philosophers and those foremost amongst the people of wisdom initially gave this same counsel. They cautioned people not to allow philosophy to become a set of prefabricated teachings presented to those who wish to study it. Their view was that philosophy must develop into an endeavour for the progress and advancement of thoughts, and must lead other minds to be active in an ever-evolving movement.

A true philosopher is usually positioned midway between a starting point and the final stage. Some thinkers linger and remain in that initial stage; they do not proceed and cannot progress. These are the people who we call sceptics. They dare not step forward, and they find themselves incapable of acquiring knowledge or discerning the truth. There are others who perceive themselves at the other end of the spectrum, they believe to have arrived at the finishing point. They say that all that needs to be thought and be said has been covered, and regard themselves as having arrived at a stage after which no further development is possible. Why? Because they claim to have reached the farthest attainable point. Their aim is for people to draw near unto them and find them in that position, and to feel that they, in turn, have also reached the final goal. This is what we call the setback or even the misery of 'Finality', or the 'Seal'. This ordeal has grabbed hold of philosophies

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 150.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to Dr. Auguste Forel*, p. 7

in the same way that it has taken hold of religions. How numerous have been the philosophers who considered themselves as the seal of the philosophers. They claimed that all that was needed to be said has been said, nothing is left to be taught, that they have learned it all, and have taught it to others too. As such, they claimed to have achieved wisdom in its pure form, with all its aspects, branches, and details. Such individuals have existed in the East as well as in the West; they have been part of the Islamic world as well as the world of Christianity; and they have lived in Greece as well as in the heart of Europe.

You may be surprised to know that Hegel, the great German philosopher of the XIX Century in Europe—a philosopher who presented a special model of dialectical method that generally involves and demands a process of continuous development—claimed that the dialectic expansion of thought, of philosophy, and of civilization was completed. He considered that process to have borne fruit and affirmed that nothing further could be added or achieved. The reason? Because it was presented by Hegel, the philosopher who had appeared among the German race. It was believed that the thought that was developed was the greatest of ideas and it was developed amongst the most exalted of races. Consider how a philosophy that is based on constant development and motion can turn into something regressive that obscures the clarity of mind, how it can become an ideology that confines thoughts into pre-set formats. This is the stage in which some refer to themselves as ‘orthodox’; that is to say those who wish to maintain the ‘dogmas’ and the ‘doctrines’ in the same original form, those who reject any re-evaluation, and condemn and denounce it in the name of philosophy.

We can thus see how a viewpoint can become limited, and how, within philosophy itself, it can confine thoughts to certain patterns. We see how it can immobilize ideas and dictate: ‘This is the truth; I have taught it and you have learnt it; I presented it and you have accepted it; so, take it, keep it, and don’t search further, as you already have attained unto the whole truth’. This is also what religious groups propose in this day.

Yet, if one ponders carefully, one will see that the scope of the verities presented by religion, especially in the form that we are presently considering, that is to say the Bahá'í Faith, is so vast, so universal that by accepting those verities thoughts can never become stagnated. The principles of belief are expressed in universal terms. Its teachings on Divinity, the Manifestation, Successorship, and other precepts are offered in such wise that man's liberty of thought is safeguarded without being diverted from those principles. This is because it does not enter into details or deliberate on trivialities, and it never aims to immobilise thoughts.

As stated by the Guardian of the Cause, and explicitly reiterated by the Universal House of Justice, the believers are free in their deductions of the meaning of the Text, on the condition that they do not impose their own understanding upon others³². This means that we cannot expect others to think the same way as we do; in other words, we should not limit the ideas and beliefs of others to our own understanding of a subject. When we conform to this principle, the thoughts and beliefs of every individual will soar, rather than become stagnant and unyielding.

In this Faith, the revealed or religious law (*shari'at*) takes on a form that is not incompatible with spiritual truth. In the past, disputes arose among the followers of religions about differences between religious law and the reality of those concepts. One group followed what was revealed outwardly, that is to say, the external dimension, the exoteric meaning. They are known as the people of the apparent law (*ahl-i-záhir*). The other group consisted of followers of the underlying esoteric meaning. They are referred to as the people of truth or inner reality (*ahl-i-báṭin*). In this Dispensation, however, such a conflict has totally lost its meaning, because the actual ordinances are given in a way that do not limit the individual.

Let us for example consider the Obligatory Prayer that is one of the greatest of ordinances in religious law. The provisions concerning this injunction are so broad that the requirements and restrictions have been

reduced to a bare minimum, leaving no room for anyone to create minutiae, offshoots and subsidiaries to the law. In view of the small number of binding laws that exist in the Bahá'í Faith, the believer turns with his heart towards the Obligatory Prayer. It is not regarded as a restraint, as one does not need to spend a lifetime learning the endless details for its performance. The same is true about the other laws and ordinances, as well as the matters related to the Bahá'í Administrative Order.

The explicit directive of the Guardian of the Cause to the Spiritual Assemblies, as also emphasised by the Universal House of Justice, has been to caution these Assemblies against restrain individual believers by issuing rules and regulations about trivialities. Such restrictions would also divest an Assembly from its spiritual nature³³, inasmuch as, the concept of spirituality implies broadmindedness, it requires the removal of all bigotry and intolerance, and upholds the eradication of the oppressive constraints of time and place that are amongst the attributes of the material world.

So, by now, it should be clear what is intended by the term 'broadness of vision'. This throws light on what 'Abdu'l-Bahá is referring to in the Tablet to Dr. Forel where He states: *We ... extol philosophers who are endowed with broad vision...* This issue also clarifies why the Báb rejected some of the theosophical views that were current in the Islamic Scholastic circles³⁴, and explains why Bahá'u'lláh expressed His regard for those who are endowed with wisdom, and whose knowledge is not confined to mere words.

When philosophy or wisdom is accompanied by broad mindedness, it will inevitably be shielded from a specific ethical plague. Such a moral or ethical plague is prejudice, it is fanaticism. Once prejudice and bigotry enter the realm of beliefs, all parties proscribe each other, one group of learned ones belittles another group, the devotees of one faith criticize the followers of another, the unbelievers are vilified by the band of the faithful, the pious is condemned by the transgressor, and so on. Why is it so? Because each one tries to keep his own thoughts as well as the ideas of others within the limited framework of his own

mind. That is exactly what we mean by narrow-mindedness, and that is precisely what creates fanaticism and bigotry. These characteristics are not confined to religions alone, many non-religious ideologies far exceed religions in bigotry and are coupled with dictatorial ideas. As such, they dictate that their view is final, claiming to have a monopoly on the truth, so no further path remains to be trodden, and as such no one has the right to a new and different opinion.

This is how thoughts and visions become limited, and this is when philosophers transform into people who can be defined as 'jail- keeper of ideas'. By this is meant people who, through the chill of prejudice and by way of their own mental rigidity depress the thoughts of others, deprive the minds from their essential development, and consequently rob them from the subtlety and delicacy that such an essential development would have created. Let us hope that no thinker or scholar would ever be inflicted with such a misfortune, whether in thought or action, as then he would cease to be endowed with a broad vision, and would no longer be worthy of the praise and regard of the Manifestation and the Interpreter of His Words.

Glossary of Terms

ABSTRACT, IMMATERIAL, INCORPOREAL: (*Mujarrad* - مجرد)

Something is referred to as abstract, incorporeal or immaterial when it is considered devoid of any conditions, connections, or attachments. Beings are divided into two categories: physical and spiritual. Physical beings consist of objects and corporeal bodies, and spiritual beings consist of incorporeal and intelligible existences. Abstract or incorporeal beings are in contrast to concrete or perceivable beings.

ABSURD:

A thing is commonly considered absurd when it is contrary to reason and logic. Some followers of the school of existentialism believe in absurdism (*La philosophie d'absurde*): a viewpoint asserting the human inability to find meaning in life.

ADVENT: (*Zuhur* - ظهور)

See: Manifestation

ALMIGHTY, ALL-POWERFUL: (*Qadir* - قدير)

The two words *qadir* (all-powerful, almighty), and *muqtadir* (omnipotent, or most powerful) are two derivatives or the word *qadir* (potent, mighty); and are both amongst the attributes of God as mentioned

in the Qur'an. The term *qadír* in the Quranic verse, ...*and He hath power over all things**, is the superlative form of *qádír* (mighty).

ANCIENT: (*Qadím* - قديم)

See : Pre-existent

ANTHROPOMORPHISM:

In general anthropomorphism refers to the attribution of unique human characteristics to any non-human being, whether natural or supernatural. In religion and mythology, it is mainly directed towards deities or to the divine Reality. The term is derived from the two Greek words: *anthrōpos* (human) and *morphē* (form). In such a school of thought anthropomorphic deities are depicted in human form and exhibit human traits.

ARISTOTLE (384-322 BC): (ارسطو)

Aristotle was the famous pupil of Plato and one of the greatest of the world philosophers. In Islamic philosophy he was referred to as the 'first teacher' and he was also known as *Aristutalis*, and more frequently as *Aristu*. Most of his works were translated into Arabic during the reign of Al-Ma'mún, the Abbasid Caliph. His works were keenly studied and expanded upon by Islamic philosophers, directly as well as through analysts. The study of logic was established by Aristotle. He was also the founder of the Peripatetic school of philosophy. The term means 'the ones walking about'. It may be derived from the fact that Aristotle walked about as he discoursed with his students, or from the name of the covered walkways that he and his disciples frequently took known as *peripatoi*. The works of Aristotle in the fields of philosophy, logic, politics and physical science were used and studied by scientists throughout centuries.

Referring to Aristotle, Bahá'u'lláh writes in the Tablet of Wisdom:

* *Qur'an* (Rodwell's tr.), The Table (*Má'idih*), 5:120.

*...Then came Aristotle, the well-known man of knowledge. He it is who discovered the power of gaseous matter. These men who stand out as leaders of the people and are pre-eminent among them, one and all acknowledged their belief in the immortal Being Who holdeth in His grasp the reins of all sciences...**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá refers to Aristotle as follows:

Know that the idea of the unity of existence is ancient and is not restricted to the Theosophists and the Sufis alone. Indeed, it was espoused by some of the Greek philosophers, such as Aristotle, who said: “The uncompounded Reality is all things, but it is not any single one of them.” “Uncompounded” stands here in contrast to “composed”—that is to say, that solitary Reality, which is sanctified and exalted above composition and division, has resolved itself into countless forms. Thus, real Existence is all things, but it is not any single one of them.†

AUTHORITATIVE INTERPRETATION: (تبيين - *Tabyyín*)

Such a method of interpretation allows for a detailed explanation or clarification of the verses and words of a Sacred Text. Bahá’u’lláh Himself explained and elucidated many of His own Writings at the request of several of the believers such as Zaynu’l-Muqarrabín. Later, the interpretation of the Holy Writ was turned over to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and then to the Guardian of the Faith.

BODY: (*Jism* - جسم)

That which is formed through a combination of various proportions of the four elements is known as ‘body’ or ‘matter’ (also referred to as substance). A body is therefore a composite and separable entity. According to the philosophers, a body is composed essentially of ‘prime

* Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 147.

† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 82, p. 335.

matter' (*hayúlá*) and of 'form' (*šúrat*). A distinction must be made between two cognate terms *jasad* and *jism*. Although the two are synonymously used and often translated into English as 'body', *jasad* is used specifically to denote mineral substances and compositions, while *jism* can also refer to heavenly or ethereal bodies.

BOUNTY, DIVINE GRACE OR DIVINE EMANATIONS: (*Fayḍ va Fuyúdat-i-Iláhiyyih* - فيض و فيوضات الهية)

In philosophy as well as in mystical and Sufi terminology, effusion or emanation (*fayḍ*) implies the infusion of knowledge in the heart through inspiration and without the effort of learning. *Fayḍ* is also taken to mean grace, favour, mercy, munificence, and assistance; and that consists of a perpetual and unceasing action, in return of which the one performing the action has no personal interest, nor any expectation of compensation. As an example, the sun is the source of bounty, and the rays of the sun are the bounties that emanate from it. Likewise, creation came into being through the divine bounty that emanated from the All-Bountiful One: the divine Essence.

According to the Bahá'í Teachings, divine bounty or emanation is unlimited; it has no beginning and no end, it never ceases, its manifestation is apparent in all stages of existence, and each and every created thing is regarded as one of the tokens of the bounty of God.

The Most Great Emanation (*fayḍ-i-a`zam*) is the Word of God, and the Most Holy Emanation (*fayḍ-i-aqdas*) is the revelation of the True One in the Person of the Manifestation (*ḥadrát-i-'ilm*). The Holy Emanation (*fayḍ-i-muqaddas*) is the reflection and effulgence of the divine realm in the world of creation. In other words, the inherent or essential divine mercy consists of the revitalization of existence through the Most Holy Emanation, which contains the eternal realities, the forms, and archetypes of creation that exist within His intrinsic and essential knowledge. The attributive mercy of God is vouchsafed unto all forms

of beings according to their capacity and receptiveness, by means of the Holy Emanation.*

BUDDHISTS:

Buddhists are the followers of Buddha (563-483 BC), who was regarded as a sage and a great thinker. He called people to turn away from self-indulgence, and invited them to live a life of truthfulness, rectitude of conduct and chastity of the soul. He encouraged them to tread the path leading to self-surrender. 'Abdu'l-Bahá confirms in *Some Answered Questions* that Buddha established a new religion.

CAUSALITY, THE PRINCIPLE OF: (*Aşl-I-Illiyyat* - اصل علّیت)

See: Cause and Effect.

CAUSE AND EFFECT: (*Illat Va Ma'Lúl* - علّت و معلول)

Anything that influences something other than itself is a cause, and the outcome is the effect. Aristotle has divided causes into four categories: efficient, material, formal, and final. The 'primal Cause' or the Cause of causes is attributed to God. In *Some Answered Questions*, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the four causal types stated by Aristotle:

... [T]he existence of each and every thing depends upon four causes: the efficient cause, the material cause, the formal cause, and the final cause. So this chair has a creator who is a carpenter, a matter which is wood, a form which is that of a chair, and a purpose which is to serve as a seat. Therefore, this chair is essentially originated, for it is preceded by, and its existence is conditioned upon, a cause. This is called essential or intrinsic origination.†

* For further reading, refer to *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 1, pp. 60-61.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 80, p. 323.

CERTITUDE: (*Yaqín* - يقين)

Certitude is the firm and resolute conviction about the truth of a matter in such manner that the doubt of the sceptics will not shake that certainty. When knowledge reaches total conviction (*ittiqán*), it becomes certitude. The sages and mystics consider that which is confidently known by the heart as ‘certitude’, and regard that which is perceived and observed by the sight, by the senses and the mind as ‘knowledge’. Describing the stages of certitude, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

...the station of Positive Knowledge... is the conviction gained through logic and reason. The station of Perceived Assurance† is that certitude attained from discerning a truth. And the station of Absolute Certitude‡ is to reach the fulfilment of that truth...§*

COMPOSITION: (*Tarkíb* - تركيب)

See: Formation

CONCEPTION - THOUGHT: (*Taşavvur* - تصور)

In psychology, the formation of the image of something in the mind is known as a thought, a concept or an idea. In general, abstract ideas are also referred to as concepts. The collection of thoughts that a person has about life and about the world of existence also forms their concept of the world. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

Consider that man’s contemplative powers produce two kinds of conceptions. One kind consists in sound and true conceptions, which, when combined with resolution, become outwardly realized, such as proper arrangements, wise opinions, scientific discoveries, and technological inventions. The other consists in false

* ‘*Ilmu’l-Yaqín*.

† ‘*Aynu’l-Yaqín*.

‡ *Haqqu’l-Yaqín* (also referred to as Indubitable truth).

§ Provisional translation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Má’idiy-i-Ásmání*, vol. 9, pp. 100-101.

*ideas and baseless imaginations, which yield no fruit and have no reality. They surge like the waves of the sea of delusion and fade away like idle dreams.**

CONCRETE REALITIES: (*Maḥsúsát* - محسوسات)

See: Sensible Realities

CONSCIENCE - (EMOTIONS, SENTIMENTS): (*Vijdán* - وجدان)

The combination of conditions and inner feelings that are produced in a person, such as delight and grief are referred to as conscience. It alludes to an inner power of perceptiveness and consciousness. The sentiments and conditions that are related to one's conscience stand in contrast to the conditions of the mind, the intellect, or to rational considerations. The inner developments related to the conscience consist of intuitive insight, and differ from knowledge based on reason. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

... [T]he conscience of man is sacred and to be respected; and that liberty thereof produces widening of ideas, amendment of morals, improvement of conduct, disclosure of the secrets of creation, and manifestation of the hidden verities of the contingent world...†

CONFUCIANS:

The Confucians are the followers of the philosophy of Confucius (Master Kung) who was a celebrated Chinese thinker and philosopher. Confucius lived from 551 to 479 BC, and founded a set of moral and ethical principles that emphasize the adherence to family, and to national traditions and customs. In his views and ideologies, Confucius placed a great importance on brotherhood, piety, respect for religious and social traditions, perseverance, morality, and an upright conduct.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 71, p. 291.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *A Traveler's Narrative*, p. 91.

Referring to him, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states: ... *Confucius renewed the ancient conduct and morals...**

CONTINGENT (ORIGINATED - TRANSIENT): (*Hádith* - حادث)

Contingent, phenomenal, or originated refer to that which has come into existence, having not existed before. Contingent, also known as 'created' is the opposite of pre-existent (*qadím*). For example, the sun is pre-existent while its rays are considered to be originated or contingent. 'Abdu'l-Bahá has given a detailed explanation of pre-existence and origination in *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 80, pp. 323-5.

CREATE: (*Khalq* - خلق)

To fashion something from nothingness or from a previous form is referred to as the act of 'creation'. Other terminologies employed are 'to make' or 'to produce'. In Islamic philosophy there is a distinction between two types of creation: *khalq* and *ibdá`*. The former may be a result of the work of God as well as that of man (such as the creation of an artwork by man). But the latter (*ibdá`*) is confined to God alone and consists of the creation of a being from absolute nothingness; it is regarded as 'pure creation' and the Almighty Lord is its fashioner and protector. Divine creation is continuous. According to the Bahá'í Writings, creation is essentially originated or contingent, and is pre-existent in time. Creation has existed from time immemorial, and no beginning can be imagined for it. Likewise, it will everlastingly continue to exist and will never end. In the Bahá'í view, creation is perfect, though the perfections endowed upon the world of creation only become gradually manifest. Man is distinguished from all other created beings in the contingent world by virtue of the human soul. Man has been created to attain the knowledge of and the faith in God, and to perform goodly

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 188.

deeds. The dependence of creatures upon God is a dependence of emanation, and the contingent world continuously receives His all-encompassing grace.

DEDUCTION BY ANALOGIC REASONING, SYLLOGISM: (*Qiyás* - قياس)

The term *qiyás* in common usage refers to estimation, evaluation, and also a comparison of two things. In Islamic theology, syllogism or *qiyás* refers to a process of reasoning in which the ruling of a given proposition that is assumed to be true is transferred to a new proposition. Such process is based on the fact that the operative cause of a ruling is shared by and is common to both propositions. In Logic, syllogism (*qiyás*) refers to a form of deductive reasoning.

DETERMINISM AND FREE WILL: (*Jabr Va Ikhtiyár* - جبر و اختيار)

In theological terms, determinism^{*}, also known as pre-destination (*jabr*), is the thesis that man has no power or freedom of will, and is thus compelled in all his actions that in turn are determined and decreed by God. In contrast, the concept of free will (*ikhtiyár*) proposes that man exercises control over his actions and decisions.

These two opposing views have been a major subject of discussion in scholastic theology (*'ilm-i-kalám*) among Muslims. Two schools of thought emerged as a result, each one presenting reasons and arguments, and providing lengthy and details theological and philosophical debates to refute the other. One school of thought (known as the *jabriyyih*) upheld the 'deterministic or predestination view', while the other (called *qadariyyih*) believed in 'free will'. As such, the subject of pre-destination and free will has been one of the greatest, most controversial, and most complex debates in scholastic theology and among Islamic scholars and denominations, inasmuch as the Qur'an refers both to man's free will as well as his pre-destiny. There are, obviously, arguments against each of these schools of thought. For example, if man

* T.N.: Similar to the concept of fatalism.

be considered as totally compelled in what he does, he cannot be held responsible for his actions, and the coming of the Prophets and the revelation of Holy Scripture for his guidance would be futile. Consequently, the subject of reward and punishment which is the foundation and corner stone of religious thinking would be pointless. On the other hand, if man be regarded as totally free, given God's omniscience, that would imply that He would have been aware of the actions of men prior to those actions having taken place. Therefore, it would be rationally impossible for man's deeds to be unknown to God prior to the actual deed. This would imply that man is not free in his actions. The complications inherent in these two schools of thought led the Islamic scholars to turn to and adopt an intermediary position, namely, 'the Middle Way' (*amrun bayna 'l-amrayn*: a position between the two positions), that allows man to be viewed in a position somewhere in between pure predestiny or compulsion, and absolute freedom of action and will. This view in essence states that man's actions are directly the creation of his own will. The Writings of the Faith give a detailed explanation on this subject. In a Tablet addressed to Ghulám Ḥusayn Mírzá of Shíráz, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

He is God! O servant of the One true God! The statement 'Neither compulsion nor deference, and neither aversion nor dominion; but the Middle Way', signifieth that deeds are committed by man but aid and assistance cometh from God. Unless His bountiful favour and assistance be received, 'all on the earth shall pass away',† but with His aid and favour, 'every one acteth after his own manner...'.‡ And yet, 'to all—both to these and those—will we prolong the gifts of thy Lord; for not to any shall the gifts of thy Lord be denied'.§*

* T.N.: Reference to an Islamic Tradition.

† *Qur'an* (Rodwell translation), Sura 55 - The Merciful; 55:23.

‡ *Qur'an* (Rodwell translation), Sura 17 – The Night Journey; 17:86.

§ *Qur'an* (Rodwell translation), Sura 17 – The Night Journey; 17:21.

*If the wind bloweth not, that is if divine assistance be withdrawn, the ship cannot move. It can neither sail to the east nor to the west. But with the aid of the wind, the ship can be carried in whichever direction the rudder turneth. Thus the motion of the ship, either to the east or to the west, dependeth on the wind's assistance, but its course will follow the direction of the rudder, however it may be inclined. The words 'no deference,' signify that the ship cannot move by its own power whereas 'no compulsion' implieth that by means of its rudder, it is free to move in any direction. This is the meaning of the Middle Way. Ponder a while upon this subject so that thou mayest discern the truth of the matter. The Glory of Glories rest upon thee...**

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this subject further in *Some Answered Questions*:

...Certain matters are subject to the free will of man, such as acting with justice and fairness, or injustice and iniquity—in other words, the choice of good or evil actions. It is clear and evident that the will of man figures greatly in these actions. But there are certain matters where man is forced and compelled, such as sleep, death, sickness, failing powers, misfortune, and material loss: These are not subject to the will of man and he is not accountable for them, for he is compelled to endure them. But he is free in the choice of good and evil actions, and it is of his own accord that he performs them...

Moreover, man's stillness or motion itself is conditioned upon the aid of God. Should this assistance fail to reach him, he can do neither good nor evil. But when the assistance of the all-bounteous Lord confers existence upon man, he is capable of both good and evil. And should that assistance be cut off, he would become

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Muntakhabáti az Makátib-i 'Abdul-Bahá*, vol. 3, p. 19.

absolutely powerless. That is why the aid and assistance of God are mentioned in the Sacred Scriptures. This condition can be likened to that of a ship that moves by the power of wind or steam. Should this power be cut off, the ship would become entirely unable to move. Nevertheless, in whatever direction the rudder is turned, the power of the steam propels the ship in that direction. If the rudder is turned to the east, the ship moves eastward, and if it is directed to the west, the ship moves west. This motion does not arise from the ship itself, but from the wind or steam.

In like manner, all the doings of man are sustained by the power of divine assistance, but the choice of good or evil belongs to him alone.....

*Our meaning is that the choice of good and evil belongs to man, but that under all circumstances he is dependent upon the life-sustaining assistance of Divine Providence. The sovereignty of God is great indeed, and all are held captive in the grasp of His power. The servant can do nothing of his own will alone: God is almighty and all-powerful and bestows His assistance upon all creation.**

DISCOVER OR UNVEIL – INNER REVELATION: (*Kashf* - كشف)

Discovery (*kashf*) refers to the act of something being made visible or apparent. It also implies gaining knowledge about something, to find, to reveal or to unveil. Discovery is also one of the steps taken in the path of scientific work that directs and guides the mind of man towards scientific theories and explorations. In fact, discovery is gaining knowledge about a reality and a verity that was previously unknown, and that has become known and revealed through research and scientific exploration. In Sufi and mystical terminology, the term implies gaining direct knowledge of the hidden meanings or invisible realities that are unattainable by reason. When such an inner revelation takes

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 70, pp. 287-290.

place in the material realm, it is known as *kashf* (mystical insight, clairvoyance), and if it happens in the world of dreams it is referred to as *shuhúd* (illumination, intuition or prophetic dream). For an extensive explanation of the subject of *kashf* and *shuhúd* in Islamic mysticism, refer to the *Farhang-i-Ash`ár-i-Háfiz*, pp. 579-587.

DISTINCTION OR SEPARATION: (*Faşl* - فصل)

In terms of logic, distinction (*faşl*) refers to the existence of a specific and essential quality or attribute in a thing which distinguishes it from other things, and by which it can be identified. For example, the power of speech is the specific and distinguishing feature in man, and distinguishes and differentiates him from other animals that may share many similar traits with him. In this example, speech is the distinctive feature between man and other animals.

DIVINE UNITY - MONOTHEISM: (*Tawhíd* - توحيد)

The doctrine of divine unity or the oneness of God, also known as the concept of monotheism, is the core principle in Islam, and constitutes the foremost article of Muslim profession. It asserts the existence of a God Who is sanctified from duality and likeness. Muslim scholars regard the doctrine of divine unity to fall into three categories: The unity of divine actions, of divine attributes, and of divine essence. They consider it possible to attain unto the station of *tawhíd* through two procedures: the theoretical or intellectual path ('*ilmí*), and the intuitive way ('*ayní*). The former is attained through reasoning and the rational faculty of man, while the latter is through inner revelation and illumination (*kashf*) or through visions (*shuhúd*) and is bestowed through divine inspiration.

Bahá'u'lláh explains the following regarding Divine Unity:

...Divine Unity can be perceived as having a twofold station. One is the station of existential Oneness whereby the entire creation is represented by the letter of negation, and God alone is*

* *Tawhíd-i-Vujúdi.*

singled out with that of affirmation. That is to say, all things besides God are regarded as non-existent. By this is meant that every contingent being hath been and will continue to be as utter nothingness before the tokens of His revelation or allusions to His Name. 'All things shall perish except Himself' meaning that in His presence, no created thing is deemed worthy of existence, or can even be regarded as extant. Thus it is that despite the fact that His creation hath ever been and shall always continue to be, it hath been said: 'God was alone, there was none else besides Him; He will always remain what He hath ever been'. By this is meant that contingent beings have, for ever, been evanescent before the sanctuary of His holy presence. According to the concept of Existential Oneness, all creation fadeth into nothingness and passeth away, while only the countenance of the one true God remaineth imperishable, ever-lasting and eternal.*

The other station is that of perceivable Oneness[†], and this is when the tokens of His Divinity are manifest in the world of being, when the evidences of His everlasting Manifestation and the effulgent revelation of the light of His singleness are clearly visible in all things, even as it hath been revealed in the heavenly Book: 'We will surely show them Our signs in the world and within themselves'.[‡] From this standpoint, the glorious tokens of the uncreated Reality are manifest and resplendent throughout this contingent world.[§]

* *Qur'an* 28:88.

† *Tawhīd-i-Shuhūdī*.

‡ *Qur'an* 41:55.

§ Provisional translation from a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh (*Iqtidárát*, pp107-108). For further passages on Divine Unity, refer to *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, sections XXIV, XXVIII, LXXXIV. 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Writings published in *Foundations of World Unity* pp 67-68 are among some of the many passages that throw light on the subject of Divine Unity.

DIVINITY: (*Ulúhíyyat* - الوهيت)

Divinity or Godhead is the station of the single Supreme Being that embraces all the divine Names and Attributes. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

O spiritual youth! Praise thou God that thou hast found thy way into the Kingdom of Splendours, and hast rent asunder the veil of vain imaginings, and that the core of the inner mystery hath been made known unto thee.

This people, all of them, have pictured a god in the realm of the mind, and worship that image which they have made for themselves. And yet that image is comprehended, the human mind being the comprehender thereof, and certainly the comprehender is greater than that which lieth within its grasp; for imagination is but the branch, while mind is the root; and certainly the root is greater than the branch. Consider then, how all the peoples of the world are bowing the knee to a fancy of their own contriving, how they have created a creator within their own minds, and they call it the Fashioner of all that is -- whereas in truth it is but an illusion. Thus are the people worshipping only an error of perception.

But that Essence of Essences, that Invisible of Invisibles, is sanctified above all human speculation, and never to be overtaken by the mind of man. Never shall that immemorial Reality lodge within the compass of a contingent being. His is another realm, and of that realm no understanding can be won. No access can be gained thereto; all entry is forbidden there. The utmost one can say is that Its existence can be proved, but the conditions of Its existence are unknown.

That such an Essence doth exist, the philosophers and learned doctors one and all have understood; but whenever they tried to learn something of Its being, they were left bewildered and dismayed, and at the end, despairing, their hopes in ruins, they went their way, out of this life. For to comprehend the state and the

inner mystery of that Essence of Essences, that Most Secret of Secrets, one needs must have another power and other faculties; and such a power, such faculties would be more than humankind can bear, wherefore no word of Him can come to them.

*If, for example, one be endowed with the senses of hearing, of taste, of smell, of touch—but be deprived of the sense of sight, it will not be possible for one to gaze about; for sight cannot be realized through hearing or tasting, or the sense of smell or touch. In the same way, with the faculties at man's disposal it is beyond the realm of possibility for him to grasp that unseeable Reality, holy and sanctified above all the sceptics' doubts. For this, other faculties are required, other senses; should such powers become available to him, then could a human being receive some knowledge of that world; otherwise, never.**

DOGMATISM:

A philosophical doctrine or a system of ideas based on resolute premises.

DOSTOYEVSKY (1821-1880):

Dostoyevsky was one of the most famous Russian novelists. He completed his education in the field of engineering in St. Petersburg, but is renowned for his literary works, the first one being *Poor Folk*. He created legendary writings such as *The House of the Dead*, *Crime and Punishment*, *The Idiot*, and *The Brothers Karamazov*. In 1849 Dostoyevsky was sentenced to death for his political views, but he managed to escape execution and subsequently spent some years (1850-1854) in prison. His writings are among the outstanding literary works in the world.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, n° 24, p. 53.

DREAM (*Ru'yá* - رؤيا)

That which man sees during his sleep is known as a dream. In olden times it was thought that through the human soul's contact with heavenly spirits, certain images were imprinted upon it enabling it to become aware of future events. If such communication occurred while one was awake the result was called 'revelation' and if it was during one's sleep it was called 'prophetic dream'. When a dream results from material reasons or physical conditions, or when it is affected by the events of one's life, it is nothing but vain and idle thoughts, but if the spiritual principles and exalted influences affect it, it results in spiritual discoveries.*

ELEMENT: (*Unşur* - عنصر)

An element is the primary and simple constituent matter of an object. From a chemical viewpoint, elements cannot be divided into more simple matter. Ancient philosophy believed that various objects were composed of four basic elements that were regarded to be water, earth, wind and fire. The Arab philosophers adopted the word *ustuquş* (meaning primordial element) to refer to an element. The word was derived from the Greek word *stoichéion*.† In ancient philosophy and astronomy, it was believed that the celestial fathers (*ábá'-i 'alaví*)—referring to the seven planets, namely the Moon, Mercury, Venus, the Sun, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn—were wedded to the earthly mothers (*ummahát*) or the four elements; and that from this union resulted the mineral, vegetable, and animal kingdoms that were referred to as the three hybrids or offsprings (*mawálid-i-thaláthih*).

EMOTIONS: (*Vijdán* - وجدان)

See: Conscience

* Also see: *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, LXXIX p. 151, LXXXII, p. 159; and 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, pp. 261 and 291, chapters 61 & 71.

† T.N.: *Stoichéion*: In ancient Greek, the word literally meant syllable (the basic unit from which a word is formed).

ESOTERIC INTERPRETATION*: (*Ta'vil Or Ta'wil* - تاویل)

The term *ta'vil* refers to an allegorical and inner interpretation of the Divine Word and of the verses of Holy Script. The Qur'an, for example, is believed to have many levels of meanings, and is considered to possess an outer (*al-záhir*) and several inner (*al-báṭin*) significances. Esoteric or mystical commentaries that deal with inner meanings are called *ta'vil* or *ta'wil*, which implies taking the text back to its origin. The word *ta'vil* is derived from the word *avval*, meaning first or original. Such an interpretation implies, therefore, that a verse of the Qur'an would be referred to its source, for which an inner interpretation or commentary would be provided. This type of interpretation is in fact a kind of an elucidation or analysis that goes beyond the simple apparent explanation of the verse, in which the interpreter aims to use his own analytical interpretation to distinguish the allusions or metaphors in the verse and to expound on the inner meanings behind them.

In one of His Tablets Bahá'u'lláh writes:

Do not falsely interpret the Divine Word, and deprive not yourselves of its outward and manifest meaning, for none knoweth its true significance except God. The Most Great Name beareth Me witness! They who have failed to perceive the outward meaning of the Words, and claim to know their inner significances—such men have been and always will be lying impostors. Blessed are they that observe that which the outward biddeth and strive with all eagerness to attain unto the hidden meaning...†

In another Tablet:

* T.N.: Also referred to as: Subjective hermeneutics, symbolic, figurative, allegorical and spiritual explanations or interpretations.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, *Ganjiniy-i-Hudúd va Ahkám*, p. 340.

*By 'interpretation'** is intended that none may be deprived of the apparent meaning of the words, or fail to grasp their purpose. For example, if the heaven of Divine Will should reveal the injunction 'wash your faces...', do not interpret the reference to such ablutions as the cleansing of one's inner countenance[†], or its purifying with the waters of mystical insight and the like. How often doth a person's face remain sullied and defiled due to such interpretations, while imagining himself to be acting according to the principles of the Faith of God; whereas in fact the obvious intention here is that the face should be washed with physical water. The inner meanings of certain of the Divine Words, however, may be expounded, if these interpretations do not become a source of idle fancies and vain imaginings, or be bereft of the Divine purpose...

Some souls who call themselves dervishes have interpreted all of God's laws and ordinances. When they are told that prayer[‡] is amongst the weightiest of Divine ordinances, they say: 'By prayer is meant supplication[§], and since we were born in the position of supplication, we have already performed the true prayer at birth.' Such a hapless soul is even deprived of the literal meanings of the words, how much more their hidden significance. The vain imaginings of the heedless are innumerable and immeasurable. In brief, they have, through idleness and sloth, falsely interpreted all the heavenly ordinances that serve as a mighty stronghold for the protection of the world and its security. They have chosen a life of seclusion in monasteries, where they busy themselves with naught but food and sleep. They acknowledge all that is said regarding spiritual knowledge, but apart from a handful of souls

* *Ta`vîl*: Esoteric Commentary.

† The soul.

‡ *Şalât*.

§ *Du`â*.

who have tasted the sweetness of His Words and truly recognized the purpose of His Revelation, most of them display not a single sign of the warmth of the love of God.

Some of the interpretations that have been mentioned earlier describing the term 'wisdom' are valid, each in its own way, for they are not contrary to Divine principles and precepts. In the case of verses concerning the Divine injunctions and prohibitions regarding acts of worship, atonement, transgressions and the like, the intention hath been, and will always be, to act according to the apparent and literal meaning of the verses. However, those divinely revealed verses mentioning the Day of Resurrection and the last Hour—whether mentioned in the Books of former times or in the Qur'an—are mostly subject to interpretation, and 'none knoweth the inner meaning thereof except God'.†*

These subjects have been clearly explained in the Book of Certitude. Whoever doth ponder this truth will discover therein all that hath been hidden from the eyes of men. Consider that which the All-Bountiful—magnified be His utterance—hath sent down in the Book: 'To the sun it is not given to overtake the moon, nor doth the night outstrip the day'.‡ This blessed verse hath been interpreted time and again in esoteric terms and endlessly commented upon by the divines, each finding a different meaning within it to suit his own convictions. And yet, 'where doth knowledge rank, and where do idle fancies and vain imaginings stand?' The one whom people consider the king of interpreters,§ that is to say Qāḍī Bayḍawī, hath claimed that this verse was revealed as a refutation of sun worship! Consider how far he is from the wellspring of knowledge, despite being thought an expert by the people. The reins of knowledge lie

* *Hikmat*. See the topic 'wisdom' in this Glossary.

† *Qur'an* 3:5.

‡ *Qur'an* (Rodwell tr.), Sura *Ya, Sin*, 3:40.

§ *Sulṭānu 'l-Mufasssirin*.

within the grasp of the divine Omnipotence; He bestoweth them upon whomsoever He willeth.

Most references to this Revelation that have streamed forth from the Pen of Glory and recorded in the Books of the past also have inner meanings. For example, it is stated: ‘...[A]nd the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before [the Lord]’; and also: ‘The tabernacle shall be reared up in the mount’,† as it hath come to pass; and further: ‘...[A] tabernacle that shall not be taken down; not one of the stakes thereof shall ever be removed, neither shall any of the cords thereof be broken’.‡ All these passages are symbolic. A fair-minded person can recognize which words require interpretation and which are to be taken literally and as outwardly revealed.*

In brief, that which will cleanse mankind from all defilements and will ensure its true welfare and tranquillity in this day is none other than the Faith of God and His Religion. Thus hath the outpouring of Divine utterance rained down from the heaven of knowledge as a token of grace upon thee. Render thanks unto thy Lord, lift up thy voice and say: All praise be to Thee, O Thou the Beloved of all such as have recognized Thee! Glory be to Thee, O the Desire of all worlds, and thanks be to Thee, O Thou in Whose grasp is the empire of whatsoever is in the heavens and on the earth.§

‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

One of the binding exhortations and explicit admonitions of the Greatest Name is to close the doors of interpretation. All

* Nev’im (Prophets); Michah: 1:4.

† Kings James Bible, Exodus; 26:30.

‡ King James Bible, Isiah; 33:20.

§ Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh, *Iqtidárát*, pp. 279, 283-286.

*should adhere to the explicit text of the Book, that is to say the literal meaning of the words current amongst men.**

He further writes:

It behooveth us to carefully reflect upon the explicit Holy Writ. We should adhere firmly to the precepts of the Faith of God, and avoid the false interpretations of the divines and the perturbations provoked by the learned, as these cause souls to become chilled and sorrowful, leading to lethargy and indifference, to agitation and perplexity.†

ESSENCE: (*Dhát* - ذات)

The essence of a thing is its existential reality. The essence of each thing is known only through its attributes; otherwise, that essence is unknown and unfathomed.‡

ESSENTIAL NECESSITY: (*Luzúm-I-dhátí* - لزوم ذاتی)

In every being there exist attributes that are inseparable from it. The sum total of all such attributes constitutes the quality of that being. This is to say that if any of those attributes are removed, the object no longer remains as previously defined.

ETERNAL: (*Qadím* - قدیم)

See: Pre-existent

ETHER (OR AETHER): (*أثير*)

The word 'aether' in ancient Greek meant 'pure or fresh air', and was another term for the clear sky. Hájí Mullá Hádí Sabzivári§ has also taken

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh, *Ganjiniy-i-Hudúd va Ahkám*, p. 341.

† Provisional Translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 8, p. 175. Also, *Kitáb-i-Badí*; pp. 20-21.

‡ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 253, chapter 59.

§ T.N.: An Iranian mystic theologian, philosopher and poet (1797-1873 BC.).

it to mean ‘unconstrained’ and ‘all-powerful’. In Sabzivári’s view there are two kinds of matter: earthly and ethereal. Ethereal or heavenly matter or objects are purer and more unrestrained than earthly ones. In ancient times, ether was believed to be fluid, diluted, and weightless, and was considered to be a substance that filled the space above the terrestrial atmosphere. It was also known as the fiery sphere (*kuriyi nár*) that was thought to be above the sphere of air. The ethereal wheel (*charkh-i-athír*) or ethereal firmament (*falak-i-athír*) are other terms used for the fiery celestial sphere (*falak-i-nár*). It was believed that the ethereal sphere could not be rent asunder or conglutinated, and that, being in the utmost subtlety and purity, it would not undergo change or corruption. Aether was also called quintessence (from *quinta essentia*: fifth element). Quintessence was also thought to be heavenly, in other words, not of the world of matter, and was believed to have the power of life.

In one of His Tablets ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

...Gabriel soundeth the clarion call of ‘O Thou Glory of Glories’ in the ethereal heavens,† while the voice of wisdom raiseth the triumphal cry of ‘O my Lord, the Most High’‡ in the realms above...§*

In a Tablet addressed to Áqá Mullá ‘Alí Akbar-i-Qúchání, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains the meaning of the following section of the Tablet of Wisdom: ...*The world of existence came into being through the heat generated...,*** as follows:

‘The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that

* *Yá Bahá’u’l-Abhá.*

† T.N.: Upper heaven: Referring to the space encompassing the earth’s atmosphere (*Farhangi Lughát-i Muntakhabih*, vol.2, p. 594).

‡ *Yá Rabbi al-A’lá.*

§ Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Makátib*, vol. 2, p. 156.

** Bahá’u’lláh; *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 140.

*which is its recipient'. That is to say: The substance and primary matter of contingent beings is the ethereal power, which is invisible and known only through its effects, such as electricity, heat, and light—these are vibrations of that power, and this is established and proven in natural philosophy and is known as the ethereal matter. This ethereal matter is itself both the active force and its recipient; in other words, it is the sign of the Primal Will in the phenomenal world. 'God created man by the Primal Will and the Primal Will by itself'. The ethereal substance is, therefore, the active force since light, heat and electricity appear from it. It is also the recipient, for as vibrations take place in it, they become visible. For instance, light is a vibration occurring in that ethereal substance. From these vibrations the power of sight is affected, and the result is vision. Likewise, vibrations occur in air and from them the eardrum is affected. That effect is sound and the result is hearing.**

EXISTENCE, WORLD OF EXISTENCE, UNIVERSE: (*Kawn* – گون)

The term 'kawn' refers to the world of existence, as well as to the state of existence. In English it is related to the verb 'to be'. The word 'existence' derives from the Latin word *existere* meaning to become, to be, or to appear. It denotes something coming forth from nothingness, and is used in contrast to 'corruption' or 'annihilation' that implies the process of ceasing to exist, and the dissociation and separation of the elements. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains:

...For in this universe of God's, which appears in the utmost perfection, beauty, and grandeur, the luminous bodies of the material universe are infinite...†

In another Tablet He writes:

* Provisional translation from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 333, chapter 81.

*...So it is with regard to the universe and its corruption, existence and non-existence. Every contingent being is made up of different and numerous elements and the existence of everything is a result of composition. That is to say, when between simple elements a composition takes place, a being arises; the creation of beings comes about in this way. And when that composition is upset, it is followed by decomposition, the elements disintegrate, and that being becomes annihilated. That is to say, the annihilation of everything consists in the decomposition and the separation of elements....**

EXISTENCE - BEING: (*Wujúd* or *Vujúd* - وجود)

The term 'existence' implies the realization of a thing, either in the mind or outside of it. It may be material and empirical, or it may be rational. Existence is distinct from the quiddity of a thing. The quiddity of an entity is its fundamental or rational nature, while its existence is its actual and factual realization. Essential Existence pertains unto God, and other than the Almighty, all that exists has a conditional or dependent existence that is derived from the Essential Existence. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

...All creatures in this contingent world exist through the grace of the Source of Being, that Source which giveth rise to the existence of every created thing. He is beyond all egress and regress, all ascent and descent, is immeasurably exalted above all comparison and change and sanctified beyond similitude, inscrutable to all minds. Verily, this is that Source from which all things derive their very existence ...†

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Bahá'í World Faith* - 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 294.

† Provisional translation from a Tablet of Abdu'l-Bahá, *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, volume 2, p. 140.

And further, in relation to the division of existence into the two kinds of 'external' (*vujúd-i-a`yání*)* and 'contingent' (*vujúd-i-inkání*)†, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

...These realities and capacities were never utterly non-existent. Rather, in the plane of being, they were in a state of contingent existence, but not having external existence. There are many distinctions between a contingent and an external existence.‡

In a Tablet addressed to Mr. Wolcott, the Master writes:

Existence is of two kinds: one is the existence of God which is beyond the comprehension of man. He, the invisible, the lofty and the incomprehensible, is preceded by no cause but rather is the Originator of the cause of causes. He, the Ancient, hath had no beginning and is the all-independent. The second kind of existence is the human existence. It is a common existence, comprehensible to the human mind, is not ancient, is dependent and hath a cause to it. The mortal substance does not become eternal and vice versa; the human kind does not become a Creator and vice versa. The transformation of the innate substance is impossible.

In the world of existence—that which is comprehensible—there are stages of mortality: the first stage is the mineral world, next is the vegetable world. In the latter world the mineral doth exist but with a distinctive feature which is the vegetable characteristic. Likewise in the animal world, the mineral and vegetable characteristics are present and in addition the characteristics of the animal world are to be found, which are the faculties of hearing and of sight. In the human world the characteristics of the

* T.N.: Also referred to as material, phenomenal, substantial, corporeal, or actual existence.

† T.N.: Also referred to as potential existence.

‡ Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 2, p. 39.

mineral, vegetable and animal worlds are found and in addition that of the human kind, namely the intellectual characteristic, which discovereth the realities of things and comprehendeth universal principles.

*Man, therefore, on the plane of the contingent world is the most perfect being. By man is meant the perfect individual, who is like unto a mirror in which the divine perfections are manifested and reflected. But the sun doth not descend from the height of its sanctity to enter into the mirror, but when the latter is purified and turned towards the Sun of Truth, the perfections of this Sun, consisting of light and heat, are reflected and manifested in that mirror. These souls are the Divine Manifestations of God...**

Also, regarding another division of existence into ‘conceptual’ (*vujúd-i-‘ilmí*)[†] and ‘material’ (*vujúd-i-‘ayní*)[‡], ‘Abdu’l-Bahá expounds:

... Existence is of two kinds: conceptual and material. Prior to being embodied in material forms, all created things existed on a conceptual plane, that is to say they were entities within the knowledge of God. They subsequently found material existence and became visible in the external world. Conceptual existence hath no impact on the eye; it can only be affected by material reality.[§]

Bahá’u’lláh states:

All existence is begotten by the Word of God, and the Word is made manifest through His advent. He is the perspicuous Book

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, no. 30, p. 61.

† T.N.: Also referred to as ‘ideal’, ‘mental’ or ‘intelligible’ existence (*vujúd-i-‘ilmí*).

‡ T.N.: Also referred to as ‘external’, ‘phenomenal’ or ‘actual’ existence (*vujúd-i-‘ayní*).

§ Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Má’idiyi Ásmání*, vol. 2, p. 90.

*and the mighty Stronghold. He is the Dayspring of the hidden Mystery and the Dawning Place of the treasured Name...**

EXISTENTIALISM:

Existentialism is a philosophy with special regard for existence and its qualities. It considers existence to precede substance, and believes in the absolute freedom of man; regarding him as a being that can refrain from whatever he chooses, and can accept that which is pleasing to him. Existentialism tends to focus on the study of the real man, and avoids metaphysical and transcendental discussions. In existentialist views, existence is not only confined to that which can be studied, but the effect of that existence upon the mind is also discussed. So, perception is not purely a rational act, but it is also affected by psychological and biological conditions.

FACULTY: (*Quvvih* - قوه)

See: Power

FORMATION OR COMPOSITION: (*Tarkib* - تركيب)

In common usage, formation refers to the bringing together of dispersed elements, and combining or blending them in such wise that the constituent parts no longer maintain their individuality and essential identity. In natural sciences, formation consists of the creation of new substances that are made up of more simple elements. Bahá'u'lláh explains the following in one of His Tablets:

In the Name of the Peerless Friend! Thy letter written in the Arabic tongue is present before Our Throne and the reply hath been revealed in the Persian language. Harken thereto with a pure and sanctified ear. Sorrow not at the delay in thy affairs. Each matter is dependent upon its proper season. With respect to the blending and coming together of things, two methods can be

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh; *Áyát-i-Iláhi*, vol 2, p. 285.

discerned: one is through the absolute and unmitigated power which is conditioned upon His permission and is strictly confined to His Godhead. The other is through the conjunction of mutually attractive and non-repellent substances, and this occureth after knowledge is gained of the perfect nature, and is known to the alchemists as the 'egg' , and that is the worked and crafted stone.† It containeth the four humours‡ and after separation§, perfect blending is again possible. We ask God to aid thee to accomplish that which He loveth and is well pleasing unto Him; and to destine for thee that which is best in His sight. He, verily, is the Guardian of the faithful. The Glory of God rest upon thee, and upon thy son, and whoso is with thee. We ask Him graciously to enable all to serve Him and to obey Him. Verily, He is the Almighty, the Ever Forgiving, the Most Bountiful.***

Further, in relation to compositions and decompositions 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

...every composition, whether universal or particular, must of necessity be decomposed. At most, some disintegrate quickly and others slowly, but it is impossible for something that is composed not to ultimately decompose††.

And:

...Then again, consider the phenomenon of composition and decomposition, of existence and non-existence. Every created

* T.N.: *prima materia*, prime chaotic matter, quintessence of life, essential seed, seed of life, elixir of life, literally here egg (in Persian the term used is bayḍa).

† T.N.: The philosopher's stone.

‡ T.N.: The four natures: yellow bile, blood, phlegm, black bile.

§ T.N.: One of the (usually seven) stages of the alchemical process.

** Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh.

†† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 47, p. 208.

thing in the contingent world is made up of many and varied atoms, and its existence is dependent on the composition of these. In other words, through the divine creative power a conjunction of simple elements taketh place so that from this composition a distinct organism is produced. The existence of all things is based upon this principle. But when the order is deranged, decomposition is produced and disintegration setteth in, then that thing ceaseth to exist. That is, the annihilation of all things is caused by decomposition and disintegration.*

In a Talk dated 10 November 1911, He states:

...The followers of Truth hold that all material things will prove on close examination to be composite and compound forms, even though philosophers through the ages may have regarded them as simple substances.†

GENUS OR KIND: (*Jins* - جنس)

In philosophy and logic, ‘genus’ (*jins*) refers to a class of beings or objects that share certain essential attributes. For example, ‘animal genus’ or ‘animal kind’ includes humans, birds, fish, insects, and all that share the attributes of animal life. Each of these animals obviously has distinguishing characteristics and qualities that differentiate it from others, and categorize it into various narrower sub-divisions, known as species.

HEGEL:

Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel was a German philosopher (1770-1831) who studied theology and then philosophy at Heidelberg University. He is the founder of a new school of thought. His ideas have greatly

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Selection from the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, n°. 225, p. 289.

† Provisional translation, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá *Khaṭábát*, p. 152 (or volume 1, p. 146).

revolutionized the philosophical and political views of the great European thinkers.

HOLY SPIRIT, THE: (*Rúhu 'l-Qudus* - روح القدس)

In Christianity, the Holy Spirit or Holy Ghost is one of the three members of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. It is regarded as the source of faith and consolation and has the dove as its symbol. According to the Quranic verses, Jesus, son of Mary was confirmed by the outpouring grace of the Holy Spirit: *...and to Jesus, son of Mary, gave we clear proofs of his mission, and strengthened him by the Holy Spirit.** Islamic commentators have interpreted the concept of the Holy Spirit in various ways. In his book *Kashfa 'l-Asrár*†, Meibodi identifies the Holy Ghost with Gabriel, and he further quotes Ibn-i-'Abbás‡ in saying that some of the commentators equate the Holy Ghost with the Greatest Name. From the philosophical point of view, the Holy Spirit is identified with the rational essence or intellectual substance (*jawhar-i-'aqli*). In describing the Holy Spirit 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

...the Holy Spirit... is the mediator between God and His creation. It is like a mirror facing the sun: Just as a spotless mirror receives the rays of the sun and reflects its bounty to others, so too is the Holy Spirit the mediator of the light of holiness, which it conveys from the Sun of Truth to sanctified souls. This Spirit is adorned with all the divine perfections. Whensoever it appears, the world is revived, a new cycle is ushered in...§

* *Qur'an* (Rodwell tr.), 2:81.

† *Kashfa 'l-Asrár va 'uddata 'l-Abrár* (Unveiling of mysteries and provision of the righteous) volume 1, pp. 264-265; a Persian Sufi commentary on the Qur'an, by Sunni scholar, mystic and author Abu'l-Faql Meibodi (*Encyclopaedia Iranica*).

‡ T.N.: 'Abdu'lláh Ibn-i-'Abbás: A cousin of the Prophet Muḥammad, and an Islamic scholar and commentator on the Qur'an.

§ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 163, chapter 36.

HUME:

David Hume (1711-1776) was born in Edinburgh, and studied at the University in that city. He spent the years 1734 to 1737 in France, and published two compilations of his works during 1741-2. In 1748 he published *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, after which he prepared his enormous work on *The History of England* in several volumes published in 1753-1761.

IDEALISM:

Idealism is a philosophy in contrast to realism. It gives priority to mind perception and maintains that the ultimate nature of reality is an ideal one. It asserts that the existence of all beings depends upon the powers of the mind and understanding in the broadest sense. In contrast, in realism existence stems from external beings and not from perceptions in the mind. Both schools of thought have greatly influenced the philosophy of existence, knowledge, ethics and aesthetics.

IGNORANCE: (*Jahl* - جهل)

By definition, ignorance is the lack of knowledge, learning or wisdom.

IMMATERIAL: (*Mujarrad* - مجرد)

See: Abstract

IMPOSSIBLE: (*Mustahil* - مستحيل)

'Impossible' implies a situation or condition that is neither feasible nor practical. In philosophical terms, 'impossible' is synonymous with 'unattainable'. For something to be unattainable, the absence of certain conditions, concepts or things is an essential and necessary requisite. In such a classification, unattainable or impossible is in contrast to possible and necessary. It is by definition the negation of possibility and necessity.

INCORPOREAL: (*Mujarrad* - مجرد)

See: Abstract

INDEPENDENCE, RICHES OR WEALTH: (*Ghaná* - غنا)

Wealth is the opposite of poverty. Bahá'u'lláh states:

*By 'riches' therefore is meant independence of all else but God. and by 'poverty' the lack of things that are of God.**

INDEPENDENT, RICH, OR WEALTHY: (*Ghani* - غنى)

The term 'rich' is in contrast to 'poor' or 'needy'. A being is considered rich when in its essence and attributes it is independent of all else but God. Then it is known to be essentially rich. The being that is in need of the favours of anyone except God is in essence poor and needy. As such, the person who is independent of others is referred to as rich and he who is in need of others is considered as poor. All created things are needy, and God is essentially the All-Possessing, in other words, His independence is essential. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

...Moreover, just as people are in need of God in this world, so too are they in need of Him in the next. The creatures are ever in need, and God is ever completely independent of them, whether in this world or in the world to come. The wealth of the next world consists in nearness to God...†

And further:

...[I]n the contingent world there is poverty; hence there must be wealth for there to be poverty in the world... So long as the contingent world is characterized by dependency, and so long as

* Bahá'u'lláh; *The Kitáb-i-Íqán (The Book of Certitude)*, p. 131.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 266, chapter 62.

*this dependency is one of its essential requirements, there must be One Who in His own Essence is independent of all things.**

INDESCRIBABLE: (*Majhúlu 'n-na`at* - مجهول النعت)

A being is referred to as indescribable when its essential nature cannot be described or explained. It is synonymous to an Absolute or Supreme Unknowable that refers to the essence of God—that is to say a Being that is beyond all description, and His attributes are unknowable and inexplicable.

INMOST REALITY OF ALL THINGS: (*Ḥaḥiqatu 'l-ḥaḥá'iq* - حقيقة الحقائق)

In the *Book of Certitude* (p. 92), the Manifestation of God is referred to as 'the inmost Reality of all things'. In his letter to the Eastern believers (*Lawh-i-Qarn*), the Guardian specified 'the inmost Reality of all things' as one of the qualities and attributes of the Blessed Beauty. In the philosophy of *Ibn-i-'Arabí* and the followers of his school, the inmost Reality of all things is considered the same as the First Emanation (*ta`ayyun-i-avval*).[†] In his book *Sharḥ-i-Gulshan-i-Ráz* (p. 114), Láhijí writes: The 'realm of Divine Essence' (*'álam-i-dhát*) is also known as the 'plane of Divinity' or the 'Heavenly Court' (*láhút*), or the 'invisible Essence' (*huvíyyat-i-ghaybíyyih*), the 'invisible Unknown' (*ghayb-i-majhúl*), the 'Unseen of the Unseen' (*ghaybu'l-ghuyúb*), the 'inmost Reality of all things' (*Ḥaḥiqatu 'l-Ḥaḥá'iq*), the 'station of the nearest' (*maqám-i-aw adná*), the 'supreme Purpose' (*ghayatu 'l-gháyat*), and the 'ultimate Boundary' (*naháyatu 'l-naháyát*).

INNER REVELATION: (*Kashf* - كشف)

See: Discover

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 6, chapter 2.

† T.N.: Also referred to as the Primary Manifestation of the Essence, or the First Individuation or Determination.

INSPIRATION OR REVELATION: (*Vahy* - وحى)

The Word of God, the Message of the Almighty, and the hidden realities that are revealed to the divine Manifestations are referred to as Revelation (*vahy/wahy*) or divine Inspiration. In Islamic theology, divine Inspiration consists of the Word of God as descended upon the Prophet Muḥammad through the Angel Gabriel. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

*...[T]he world of existence stands in utmost need of an educator, and that its education must be achieved through a celestial power. There is no doubt that this celestial power is divine revelation, and that the world must be educated through this power which transcends human power...**

Also:

...All that is revealed through Divine inspiration is the evident truth. Whatsoever runneth counter to the explicit Text, in matters related to philosophical or scientific inquiry, ariseth from a deficiency in these disciplines, and is not due to any flaw in the verities or the meanings derived from the One Who is the Object of all knowledge...†

And in another Tablet:

...Thou hast inquired about divine Revelation. The holy Imáms were the dawning-places of inspiration and manifested the bounty of the All-Merciful. Divine Revelation was confined to Muḥammad, the Messenger of God. Thus, we do not refer to the words of the Imáms as the Word of God, but we regard them as divinely inspired.‡

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 3, p. 13.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Makátib-i-‘Abdu’l-Bahá*; vol. 2, p. 108.

‡ Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Má’idiy-i-Ásmání*, vol. 2, p. 22.

Bahá'u'lláh states:

*...The never-ending sprinkling of the showers of Revelation fall continuously from the leaves of the Divine Lote-Tree, and are made manifest in Words and revealed in the Holy Tablets. Blessed is the one who hath attained thereunto, hath inhaled the fragrance thereof, hath celebrated and given praise unto their Revealer, and arisen to serve their Author and their Maker...**

INTELLECT: (‘*Aql* - عقل)

In the general sense, intellect or rational power refers to the faculty through which one distinguishes between right and wrong. It is through this faculty that one can enter into reasoning and logical inference. The classical laws and principles acceptable to all philosophers, such as Aristotle's law of non-contradiction, are generally referred to as the Laws of Logic.

The intellect or reasoning power is divided into two groupings: First, theoretical intellect or speculative reasoning (‘*aql-i-nazari*)[†]—also known as pure reason. It is the logical or deductive way of thinking; it is contemplative and is also referred to as the ability to understand. The second is the practical intellect (‘*aql-i-amali*), also known as moral reasoning because it involves the process of decision making in relation to conduct and ethics.

In its narrower sense, the intellect refers to that faculty by the aid of which abstract ideas and universal facts are discovered, and concepts are formed and understood by means of the observation and analysis of concrete particulars. Nevertheless, the Bahá'í Writings hold the view that the rational faculty is incapable of comprehending the reality of things, and therefore, the rational faculty and comprehension are evi-

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh; *Hadiqiy-i-'Irfán*, p. 97.

† T.N.: *Intellectus contemplans, speculativus*.

dently limited. Yet, whatever is unacceptable to the mind, or is not regarded as praiseworthy by the intellect must not be done. The advisability of every matter must be evaluated by the power of reason. The ideal and highest state of human perfection is when the intellect—that is God’s greatest gift to man—be combined with other divine bounties such as sentiments, devotion, understanding and moral conduct, resulting in a balanced expression, manifestation, and use of these bounties in man.

As mentioned in the Tablet to Dr. Forel, mental faculties are the inherent properties of the soul, even as the solar ray is the essential property of the sun. The Bahá’í Writings affirm that while the human intellect develops and weakens, it is the all-unifying agency that unites all the component parts of the body one with the other. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

*The human intellect is in truth the most mighty sign of God... Thou beholdest, however, that notwithstanding his lofty and sublime position, man is incapable of apprehending the reality of created things, for the chief instrument whereby human understanding can function is the power of vision. Unless the eye seeth the palm tree, the mind will not envisage the realm of fruits, leaves, branches and twigs that lie enfolded in the seed.**

The universal reality which the ancient philosophers termed the ‘First Intellect’ or the ‘Universal Divine Intellect’ is referred to in the Bahá’í Writings as the ‘First Will’ or the ‘Primal Will of God’. Although it does not become a partner with God in pre-existence, yet it transcends the world of nature, it encompasses and comprehends the realities of existence, and is confined to the Holy Manifestations and Prophets.† In one of His Writings, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states the following:

* Provisional translation from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

† See: *Some Answered Questions*, p. 235, chapter 53.

*O thou who art steadfast and endowed with understanding! The wise define human reason as the ability to discover the unknown, by means of a sequence of major and minor premises of known facts, leading to the discovery of intelligible universal truths. They consider this to be among the greatest bounties and distinguishing features of the world of humanity...**

In another Tablet 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

O thou who hast attained to Truth!... That matter (or substance) which is the cause of the moderation and perfection of the body is that perfect moderate temperament which is produced by the organization and admixture of constituent elements; that matter (or substance) is material (or physical) not spiritual. But reason, which comprehends (or detects) the realities of things, is a spiritual reality, not physical (or material). Therefore, the animal is deprived of reason, and it (reason) is specialized to mankind. The animal feeleth realities which are perceptible to the senses, but man perceiveth intellectual realities (or things perceptible to reason). Consequently, it hath become evident that reason is a spiritual faculty, not physical (or material).†

INVALIDITY OF INFINITE REGRESS:‡ (*Buṭlân-i-tasalsul* - بطلان تسلسل)

According to the beliefs of the majority of Islamic philosophers, it is not rationally possible for an endless chain of continued events and causes to exist. Such an infinite succession or regress is based on the proposition that the existence of every being denotes a necessary relationship between that being or event (called the effect) which is the direct result of another event (called the cause). The existence of such a

* Provisional translation from a previously unpublished Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol.1, p. 207.

‡ T.N.: In Latin: *Regressus ad infinitum*; referring to an endless chain, also known as the 'Continuation of the Causal Chain'.

cause would imply the existence of yet another cause preceding it. According to the theory of infinite regress, such a causal chain would continue indefinitely.

KANT (1724 - 1804 AD):

Immanuel Kant was a prominent German philosopher. His ideas about the world of existence are similar to those of Plato. Kant founded a new set of doctrines within the school of idealism.

KINGDOM, LIFE OR WORLD OF BEING: (*Nash'ih* - نشئه)

The term 'kingdom' (*nash'ih*) is another definition for 'station', in the sense that each altering and evolutionary stage or station is known as a 'kingdom' or 'life'; such as the life of man and the great life hereafter, or the vegetable, animal, and human kingdoms.

KNOWLEDGE (INSIGHT, COGNITION): (*Irfán* - عرفان)

Knowledge consists of attaining to the recognition, understanding or comprehension of a thing. According to the explanation given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

*Know that there are two kinds of knowledge: the knowledge of the essence of a thing and the knowledge of its attributes. The essence of each thing is known only through its attributes; otherwise, that essence is unknown and unfathomed. ...[T]he inner essence of a thing can never be known, only its attributes**

As such, knowledge of the divine Essence is impossible. The knowledge of God can only be attained through the recognition of His Manifestations, Who are the embodiments and revealers of divine Attributes. Bahá'u'lláh states:

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 59, p. 253.

The source of all learning is the knowledge of God, exalted be His Glory, and this cannot be attained save through the knowledge of His Divine Manifestation.*

According to the Bahá'í teachings, the knowledge of the Manifestations of God is the cause of man's eternal glory, and by traversing the stages of such knowledge one attains unto certitude—the stage in which man becomes the embodiment of an upright character and will shun all evil and eschew that which is forbidden.

KNOWLEDGE (OR ACQUIRED KNOWLEDGE): (*Ilm* - علم)

In its broad term, knowledge refers to the understanding of mysteries and the discovery of the relations and characteristics of things. In its narrower sense, knowledge, also termed science, refers to the specific study of a particular subject in a special method that would lead to the discovery or understanding of scientific principles and laws. The discovery of the specifics leads to the inference of universal facts.

Knowledge (or science) has been divided into two groups: Theoretical and practical (the latter also known as applied sciences). Theoretical knowledge interprets and analyses the outer aspects of things and explains the laws and principles that govern them, such as natural sciences and mathematics. Practical sciences apply the laws resulting from theoretical knowledge to particular events and situations. Aristotle regarded theoretical knowledge to consist of natural sciences, mathematics and metaphysics; by practical sciences he meant ethics, domestic justice and politics. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

...For example, knowledge, which is a form acquired by the mind, is an intelligible thing, and to speak of entering into the mind or exiting from it is absurd. Rather, it is a relationship of acquisition, even as images are reflected in a mirror...[†]

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 156.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 122, chapter 25.

Regarding knowledge and its division, He explains:

*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...**

Further, in another classification of knowledge, He writes:

*Knowledge is of two kinds: one is conceptual[†] and the other confirmed.[‡] In other words, one kind is acquired[§] and the other is conscious knowledge.** For example, we know that water existeth in principle, but that knowledge remains a mere mental concept. But when we drink that water, it then becometh a confirmed reality...^{††}*

And again, regarding knowledge He states:

Knowledge is of two kinds: existential knowledge and formal knowledge, that is, intuitive knowledge and conceptual knowledge.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 138.

† T.N.: *'Ilm-i-taşavvurî*: Conceptual knowledge is that knowledge derived from perception; also referred to as abstract, formal or suppositional knowledge.

‡ T.N.: *'Ilm-i-tahaqquqî*: Confirmed or absolute knowledge, also referred to as evident, certain, empirical or realizational knowledge.

§ T.N.: *'Ilm-i- huşûlî*: Acquired knowledge, also referred to as knowledge by representation, and is conditioned upon acquisition.

** T.N.: *'Ilm-i- huđûrî*: Conscious knowledge is also referred to as 'knowledge by presence' or 'presential knowledge', since the object of knowledge is 'present' in the consciousness of the subject, also known as intuitive knowledge.

†† Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Amr va Kĥalq*, vol. 1, p. 67.

The knowledge that people generally have of things consists in conceptualization and observation; that is, either the object is conceived through the rational faculty, or through its observation a form is produced in the mirror of the heart. The scope of this knowledge is quite limited, as it is conditioned upon acquisition and attainment.

*The other kind of knowledge, however, which is existential or intuitive knowledge, is like man's knowledge and awareness of his own self... This is an existential knowledge through which man realizes his own condition. He both senses and comprehends it, for the spirit encompasses the body and is aware of its sensations and powers. This knowledge is not the result of effort and acquisition: It is an existential matter; it is pure bounty.**

And yet from a differing aspect, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains:

Knowledge is of two kinds. The one is the knowledge that pertaineth to the Essence. This knowledge is of God and is identical with and undistinguishable from His Essence, for it ariseth from the station of His Supreme Singleness in which His Essence encompasseth all Names and Attributes. That Essential knowledge is divine and sanctified above all understanding. The other kind of knowledge is confined to the plane of action and visible being. In other words, it ariseth from that which is revealed and manifest, and signifieth the outward realization of a thing. The eye can perceive that which outwardly existeth, not that which is invisible. But knowledge can pertain to that which hath no outward existence, a connection impossible for the eye...†

Further, He writes:

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 179, chapter 40.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Má'idíyi Ásmání*, vol. 2, pp. 90-91.

...Those who have been initiated into the divine mysteries believe that knowledge is of two kinds: The first is the comprehension of a thing without the conception of it in the mind; this is essential or inherent knowledge.* The second is empirical knowledge,† and that is knowledge acquired through observation‡ which consisteth of the comprehension of a thing perceived as an image in the mind. Saying that God beheld [His creation]§ referreth to observational knowledge, whereas existential knowledge is identical with His Essence, the Essence of Divinity itself, whose reality is at once unknowable and unfathomable to all. Wert thou to understand the subtleties of this subject, thou wouldst have to ponder its meaning deeply. Thou mayest know that a great tree potentially existeth within this seed, yet the eye cannot actually see it until such time as it shall spring forth as a tree...**

By the term ‘Him Who is the Object of all knowledge’ (*Ḥaḍrat-i-‘ilm*) that is repeatedly referred to in the Bahá’í Writings is meant the reality of the Manifestation Who has two aspects: one is earthly and the other heavenly.††

In a Tablet revealed in honour of Ḥájí Mírzá Abu’l-Ḥasan-i Amín-i Ardikání dated Nov./Dec. 1885‡‡, Bahá’u’lláh defines the highest level of knowledge as:

* T.N.: *‘Ilm-i-dhátí*: Essential knowledge, also referred to as intuitive, existential, or subjective knowledge.

† T.N.: *‘Ilm-i-šúrí*: Empirical knowledge, also referred to as formal or objective knowledge: related to the form of the object.

‡ T.N.: *‘Ilm-i-shuhúdí*: Observational knowledge, also referred to as visionary knowledge.

§ T.N.: Reference to the *Book of Genesis*, 1:10, 12, 17, 21, 25.

** Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Má’idiyi Ásmání*, vol. 2, p. 92.

†† See *Má’idiyi Ásmání*, vol. 9, p. 89.

‡‡ *Šafar* 1303 SH.

*... The purpose of learning should be the promotion of the welfare of the people, and this can be achieved through crafts. It hath been revealed and is now repeated that the true worth of artists and craftsmen should be appreciated, for they advance the affairs of mankind. Just as the foundations of religion are made firm through the Law of God, the means of livelihood depend upon those who are engaged in arts and crafts. True learning is that which is conducive to the well-being of the world, not to pride and self-conceit, or to tyranny, violence and pillage.**

‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated in one of His talks:

...religion and science are as two concentric circles that revolve around one common point, which is reality.†

LATENT OR MENTAL EXISTENCE; FIXITY: (*Thubút* - ثبوت)

The term is often synonymous with existence. Some Islamic theologians believe in a stage or distance between existence and nothingness, and they call that gap *thubút*.‡

LIFE: (*Hayát* - حیات)

In common usage, ‘life’ refers to the state of being alive. The life of every being consists of the emergence of certain signs that emanate from that being. As long as specific qualities and attributes exist in a being, it possesses life. In human beings, life specifically refers to action and active comprehension, and in animals it refers to sensation. Life can also be defined according to its expressions and manifestations

* Authorized translation from a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 2, p. 129.

‡ It refers to the state of existence as objects in the knowledge of God. It has been translated as: state of latency, latent existence, relative or noetic or mental existence, stability, transcendental determination, state of subsistence or permanent subsistence, fixedness and affirmation.

that consist of nourishment, growth, reproduction, sensation, and locomotion. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

*As for created things, their life consists in composition, and their death in decomposition. But matter and the universal elements cannot be entirely destroyed and annihilated. No, their annihilation is merely transformation...**

LOVE: (‘*Ishq* - عشق)

Love consists of friendship, affection, and immense yearning. Love is the most fundamental and basic pillar of mysticism, and has been the subject of discussion in every mystical work and school of thought. One is unlikely to find a poet or writer who has not written about love in one way or another. The origin of mystic and Islamic literature on love dates back to the Qur’an and to the Traditions in Islam. Yet, it is interesting to note that the term ‘love’ (‘*ishq*) in itself has not been mentioned in the Qur’an, but synonyms such as: affection or devotion (*ḥubb*), kindness or compassion (*maḥabbat*), fellowship or friendliness (*mavad-dat*) were used. In mystical literature love is positioned in contrast to intellect (heart versus rational mind). The intellect, despite all its glorious power, is incapable of discerning and discovering the secrets of love; but love is, in the opinion of the mystic, the eventual solution to every intricate question and complexity. It is love that gives tranquillity to man. In a Tablet addressed to *Jináb-i-Nabil ibn-i-Nabil* revealed in Istanbul on 8 August 1885[†] Bahá’u’lláh writes:

All praise to the hallowed sanctuary of the Desired One, the One Who brought forth the Most Great Mercy from out of pure wrath... God grant that thou mayest fix thy gaze upon the love of God[‡] which is the generating impulse and the purpose underlying

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 237, chapter 54.

† 26 *Shavvál* 1302 AH.

‡ T.N.: *Ḥubbu’lláh* (love of God) consists of two words: *Ḥubb* (love) and *Alláh* (God).

the whole of creation, and mayest be set aglow by its heat. Through its first letter, (Há'), the fire of His love gloweth in the hearts of the favoured among the faithful, and in the breasts of they who are nigh unto God and are devoted to Him. Through its second, (Bá'), all created things are made manifest and, by the very dot† beneath it, hath appeared the realm of distinction. If this utterance were to be further expounded, from it the mysteries of the beginning and the end would be made known and laid bare.‡*

MANIFESTATION, ADVENT OR REVELATION: (ظهور - *Zuhúr*)

The term refers to viewpoints set forth in the Bahá'í Faith about the creation or the fashioning of the universe. Although the two terms manifestation (*zuhúr*) and emanation (*šudúr*) may broadly be used synonymously, but in the Bahá'í Writings, they each have developed an independent and specific meaning. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains:

...[G]reat indeed is the difference between manifestation and emanation. Appearance through manifestation means that a single thing becomes manifest in infinite forms. For example, when the seed, which is a single thing endowed with the perfections of the vegetable kingdom, manifests itself, it becomes resolved into the infinite forms of the branches, leaves, flowers, and fruit. This is called manifestational appearance, whereas in appearance through emanation the One remains transcendent in the heights of its sanctity, but the existence of the creatures is obtained from it through emanation, not manifestation. It can be compared to the sun: The rays emanate from it and shine forth upon all things, but the sun remains transcendent in the heights of its sanctity. It

* T.N.: *Hubb* (love) consists of two consonants: *Há* and *Bá*.

† T.N.: The second consonant (*Bá*), written in Arabic and Persian as (ب), has a dot or point under the basic horizontal line.

‡ Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh; *Majmú'iyi Alváh-i-Mubárahik* ('*Andalib*), pp. 258-260.

*does not descend; it does not resolve itself into the form of the rays; it does not appear in the identity of things through specification and individuation: The Preexistent does not become the originated; absolute wealth does not fall captive to poverty; unqualified perfection is not transformed into utter imperfection.**

The revelation of the Messengers of God has often been described in the Bahá'í Writings as the raising up of Prophets, or the advent of the Manifestations of Holiness. In a very significant Tablet concerning the concept of revelation, manifestation or divine Epiphany Bahá'u'lláh writes:

O thou whose gaze is turned towards the court of God and who art immersed in the ocean of His nearness and good-pleasure!

Know thou of a truth that the Manifestation is not made up of the four elements. Nay, rather, He is the divine Mystery, the ancient Reality. He is, indeed, the everlasting Being, the unseen Essence. He, verily, can never be known through anyone except Himself. How, then can anyone determine that He hath been generated from the four elements, or from the substances spoken of by the philosophers, or yet from the four natures? For all these things have been created at His behest, and fashioned through the operation of His Will, whereas from everlasting He Himself hath existed, alone with none else besides Him, even as He shall verily remain forever. Seated high upon His throne, He sendeth Verses down upon thee for He hath discerned the fire of His love within thy heart. Is there any orator in the world who can rival Him in eloquence, or any revealer of verses who can equal Him and His Cause? And is there anyone possessed of influence who can claim for himself any existence whatever? Nay, by thy Lord, the All-Merciful! All else are as nothing, are forlorn and lost! In truth, were He to be known by any other than Himself, it would never

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 340, chapter 82.

be demonstrated that He is the Incomparable, or that His Godhead is immeasurably exalted above all peer or likeness, nor would it be maintained that His singleness is distinct from every manifestation of His creation.

*This is an ocean into which none may step. All the wondrous works thou dost behold in heaven and on earth have been called into being through His Word. I swear by My own Self, the True One! Were He to make His own Self known unto His servants, they would assuredly rid themselves of all attachment to all created things, and seek shelter, one and all, within the precincts of His Court...**

Further, in another Tablet He writes:

This Wronged One testifieth that there is none other God but Him, the Help in Peril, the Self-Subsisting. He hath ever been veiled in the ancient eternity of His Essence, and the One Who speaketh in this day, speaketh at His behest. Verily, there is none other God but Me, the All-Glorious, the Best-Beloved. Verily, all that hath been revealed proceedeth from the Unseen, and the Unseen is indeed revealed through the Manifestation. Thus doth the Day-Star of Oneness shine forth from the Horizon of Divine Unity. Happy are they who comprehend. Say: None can recognize the Unseen, save through this manifest One. Glorified be the All-loving, He Who hath appeared on the Promised Day.†

And in another Tablet with the following opening line: Praise and glory beseem His well-favoured, those who rejoice in the hope of nearness and live in aspiration of attaining unto His presence..., it is revealed:

* Provisional translation of a Tablet previously published in *Bahá'í Scriptures*, p. 204.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh; *La'áliyí Hikmat*, vol.1, p. 70.

*... Since the dominions of the hearts and souls of men are completely unable to grasp the nature of the peerless Essence, it becometh us to give praise to His First Creation, to His First Remembrance, His First Light, His First Advent, His First Revelation, His First Knowledge, His First Utterance, His First Manifestation, His First Dawning Place, His First Dayspring and His First Repository. And furthermore, it well beseemeth us to adorn the preamble of every book with His Name, inasmuch as He, verily, is the mouthpiece of God and His vicegerent. He is the Manifestation of the All-Pervading Light, through Whom the mysteries of first and last have been unravelled through dust.**

MATERIALISTS: (*Máddiyyún* – مَادِّيُون)

Materialists are followers of the philosophy of materialism—an ideology that holds that all phenomena in the world are the product of matter. Materialism considers matter to be the source and origin of all creation, and thus defines and interprets existence accordingly. Focusing on matter and considering it as the source and origin of all substances has been a common ideology since ancient times. The influence of such a viewpoint has, throughout centuries, been reflected in philosophical, political, psychological and sociological schools of thought. In a Talk delivered on Saturday 10 November 1911, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated:

...Materialists say, 'Where is the soul? What is it? We cannot see it, neither can we touch it'. This is how we must answer them: However much the mineral may progress, it cannot comprehend the vegetable world. Now, that lack of comprehension does not prove the non-existence of the plant! To however great a degree the plant may have evolved, it is unable to understand the animal world; this ignorance is no proof that the animal does not exist! The animal, be he never so highly developed, cannot imagine the intelligence of man, neither can he realize the nature of his soul.

* Provisional translation of a previously unpublished Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh.

*But, again, this does not prove that man is without intellect, or without soul. It only demonstrates this, that one form of existence is incapable of comprehending a form superior to itself. This flower may be unconscious of such a being as man, but the fact of its ignorance does not prevent the existence of humanity. *...*

and further, in a Talk on 8 June 1912, He exclaimed:

...One of the strangest things witnessed is that the materialists of today are proud of their natural instincts and bondage. They state that nothing is entitled to belief and acceptance except that which is sensible or tangible. By their own statements they are captives of nature, unconscious of the spiritual world, uninformed of the divine Kingdom and unaware of heavenly bestowals. If this be a virtue the animal has attained it to a superlative degree...†

MATERIALISTS: (*Ṭabí`iyyún* - طبعيون)

See Naturalists

MATTER: (*Máddih* - ماده)

Matter is referred to as the source and foundation of every particular thing. In philosophical terms, matter is a physical substance which takes form and shape. In fact, matter is the component that brings every object into existence. It is also referred to as 'prime matter'. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that the origin of the world existence was one, and He continues as such:

...It is therefore evident that originally matter was one, and that one matter appeared in a different form in each element. Thus various forms appeared, and as they appeared, they each assumed an independent form and became a specific element. But this distinction attained its full completion and realization only

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 93.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 177.

after a very long time. Then these elements were composed. arranged, and combined in infinite forms; in other words, from the composition and combination of these elements countless beings appeared.

*This composition and arrangement arose, through the wisdom of God and His ancient might, from one natural order. Thus, as this composition and combination has been produced according to a natural order, with perfect soundness, following a consummate wisdom, and subject to a universal law, it is clear that it is a divine creation and not an accidental composition and arrangement.**

METAPHYSICS: (*Mávará'uṭ-Ṭabí'ih* - ماوراء الطبيعة)

By definition, metaphysics means 'beyond' or 'after' physics. The subject refers to the written works of Aristotle, in which the prefix *meta-* (after) was given to the chapters in his book that sequentially followed the chapters on physics, and are therefore named as such. The topics relate to that section of philosophy that deals with matters beyond nature and the physical world. The contents of metaphysical philosophy differ among philosophers. Some consider them to consist of the study of general and common principles, as well as the study of first causes. They call such subjects 'first philosophy' or the 'science of theology'. Descartes considered the study of the knowledge of God and the knowledge of self to also be part of metaphysics. In Kant's view, metaphysics consists of the collection of facts and knowledge that exceeds outer or physical experience, and is purely dependent on intellectual perception.

MINERAL: (*Jamád* - جماد)

A mineral is known as any lifeless and inanimate object. It is one of the three categories of created things: mineral, vegetable, and animal.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 208-209, chapter 47 - Also, see the Tablet addressed to Mullá 'Alí Akbar-i Qúchání (under Ether).

MONOTHEISM: (*Tawhīd* - توحيد)

See: Divine Unity

NATURALISTS OR MATERIALISTS: (*Ṭabīʿiyyūn* - طبيعيين)

Naturalists are philosophers who study nature. They examine all matters according to natural laws and to the signs and changes in the material world. They do not believe in the existence of any cause or influence beyond that of nature. The followers of this philosophy are also called 'materialists' (*dahriyyun*) and believe that the world came into being on its own accord, with no external cause and for no specific reason. In ethical and aesthetical philosophy, naturalists believe that ethical life is simply an extension of biological life. In aesthetics they see no difference between beauty and ugliness, as they regard both to entail different manifestations and expressions of nature. Naturalism is specifically applied to Hegel's philosophy on material nature.

NATURE: (*Ṭabīʿat* - طبيعت)

In the broadest sense, nature consists of all that exists in the heavens and on earth. It can also be interpreted as the cosmos. By a narrower definition, the nature of a thing consists of those essential properties that differentiate it from another, and thus compose the makeup of that thing. The nature of a thing is the secret of its growth, its change and its movements.

Nature or natural is also used in the context of the normal, the usual, the familiar, and the expected. Any matter contrary to that would be referred to as unnatural or supernatural. Furthermore, the term nature refers to the basic source of conventional laws. For example, the concept of natural laws consists of a set of complete principles that govern the changes and movements of the world of existence.

In its everyday usage, nature relates to the set of a person's desires and instincts, worldly endeavours, as well as to personal character and habits. The Religion of God is revealed for the edification and refinement of that nature.

In the *Encyclopaedia of the Brethren of Purity*^{*}, nature is described as follows: ‘Know, O my brother, that nature is verily the power emanated from the celestial Universal Soul that flows into all bodies that exist in the sub-lunar sphere, from the earth to the highest heaven’.[†]

In the *Tablet of Wisdom*, Bahá’u’lláh writes:

... Say: Nature in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator. Its manifestations are diversified by varying causes, and in this diversity there are signs for men of discernment. Nature is God's Will and is its expression in and through the contingent world. It is a dispensation of Providence ordained by the Ordainer, the All-Wise. Were anyone to affirm that it is the Will of God as manifested in the world of being, no one should question this assertion. It is endowed with a power whose reality men of learning fail to grasp. Indeed a man of insight can perceive naught therein save the effulgent splendour of Our Name, the Creator. Say: This is an existence which knoweth no decay, and Nature itself is lost in bewilderment before its revelations, its compelling evidences and its effulgent glory which have encompassed the universe...[‡]

By Nature, as defined in the Tablet addressed to Dr. Forel, is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things.[§]

In *Some Answered Questions*, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá provides another definition of nature:

* T.N.: The encyclopaedia consists of 52 treatises written by the mysterious *Ikhwán al-Safa* in Basra, Iraq in the 10th century, on subjects such as mathematics, nature, astronomy, music, religion, natural sciences, ethics, and magic.

† *Farhang-i-‘Ulüm-i-‘Aqlí*, p. 22.

‡ Bahá’u’lláh, *Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh*, p. 141.

§ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Tablet to August Forel*, p. 11.

*Nature is that condition or reality which outwardly is the source of the life and death, or, in other words, of the composition and decomposition, of all things.**

NECESSITY: (*Darúrat* - ضرورت)

The impossibility of separating a thing from another, based on rational facts, is referred to as ‘necessity’. In philosophy it implies an exigency whose negation is self-contradictory. It is in contrast to contingency.

The terms ‘necessary relations’, ‘essential necessity’, ‘inherent property’, and ‘absolute unconditional property’ all refer to the lasting property, or the essential conditioned necessity;† that is to say as long as the essence itself exists, its necessary exigencies will also exist.

NEW CREATION (REBIRTH): (*Khalq-i-Jadid* - خلق جديد)

The term ‘rebirth’ or ‘new creation’, refers at times to the continuous process of the creation of beings; that is to say the progression of creation that constantly goes through different stages and that is never halted. At other times, however, rebirth or new creation can mean the transformation of the nature of something. In this sense, new creation signifies ridding one’s self of the old ways and views, and being reborn in a world of new ideas and customs. Such a creation which is also interpreted as ‘wondrous’ or ‘spiritual creation’ is the result of divine guidance and is brought about through belief in His Manifestations. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

And as for spiritual creation, which is the station of rebirth, that is the Most Great Guidance, it is life everlasting, it is the supreme stage of existence, it is the acquisition of heavenly perfections, and the advancement in all the degrees of the blessings of humanity. Such a creation and existence is vouchsafed through

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 3, chapter 1.

† *Darúrat-i-mádámu ‘dh-Dhát*.

*the advent of the Manifestations of God in this contingent world...**

NON-EXISTENCE: (عدم - Adam)

In philosophical terms, non-existence or nothingness is in contrast to existence or being. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

...[E]xistence and non-existence are both relative. If it be said that a certain thing was brought forth from non-existence, the intent is not absolute nonexistence; rather, it is meant that the former condition was non-existence in relation to the present one. For absolute non-existence cannot become existence, as it lacks the very capacity to exist.†

And:

... absolute non-existence lacks the capacity to attain existence. If the universe were pure nothingness, existence could not have been realized.‡

And further:

...[W]hen man dies, his body becomes dust, but it does not become absolute non-existence: It retains a mineral existence, but a transformation has taken place, and that composition has been subjected to decomposition. It is the same with the annihilation of all other beings; for existence does not become absolute non-existence, and absolute non-existence does not acquire existence.§

ORIGINATED: (Hádith - حادث)

See: Contingent

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Makátib*, vol.2, pp.141-2.

† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 324, chapter 80.

‡ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 207, chapter 47.

§ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 236, chapter 53.

ORTHODOX:

The term orthodox is derived as a combination of the Greek words *orthos* meaning ‘correct’ or ‘right’, and *doxa* which means ‘thought’, ‘belief’, or ‘opinion’. It commonly refers to the collection of beliefs or norms that are accepted by the general public. The term *Orthodox* was also adopted by one of the main denominations of Christianity that arose as a distinct branch after the XI century’s ‘Great Schism’ between Eastern and Western Christendom, and refrained from recognizing the Pope as the religious leader of the Christian Community.

PART AND WHOLE: (*Juz’ va kull* - جزء و کل)

‘Part’ is the origin of the formation and the composition of the ‘whole’. As such, while part and whole are opposites, if the part ceases to exist, so will the whole.

PERCEPTION (UNDERSTANDING-COMPREHENSION): (*Idrāk* - ادراك)

Perception or cognition refers to the cognitive experience that may either take place through the external senses, or by the inner senses,* such as perception through the formative faculty (*mutiṣavvirih*), the imagination (*mutikhayyilih*), or the rational faculty (‘*aqlīyyih*). At times, perception or cognition through the external senses differs from the one based on inner faculties. The former is known as ‘sensation or affective perception’, and the object perceived thus through the senses is referred to as ‘tangible’ or ‘concrete’ (*mahsúsát*). That which is comprehended through the inner senses is known as ‘abstract’ or ‘conceptual’ and is referred to as sentiments or emotions (*vijdáníyyát*).

* T.N. : Intelligible perception or concept formation.

Perception (*idrák*) in its general sense refers to knowledge, recognition and awareness of a phenomenon. It includes both sensory and abstract perception. Jurjání* defines understanding as the *result of an image or concept formed in the rational faculty*.†

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains that the human spirit comprehends through two means:

...Know that the influence and perception of the human spirit is of two kinds; that is, the human spirit has two modes of operation and understanding. One mode is through the mediation of bodily instruments and organs. Thus it sees with the eye, hears with the ear, speaks with the tongue. These are actions of the spirit and operations of the human reality, but they occur through the mediation of bodily instruments. Thus, it is the spirit that sees, but by means of the eye; it is the spirit that hears, but by means of the ear; it is the spirit that speaks, but by means of the tongue. The other mode of the spirit’s influence and action is without these bodily instruments and organs. For example, in the state of sleep, it sees without eyes, it hears without ears, it speaks without a tongue, it runs without feet...‡

Also, according to the Writings of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, understanding depends upon two conditions: The first is for the thing perceived to be encompassed or enveloped by the perceiving one, and the second is through resemblance and comparison. That is to say unless an entity be comparable to another, it will be impossible for it to conceive the reality of that other.§

* T.N.: ‘*Alí ibn-i-Muhammad Jurjání*, a Persian scholar of the Arabic language, an encyclopaedic writer and theologian. He lived in the 14th century.

† Jurjání, *Ta’rifát*, p. 13.

‡ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 61, p. 261.

§ T.N.: Not the exact words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, extracted from one of His Tablets, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 1, p. 42.

In a Tablet addressed to Jináb-i-Ḥaydar ‘Alí, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

He is the All-Glorious. O thou sweet gale blowing from the meads of the love of God! All human understanding and knowledge is of three categories. One is the knowledge of abstract concepts and universal elemental realities which are comprehended by sound minds and holy souls. Another consisteth of the ideal forms and images of external entities perceivable by the physical senses and faculties. And the third is that category of knowledge which is under the influence of both mental and sensuous powers, in other words thoughts produced by concepts that assume the shape of concrete things in such a way as to be visible to the faculty of imagination as well as understood by the intellect.

*Since the radiant flame of the divine intellect that discerneth abstract verities is obscured in all human beings, and since people’s perceptions are limited to the tangible, the third type of knowledge is often adopted to explain these realities, so that feeble minds may, to some extent, partake of spiritual truths. It is for this reason that the term ‘the All-Highest Paradise’ is sometimes used, and at other times ‘the Garden of Repose’, or simply ‘the Garden’, ‘the Meads’, or ‘the Forest’. Otherwise, the stages of divine nearness and proximity in the Abhá Kingdom are sanctified far above such limited and vain imaginings...**

PERIPATETIC THEOSOPHY: (حکمت مشاء - *Hikmat-i-Mashshá*)

The term ‘peripatetic theosophy’ refers to a school of thought derived from the teachings of Aristotle. It is in contrast to the philosophy of illumination (theosophy of light: *hikmat-i-ishráq*).

The term ‘peripatetic’ is often used to mean ‘walking about’ or ‘wandering’. Initially, Aristotle’s school became so named because of the *peripatoi* (colonnades) of the Lyceum gymnasium where his students

* Provisional translation from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 2, p. 147.

gathered. It is also said that the name came from Aristotle's habit of walking while lecturing. Some say that as Aristotle and his students resorted to reason for discovering the truth, they called them peripatetic: implying that they were the ones who employed the 'stroll' of the mind for understanding verities. Accordingly, the Aristotelian philosophy is known as the Peripatetic Philosophy.

PHENOMENON:

A phenomenon can be described as an appearance or an observable event. The followers of phenomenalist philosophy consider knowledge to consist purely in the perception of outward phenomena or sensory stimuli. They deny the essential existence of objects, which they interpret as 'noumenon' (literally: thought-of). According to this school of thought, existence only consists in that which can be perceived in any object.

PHILOSOPHER:

The word philosopher stems from the Greek term meaning 'lover of wisdom' (*philia+sophia*)—a term first coined by Pythagoras. In general terms, a philosopher is one who studies philosophical issues. In a more specific sense, he is one who investigates the primary cause of the existence of things and the means by which they came into being. According to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, such as the *Tablet of Wisdom*, a true philosopher would never deny the existence of God, he acknowledges the greatness of the Divine Essence and recognizes His sovereignty over the world of existence. The works and writings of the true philosopher serve as guidance to mankind. In contrast to such a philosopher, we have the philosopher of narrow vision, who, while having studied theoretical sciences, has not perfected it and has not put his knowledge into practice. For further detailed information on this subject, please refer to *The Islamic Encyclopaedia*, vol. 3, pp 477-79.

PHILOSOPHER (PHYSICIAN-SAGE-WISE): (*Hakim* - حكيم)

Philosophers and those practicing philosophy (*hikmat*) are known as men of wisdom or sages (*hakim*, pl. *hukamá*). As philosophers used to also engage in the natural sciences, the word *hakim* used to be synonymous with physician. Those who were involved in occult sciences, traditions, and alchemy also regarded their work as *hikmat*. But a proper definition of the word *hakim* is a divine philosopher, and in this sense the two are synonymous.

Hakim (the All-Wise, or the Wise One), is also one of the names and attributes of God. It has been often used in the Qur'an as well as in the Bahá'í Writings as one of the attributes of the Almighty. The Bahá'í Writings also employ the word *hakim* to refer to a learned one whose conduct is upright, and to a sage who is endued with insight and wisdom, one whose existence is an adornment to the world of humanity. Describing such a person, Bahá'u'lláh states:

*The man of consummate learning and the sage endowed with penetrating wisdom are the two eyes to the body of mankind. God willing, the earth shall never be deprived of these two greatest gifts.**

Also:

The divine whose conduct is upright, and the sage who is just, are as the spirit unto the body of the world. Well is it with that divine whose head is attired with the crown of justice, and whose temple is adorned with the ornament of equity.†

According to the *Encyclopaedia of Islamic Terms*, the divine philosopher is one who is pious and immersed in theology, and who does not approach disputes.

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p.170.

† Bahá'u'lláh, (cited in) *The Promised Day is Come*, p.111.

PHILOSOPHY (ALSO SEE WISDOM):

The word philosophy is a derivation of the ancient Greek word 'philo' (to love or to befriend) and 'sophia' (wisdom); hence love of wisdom. Philosophy is the study and knowledge of the reality of things and their relations, and aims to understand their values and significances. The knowledge of the soul of man and his self, and insight into his aims and aspirations in the contingent world also fall within the range of philosophy. In relation to true philosophy, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

*...This nether world is a mirror the Kingdom, and each one is in full conformity with the other. Sound and sensible ideas arising from pure and genuine philosophies are completely consistent with the heavenly Writings. There is no difference whatsoever between the two, inasmuch as the inner essences of all things exist in the treasuries of the Kingdom. Once these inner essences are revealed in the physical world, they assume actual existence... Should any philosophical views not conform to the heavenly Writings, it is certain that they are naught but error.**

PLATO (427 – 347 BC): (افلاطون)

Plato was one of the world's greatest thinkers and philosophers. He was Greek, a student of Socrates and the teacher of Aristotle. After the death of his master, Plato spent some time travelling the world, and upon his return to Athens, he founded one of the earliest known organized schools in Western civilization known as the *Academia*. Plato spent forty years teaching there, and as such his philosophy is known as *Academic* philosophy. Plato's writings are amongst the world's matchless masterpieces of literature, both for their contents as well as their literary value. His most well-known work is the *Republic* in which he describes his ideal form of government.

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Makátib*, vol. 3, pp. 172-173.

In the *Tablet of Wisdom*, referring to Plato, Bahá'u'lláh writes:

*After Socrates came the divine Plato who was a pupil of the former and occupied the chair of philosophy as his successor. He acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs which pervade all that hath been and shall be...**

'Abdu'l-Bahá makes mention of Plato's capacity for understanding ethics and theology, and speaking of methods of reason and understanding, He states:

It is true that Pythagoras, and Plato during the latter part of his life, conceived that the sun's annual movement around the zodiac did not proceed from the sun itself but from the earth's movement around it, but this theory was entirely forgotten and the Ptolemaic theory was universally accepted by all mathematicians.†

POVERTY: (*Faqr* - فقر)

The term poverty implies need, indigence, and destitution. In the philosophical and mystical sense, poverty consists in man's dependence on, and his need of his Creator Who, in essence, is independent. Poverty and need are attributes of the created being, and wealth and independence are those of the Creator. Poverty is also used synonymously with the dying to the self and living in God. In mystic literature, poverty has a material as well as a spiritual aspect. Outward poverty in the estimation of the Sufis is a lack of possession of material things lest they become an obstacle to the wayfarer in his quest, and thus absorb him in the transitory things of this world. Poverty in the spiritual sense refers to the need and dependence of all created things to the ever-forgiving

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 146.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 7, p. 28.

Lord, as stated in the Qur'an: *O men! Ye are but paupers in need of God; but God is the Rich, the Praiseworthy!**

POWER OR MIGHT (ALSO ABILITY OR CAPABILITY): (*Qudrat* - قدرت)

'Power' is a human attribute by the help of which one decides to accomplish or abandon an action. A person is regarded as able or powerful when he is capable of acting or abandoning an action through the power of his will.

POWER, STRENGTH, FORCE, FACULTY: (*Quvvih* - قوه)

The source of any movement and action is referred to as its power, such as the power of the spirit, will power, the power of reflection, and so on. (See *Some Answered Questions*, chapters 55 & 58, pp. 241-242 & 250-22). In one of His Tablets, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

O thou who art yearning for reunion! Those who discover the secrets of the universe, and are aware of its inherent properties and concealed mysteries believe that an astonishing power of attraction is diffused throughout creation; that an extraordinary bond of magnetism embraceth these myriad beings and governeth these countless elements, both physical and spiritual. Through this Universal Power the individual essences of the diverse simple elements are bound together. And through the principles of separation, distinctiveness, as well as the multiplicity and variation of elements, the limitless range of created beings have been produced. Thus, hath the material world become a rose garden of wonders and the physical realm a paradise of subtle grace. That universal power of attraction is manifest within the inmost reality of every being with an ever-varying splendour, its beauty and

* *Qur'an* (Rodwell's translation) The Creator (*Fátir*), 35:16.

*charm made apparent in different degrees. Within the inmost reality of man, it expresseth itself as the power of yearning, which is conducive to rapture, fervour, and ecstasy.**

POWER OF DISCERNMENT: (QUVVIYI KÁSHIFIH - قُوَّةُ كَاشِفِه)

See: Discover/Unveil; and Power

POWER OF GROWTH: (*Quviyyi Námíyih* - قُوَّةُ نَامِيَه)

Is a power the action of which is growth.

POWER OF IMAGINATION (THOUGHT): (*Quvviyi Mutikhayyilih* - قُوَّةُ مَتَحَيِّلِه)

See: The Five Senses; and Power

POWER OF IMAGINATION: (*Quviyyi Váhimih* - قُوَّةُ وَاهِمِه)

See: The Five Senses; and Power

POWER OF MEMORY: (*Quvviyi Háfízih* - قُوَّةُ حَافِظِه)

See: The Five Senses.

POWER OF UNDERSTANDING-REASONING POWER OF THE MIND: (*Quvviyi 'Áqilih* - قُوَّةُ عَاقِلِه)

See: The Intellect; the Five Senses; and Power.

POWER OF UNDERSTANDING: (*Quviyyi Mudrikih* - قُوَّةُ مَدْرِكِه)

See: Perception; and Power

POWER OF REFLECTION (THOUGHT): (*Quvviyi mutifakkirih* - قُوَّةُ مَتَفَكِّرِه)

See: The Five Senses, and Power.

Bahá'u'lláh states:

* Provisional Translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Má'idíyí Ásmání*, vol 9, p. 9-10.

*O people of Baha! The source of crafts, sciences and arts is the power of reflection. Make ye every effort that out of this ideal mine there may gleam forth such pearls of wisdom and utterance as will promote the well-being and harmony of all the kindreds of the earth.**

POWER OR SENSE OF FEELING: (*Quvviyi Hassásih* - قُوَّة حَسَّاسِه)

See: The Senses; Sensible, Tangible or Concrete Realities; and Power.

POWERLESSNESS: (*'Ajz* - عَجْز)

Powerlessness refers to the lack of ability to achieve something which is essentially possible to achieve. If achievement of a certain task were inherently impossible, then the term powerlessness would not apply. As such, a person is powerless in carrying out a task, only if that task is possible to be carried out.

PRE-EXISTENT, ANCIENT, ETERNAL: (*Qadím* - قَدِيم)

In its general use, the term ancient (*qadím*) means old, former, and aged. In philosophical terms, ancient or pre-existent refers to a being whose existence is not preceded by time. Pre-existence is a divine attribute, and in this sense, it refers to an Essence or a Being Who is not preceded by a cause and is independent thereof. 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains:

...Certain sages and philosophers hold that there are two kinds of pre-existence —essential and temporal— and that there are likewise two kinds of origination— essential and temporal.

Essential pre-existence is an existence which is not preceded by a cause; essential origination is preceded by a cause. Temporal pre-existence has no beginning; temporal origination has both a beginning and an end...[†]

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih* [Words of Paradise], p. 72.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 323, chapter 80.

He further states:

*Divine Sovereignty is pre-existent, and the world of being is one of the immemorial emanations of the Sun of Truth. A sun without rays cannot be imagined. All the Names and Attributes of God are pre-existent, as are their manifold exigencies.**

QUANTITY: (*Kamiyyat* - كَمِّيَّة) - QUALITY: (*Kayfiyyat* - كَيْفِيَّة)

Quantity (*kamiyyat*) consists of measurable attributes of a thing, such as its weight, volume, length or width. But quality (*kayfiyyat*) refers to a different kind of characteristic which cannot be measured, such as colour, aroma, beauty, dignity, majesty etc.

QUIDDITY: (*Máhiyyat* - مَاهِيَّة)

The quiddity of a thing is known by the reply given to the question about the essential nature or reality of that thing (the quality that makes it different from other things). Derived from the Latin *quidditas* (literally: ‘whatness’, *quid* ‘what’). In Arabic, the question posed would be *má huwa* (what is it?). The reply would indicate or specify its ‘whatness’ (*máhiyyat*) or quiddity.

RATIONAL SOUL: (*Nafs-i-nátiqih* - نَفْس نَاطِقَه)

The rational soul is a term synonymous with the intellect or mind, and is the distinguishing feature of a human being. Some sages and mystics use the term ‘heart’ to refer to the rational faculty. According to the Bahá’í teachings, the rational soul or human intelligence is confined to man, and derives its sustenance from the spirit. ...*This intelligence of man is the intermediary between his body and his spirit...†*

The rational soul is also referred to as the human soul, that is the intermediary between the intangible and the material. As such, it is neither totally tangible nor is it fully abstract, but as explained by ‘Abdu’l-

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Má’idiyi Ásmáni*, vol. 2, p. 59.

† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Paris Talks*, p. 96.

Bahá, it is ‘the place where the two seas meet’ (*majma`u`l-bahrayn*), and ‘the mediator between the two’ (*barzakh-i-baynu`l-amrayn*)*: in other words, it is the intermediary or ‘isthmus’ between two realities. Regarding the rational soul, Bahá’u’lláh affirms:

Consider the rational faculty with which God hath endowed the essence of man. Examine thine own self, and behold how thy motion and stillness, thy will and purpose, thy sight and hearing, thy sense of smell and power of speech, and whatever else is related to, or transcendeth, thy physical senses or spiritual perceptions, all proceed from, and owe their existence to, this same faculty. So closely are they related unto it, that if in less than the twinkling of an eye its relationship to the human body be severed, each and every one of these senses will cease immediately to exercise its function, and will be deprived of the power to manifest the evidences of its activity. It is indubitably clear and evident that each of these afore-mentioned instruments has depended, and will ever continue to depend, for its proper functioning on this rational faculty, which should be regarded as a sign of the revelation of Him Who is the sovereign Lord of all. Through its manifestation all these names and attributes have been revealed, and by the suspension of its action they are all destroyed and perish.

It would be wholly untrue to maintain that this faculty is the same as the power of vision, inasmuch as the power of vision is derived from it and acteth in dependence upon it. It would, likewise, be idle to contend that this faculty can be identified with the sense of hearing, as the sense of hearing receiveth from the rational faculty the requisite energy for performing its functions.†

* See *Najm-i-Bákh̄tar* [*Star of the West*], 1914, volume 7, p. 3, also see *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 55, p. 242 and chapter 66, pp. 276-278.

† Bahá’u’lláh, *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh*, LXXXIII, p. 162.

REALISM:

Realism is a doctrine claiming that external beings take precedence over mental perceptions. In matters related to existence, this philosophy believes in the existence of realities outside the mind, and assumes the outside world to be exactly as perceived by the senses. In matters related to cognitive sciences, this doctrine asserts that meanings and universals have an independent existence outside the human mind. 'Aesthetic realism' considers art to be the mirror of natural realities and believes that it depicts subjects as they appear in everyday life. Such a concept is in contrast to 'surrealism'.

REALITY - TRUTH: (*Ḥaqīqat* - حَقِيقَات)

In common usage, truth refers to the conformity of thoughts with facts or with reality in general. It is of course impossible to prove the existence of such conformity, and as such they say that truth is relative and dependent upon circumstances and minds. In terms of logic, a necessary or logical truth is a statement the negation of which is unacceptable. Truth is the opposite of idle fancy and error; and man's judgements are not void of error.

Gottfried Leibniz (1646 – 1716) made the distinction between two types of conceptual (*dhihni*) and concrete (*'ayni*) truths: He used two terminologies: 'truth of reason'* or conceptual truths, and 'truth of fact'† or empirical truths. The first category of truth is unquestionable, self-evident by definition, and necessary. The denial or negation of such a statement produces a contradiction on the basis of its meaning. 'Truth of fact' that refers to statements based on empirical data, on the other hand, is characterized by its dependence upon experience. The denial of these statements does not necessarily produce a contradiction.

* T.N.: Conceptual, intuitive or mental truths: related to the concept of deductive reasoning, analytic, necessary, and a priori knowledge.

† T.N.: Related to inductive reasoning, synthetic, contingent, and a posteriori knowledge; concrete.

According to Descartes and Malebranche, 'eternal truths or realities' (*ḥaqá'iq-i-azaliyyih*) are constant and unchangeable verities, for they partake of the divine spirit.

'Primary truths' (also known as *a priori*) consist of fixed principles or statements whose validity do not rely on experience, and do not require any proof. They form part of any rational reasoning. 'Objective (or actual) truths', also known as *a posteriori*, rely on experience. They are not self-evident, and are subject to error. The denial of such a statement does not involve a logical contradiction.

Reality is at times regarded in contrast to fallacy, myths, vain imaginings, and idle fancies. Such a notion of reality stands for the principles and criteria that govern the world beyond the transient affairs. In one of His Talks, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that *...religion and science are as two concentric circles that revolve around one common point, which is reality.* *

And in one of His Tablets, He writes:

O thou seeker of the Kingdom! Thy letter was received... Reality is, in effect, the Word of God which is the lifegiver of the world of humanity...†

REALITY OF THINGS, THE: (*Ḥaqáyiḳ-i-Ashyá'* - حقایق اشیاء)

Regarding the realities of things, Bahá'u'lláh states the following:

...The death that thou hast heard of referreth to the world of appearances, to the outer robe and not to the reality or essence. There can be no doubt that the realities of things will continue to be unveiled and revealed through all the worlds, in diverse ways and varying forms...‡

'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

* Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 2, p. 129.

† Provisional translation of a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

‡ Provisional Translation of a Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh: *Má'idiyi Ásmání*, vol. 7, pp. 120-121.

*Sound and sensible ideas arising from pure and genuine philosophies are completely consistent with the heavenly Writings. There is no difference whatsoever between the two, inasmuch as the inner essences of all things exist in the treasuries of the Kingdom. Once these inner essences are revealed in the physical world, they assume actual existence...**

REASON: (*Shu`úr* - شعور)

It is also referred to as awareness and understanding, and involves the ability to draw conclusions and to understand without the necessity of a proof. In other words, reason or intelligence is the first stage of attaining to knowledge through the rational faculty.

REASONING - ARGUMENTATION: (*Istidlál* - استدلال)

According to the *Dictionary of Islamic Philosophical Terms*, reasoning (*istidlál*) is an expression used in logic, and refers to the cognitive process of providing rational arguments in support of conclusions. There are two main divisions between the forms of reasoning in philosophy:

1. Assertoric proof or *demonstratio quia*[†] (referred to in Islamic philosophy as *burhán-i-inní*).
2. Demonstrative proof or *demonstratio propter quid*[‡] (known as *burhán-i-limmi*).

In the first division, also known as inductive reasoning, inference is made from effect to cause, and the existence of the effect leads to conclusions about the cause. Demonstrative proof or deductive reasoning is a mode of reasoning that proceeds from cause to effect.

* Provisional Translation of a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: *Makátib*, vol. 3, p. 172.

† T.N.: *Quia*: A Latin term meaning: ‘demonstration that, or because’, used as an alternative for *a posteriori* or inductive reasoning.

‡ T.N.: *Propter quid*: A Latin term meaning: ‘demonstration on account of what’, used as an alternative for *a priori* or deductive reasoning.

RELIGION: (*Dín* - دين)

Religion is a set of tenets and practices current amongst people in relation to their social interaction, as well as to their spiritual relationship with supernatural existences. Religion encompasses the personal as well as the communal rights of the individual, as well as those of the group or society. It is often centred upon matters such as the soul, paradise, hell, the next world, God, blasphemy, and moral as well as social issues. Many of the followers of religion believe it to have a divine origin, and regard religion to be the set of ideas, beliefs and institutions that are revealed by God for man. Religion is often synonymous with faith and religious law (*shari`at*).

According to the Bahá'í Faith, religion is a rational phenomenon (*ká'inát-i-ma`qúlih*) and as such must be dynamic and needs to grow and develop constantly, for the advent of religions is the result of divine emanation, and there is no cessation or delay in the continuation of divine emanations. Religion is the set of teachings, beliefs, laws, and institutions that are revealed for man through a Manifestation of God through divine inspiration. The advent of religion is the sign of the bounty and grace of God to mankind. According to the Bahá'í beliefs, divine religions agree in essence, and are in fact the various stages of one same Truth. They are interrelated and have been evolving throughout time.

RELIGIOUS LAW: (*Shari`a* or *Shari`at* - شريعة - شريعت)

The word *shari`a* refers to an archaic Arabic word denoting the 'path to drinking water'. The term is used to mean the set of statements, actions, customs and laws that God sends for mankind through His Prophets and Manifestations for the personal and collective guidance of man. The mystic philosopher, Khájih 'Abdu'lláh Anşári, considered religious law (*shari`at*) as the body, the spiritual path (*ṭaríqat*) as the heart, and spiritual truth (*ḥaqíqat*) as the life. Other mystic philosophers have written that *shari`at* consists of the words and sayings of the Prophets,

tariqat is their actions, and *haqiqat* is their view and vision. In a Tablet revealed in honour of Siyyid Muḥammad-‘Alí, Bahá’u’lláh writes:

O Muḥammad-‘Alí! May the peace of God, His loving-kindness, His glory and His mercy rest upon thee... The Wronged One of ‘Akká admonisheth all to fear God, and enjoineth on them whatsoever would exalt man’s station... The true Law of God consisteth of acts and deeds that reveal the full glory of man’s station. This is the meaning of ‘good’ ordained by the One True God, glorified be He, in all His Books. Whatsoever runneth counter to such a station is accounted as ‘wrong’† and must needs be avoided.‡*

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains Religious Law as follows:

... Briefly, the universal Manifestations of God are aware of the truths underlying the mysteries of all created things, and thus They found a religion that is based upon, and consonant with, the prevailing condition of humanity. For religion consists in the necessary relationships deriving from the realities of things.§

Further, in a Tablet addressed to Shaykh Muḥammad Ḥasan-i-Nizámu’l-‘Ulamá’ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

*... true order and law are the necessary relations inherent in the realities of things, demanded and necessitated by the nature of creation. If thou art able, do thou promote this order and promulgate this heavenly law... ***

* T.N.: Reference to the Quranic exhortation *Amr bi’l-ma’ruf wa nahy ‘an a’l-munkar* (enjoining good and forbidding evil).

† T.N.: *Munkar*, also translated as ‘evil’ in the Islamic exhortation. See footnote above.

‡ Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh, *Uṣúl-i-‘Aqáyid-i-Bahá’iyán*, p. 45.

§ ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 180, chapter 40.

** Authorized translation from a Tablet of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

REVELATION: (*Vahy* - وحى)

See: Inspiration

REVELATION: (*Zuhúr* - ظهور)

See: Manifestation

RICHES: (*Ghaná* - غنا)

See: Independence

SARTRE, JEAN PAUL:

Jean Paul Sartre was a French philosopher, novelist, and journalist, born in Paris in 1905. He was influenced by German philosophers such as Heidegger, and became one of the leaders of the Existentialist philosophy. His early works are based on the notion that there is no aim to life. His principal philosophical work is the book *Being and Nothingness*. In 1964 Sartre was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature, but he declined it. He died in 1980.

SCIENTIFIC DETERMINATION: (*Jabr-i-'Ilmi* - جبر علمی)

According to Islamic philosophy 'determination' refers to ascribing man's actions to God, based on the view that all human choices and activities happen according to God's will. In such a definition, 'determination' (*jabr*) is in contrast to 'free will' or the freedom to act (*qadr*), where human actions are ascribed to the person and not to God. Scientific or causal determination (*jabr-i-'ilmi*; also known as nomological or mechanistic determinism) is based on intellectual and scientific reasoning, as well as upon the principle of causal determination according to a chain of prior occurrences.

SCHOLASTIC:*

‘Scholastic’ was a method of learning taught by the academics of the medieval times (circa 1100-1500 AD). The sciences and philosophy of the medieval ages were confined to that which was taught by the church, and those teachings and schools were called *schola* in Latin, hence the name Scholastic. Scholastic learning and knowledge possessed certain characteristics that have been summarized as below in the *Dehkhoda Encyclopaedia*:

...To begin with, scientific and philosophical research used to be generally carried out for the purpose of establishing the principles of religion with the aim of solidifying people’s belief, and not for the sake of discovering facts and truths. The religious leaders used to openly state that faith took priority over reason, that is to say that it was not necessary to comprehend in order to believe. One needed to first believe and then try to understand, inasmuch as understanding would not come without faith.

Consequently, the efforts of the scholars and researchers were all focused upon placing reason in service of belief, and to adapt and adjust science to meet the religious standards and requirements, since it was believed that the principles of faith were sent down by God and as such were correct, and that no mind or intellect could deny those. Subsequently, there was no freedom of thought or opinion. All the supporting documentations were initially based on the contents of the Holy Books and reliance was purely on the teachings of the religious leaders. Anyone who would deviate from those teachings would either be forced to repent and to deny what he had said or written, or he would be subject to imprisonment, persecution or excommunication. So many were punished, killed or burned alive because of an act of divergence from the teachings of the religious leaders. It also often

* T.N.: Derived from the Latin *scholasticus* (i.e.: that which belongs to the school).

happened that books or articles contrary to the religious principles were cast into the fire. Once the scholars became aware of the doctrines of the great minds and philosophers of the past, they attempted to adapt those views to the principles imposed by the religious leaders; and from that time on, those new doctrines would fall into that same category of religious teachings, in the sense that if anything was said against the philosophy of Aristotle, that would be then considered as sacrilege. That resulted in scientific research and investigation being based on the views and sayings of past generations, rather than being founded on new observation and experience, on reason, study or on the investigation of realities. New ideas were not presented, and new principles and realities were not sought. The doctrines of the teachers of old were alone accepted as indisputable, and discussions were based on those doctrines.

*And finally, since scientific principles and theories could not be subject to study and research, the power of the mind and reason were simply directed towards controversy, debates and disputes. This was the way in which people were kept interested in logical discussions, and made to content themselves with mere words. Examples of subjects under scrutiny were: Can the knowledge of God increase or not? Was the dove in which form the Holy Spirit was manifested a real animal? Is the fact that the original man was not born an essential quality? When Jesus Christ was crucified, His hands, feet and His side were injured; were the wounds still there when He came back to life? Where did the angels reside prior to the creation of Adam? At the time of his descent, how tall was Adam?**

* *Dehkhoda Encyclopaedia*, under Scholastic.

SENTIMENTS: (*Vijdán* - وجدان)

See: Conscience

SENSE: (*Hiss* - حسّ)

Our senses are the means for perceiving the concrete. The followers of the empirical school of thought underline the role of experience through sensory perception in the formation of knowledge. That is to say anything that is comprehended must first be observed or perceived through the senses.

SENSES, THE FIVE: (*Haváss-i-Khamsih* - حواسّ خمسّه)

Scientists and philosophers consider man to possess two categories of senses that are the basis of all human knowledge. One kind consists of the exteroceptive senses (also known as external or sensory), which are the physiological means of perception. These senses form the faculties by which outside stimuli are perceived. The traditional five external senses are sight or vision, hearing, touch, smell, and taste. With the exception of the sense of touch that exists throughout the body, the other four senses each have a specific organ in the body that is dedicated to its perception. The second class of senses consists of the five inner powers that are categorised as the faculties of imagination, memory, thought, comprehension, and the common sense. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá talks about the human senses as follows:

There are five outward material powers in man which are the means of perception—that is, five powers whereby man perceives material things. They are sight, which perceives sensible forms; hearing, which perceives audible sounds; smell, which perceives odours; taste, which perceives edible things; and touch which perceives tactile realities. These five powers perceive external objects.

Man has likewise a number of spiritual powers: the power of imagination, h forms a mental image of things; thought, which

reflects upon the realities of things; comprehension, which understands these realities; and memory, which retains whatever man has imagined, thought, and understood. The intermediary between these five outward powers and the inward powers is a common faculty, a sense which mediates between them and which conveys to the inward powers whatever the outward powers have perceived. It is termed the common faculty as it is shared in common between the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight, which is one of the outward powers, sees and perceives this flower and conveys this perception to the inward power of the common faculty; the common faculty transmits it to the power of imagination, which in turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects upon it and, having apprehended its reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, once it has understood it, delivers the image of the sensible object to the memory, and the memory preserves it in its repository.

*The outward powers are five: the power of sight, of hearing, of taste, of smell, and of touch. The inward powers are also five: the common faculty and the powers of imagination, thought, comprehension, and memory.**

SENSIBLE REALITIES, TANGIBLE, CONCRETE: (*Maḥsúsát* - محسوسات)

Objects that are perceptible to the five outer senses are known as tangible, concrete or sensible realities. Such objects fall into five categories: Those that can be seen, heard, smelt, tasted, and felt. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains:

...human knowledge is of two kinds. One is the knowledge acquired through the senses. That which the eye, the ear, or the

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 243-4, chapter 56.

*senses of smell, taste, or touch can perceive is called “sensible”....The other kind of human knowledge is that of intelligible things; that is, it consists of intelligible realities which have no outward form or place and which are not sensible. For example, the power of the mind is not sensible, nor are any of the human attributes: These are intelligible realities. Love, likewise, is an intelligible and not a sensible reality...**

And further in the same book, He states:

...created things are of two kinds: material and spiritual, sensible and intelligible. That is, some are perceptible to the senses, while others are only perceived by the mind.

Sensible realities are those which are perceived by the five outer senses: So, for example, those outward things which the eye sees are called sensible. Intelligible realities are those which have no outward existence but are perceived by the mind. For example, the mind itself is an intelligible reality and has no outward existence. Likewise, all human virtues and attributes have an intelligible rather than a sensible existence...†

SIMPLE OR UNCOMPOUNDED: (*Basít* - بسيط)

A being that has no proper parts, and that no separate part of it can be identified is known, in philosophical terms, as ‘simple’. It is in contrast to composed. Jurjání classifies ‘simple’ in three groups: An ‘absolute simple’ (*basít-i-ḥaqíqí*) is one that contains no separate part whatsoever, such as the essence of Divinity, also referred to as the Uncompounded Reality. Second, is a ‘conventional or common simple’ (*basít-i-‘urfí*) and that is a thing which is not composed of elements of varied nature. Third is a ‘relative simple’ (*idáfí*), that is one whose com-

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 93, chapter 16.

† ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 303, chapter 74.

ponents are less in relation to another object. According to another categorization simples are of two kinds: spiritual (*rawhání*), such as the abstract and non-material beings, and material (*jismání*) such as the four basic elements.

SOCRATES:

Socrates was the famous Greek philosopher, and the teacher of Plato. He was born in Athens in 469 BC and studied the sciences of his time. He is renowned for his contributions to the field of ethics. He taught his ideas and philosophy by means of his dialectic method of inquiry. Socrates did not write philosophical texts; his teachings and philosophy were conveyed through the writings of his students such as Plato and Xenophon. His influence upon the Islamic philosophy was through the works of Plato. In 399 BC Socrates was found guilty of not worshipping the gods of Greece and of corrupting the minds of the youth of Athens. He was sentenced to death by drinking a mixture containing poison hemlock.

Bahá'u'lláh refers to Socrates in the *Tablet of Wisdom*:

...After him came Socrates who was indeed wise, accomplished and righteous. He practiced self-denial, repressed his appetites for selfish desires and turned away from material pleasures. He withdrew to the mountains where he dwelt in a cave. He dissuaded men from worshipping idols and taught them the way of God, the Lord of Mercy, until the ignorant rose up against him. They arrested him and put him to death in prison. Thus relateth to thee this swift-moving Pen. What a penetrating vision into philosophy this eminent man had! He is the most distinguished of all philosophers and was highly versed in wisdom. We testify that he is one of the heroes in this field and an outstanding champion dedicated unto it. He had a profound knowledge of such sciences as were current amongst men as well as of those which were veiled from their minds. Methinks he drank one draught when the

The Kingdom of Existence

*Most Great Ocean overflowed with gleaming and life-giving waters. He it is who perceived a unique, a tempered, and a pervasive nature in things, bearing the closest likeness to the human spirit, and he discovered this nature to be distinct from the substance of things in their refined form. He hath a special pronouncement on this weighty theme. Wert thou to ask from the worldly wise of this generation about this exposition, thou wouldst witness their incapacity to grasp it. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth but most people comprehend not.**

And in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá:

It is furthermore a matter of record in numerous historical works that the Philosophers of Greece such as Pythagoras acquired the major part of their philosophy, both divine and material, from the disciples of Solomon. And Socrates after having eagerly journeyed to meet with some of Israel's most illustrious scholars and divines, on his return to Greece established the concept of the oneness of God and the continuing life of the human soul after it has put off its elemental dust. Ultimately, the ignorant among the Greeks denounced this man who had fathomed the inmost mysteries of wisdom, and rose up to take his life; and then the populace forced the hand of their ruler, and in council assembled they caused Socrates to drink from the poisoned cup.†

And further in another Talk:

...even the Greek philosophers journeyed to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the Hebrew sages and acquire the basis of Israelitish law. According to eastern history this is an established fact. Even Socrates visited the Jewish doctors in the Holy Land, consorting with them and discussing the principles and basis of their reli-

* Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 146.

† Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 77, 1975 ed.

*gious belief. After his return to Greece, he formulated his philosophical teaching of divine unity and advanced his belief in the immortality of the spirit beyond the dissolution of the body. Without doubt Socrates absorbed these verities from the wise men of the Jews with whom he came in contact.**

SPIRIT: (*Rúh* - روح)

In common usage, 'spirit' represents the source of life. In philosophy, it denotes the reality of consciousness, as opposed to matter and body. 'Spirit' is used synonymously with 'mind', and that is the ability and capacity to acquire knowledge, and to comprehend. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

...the human spirit, in other words, the rational soul is the intermediary between the immaterial and the corporeal, that is to say, between things spiritual and things material. From one perspective, it is endowed with spiritual refinement; from another, it is characterized by the crass inclination towards animalistic appetites and worldly desires. It is neither completely spiritual nor completely worldly...†

Further, in a Tablet addressed to Mírzá 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn of Káshán, 'Abdu'l-Bahá writes:

O bearer of the name of 'Abdu'l-Bahá! Thou art the servant of Ḥusayn, and I of Bahá...‡ Thou hast asked regarding the soul and the spirit. By the soul is meant the reality of man that is inclined towards the contingent world, and is associated with the worldly aspects of human life. This definition of the soul is known and

* *Bahá'i World Faith* – 'Abdu'l-Bahá Section, p. 271.

† Provisional translation from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. *Najm-i-Bákhtar* [*Star of the West*], 1914, vol.7, p. 3.

‡ T.N.: Referring to the two names 'Abdu'l-Ḥusayn and 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

*referred to as the natural human spirit that is common to all mankind. So in this sense, the spirit and the soul are one and the same. But the heavenly spirit is that reality of man that is derived from the outpourings of divine Grace, and blessed by the splendours of the Sun of Truth. The heavenly spirit is confined to true believers. All others remain deprived of this holy breath and are such as are referred to as 'the dead' in the language common to the followers of mystical truth...**

And in another Tablet, He writes:

O servant of the True One! Thy two letters were received and the contents thereof were noted... True paradise for the soul is to enjoy near access to the eternal Beauty, while hell is to be far removed from that radiant Light. It is the difference between perfection and deficiency, sublimity and abasement, light and darkness. Though the soul is immaterial in nature, it is only transcendent in relation to the world of matter. Within itself and in its own essence, there existeth ranks and stations, both high and low. Though free from the limitations of this contingent world, yet in the world of its own, the stages, distinctions, and conditions are limitless. In like manner, its return unto God is not like a return of the part to the whole, such as that of the drop to the sea. Nay, such a return may be likened, rather, to the repair of the birds to the rose garden of tender mercies of the ever-forgiving Lord. Behold how souls, even while associated with the body, are distinguished one from the other in all respects. Some live at the loftiest heights of consciousness and excellence, while others exist in the lowest plains of degradation. Likewise, after returning to the realms of God, such differences and distinctions do exist...†

* Provisional translation from a previously unpublished Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

† Provisional translation, 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Ma'idiy-i-Ásimání*, vol 2, p. 16.

STATIONS OR DEGREES: (*Marátib* - مراتب)

The word *marátib* (stations, degrees, or stages) is the plural of *mart-abih* (stage, step, time), and refers to grades and levels. Every realm of existence contains certain stages, degrees, planes or stations; such as the stations of the prophets, the stations of numbers, the stages of paradise and hell, etc. In the works of the mystics, the four stations or stages consist of: the divine or the revealed Law (*shari`at*), the spiritual Path (*taríqat*), Knowledge (*ma`rifat*), and Truth (*ḥaqíqat*). The seven stations are:

1. The realm of Divine Unity or Absolute Oneness* (*Aḥadíyyat*). Also known as the realm of *Háhút* (the Heaven of Oneness, the realm of the unknowable Essence, the imperishable Essence, He-ness, God's Essence prior to manifestation), and the Invisible of the Invisibles (*Ghaybu`l-Ghuyúb*), the inviolable Treasure (*Kanz-i-maṣún*), and the concealed Unseen (*Ghayb-i-maknún*).
2. The station of Oneness, also as Aloneness (*Váhidíyyat*), and that is the station of the Names and Attributes of God. It is known as *Láhút* (which is the plane of Divinity, the Heavenly Court, the Manifest Absolute, God-ness), and also referred to as the station of the 'nearest of even less' or 'even nearer' (*maqám-i-aw adná*)[†], the Most Great or Supreme intervening Space or realm of dark bodies, or the Isthmus (*barzakh*) also known as the world of Ideas, and the Most Holy Grace or the Most Holy Emanation (*Fayd-i-Aqdas*).
3. The All-Highest Dominion (*Jabarút*), which is the realm of the Intellect or Minds (*Álam-i-`Uqúl*), and it is also known as the Realm of the Pen (*Álam-i-Qalam*), the Realm of Decree (*Qaḍá`*), the snow-white Vale (*Darriyi baydá`*), the white Pillar (*Rukn-i-abyad*),

* T.N.: Also referred to as the Heaven of Singleness, and the Un-manifest Absolute.

† T.N.: Reference to the Quranic verse: the distance of two bows' length or less.

the Throne (*'Arsh*), and the all-subduing Light also known as the Dominating or Victorial Lights* (*Anwar-i-Qáhirih*).

4. Another plane is that of the Most Exalted Kingdom (*Malakút-i-A`lá*); it is the realm of the universal souls (*'Álam-i-nufús-i-kulliyiyih*), and is also referred to as the Tablet or Scroll (*Lawh*), the Governing or the Lordly Lights† (*Anwar-i-Isfahbudíyyih*), The yellow Vale (*Darriyi safrá'*), and the yellow Pillar (*Rukni asfar*).
5. The station of the lower Kingdom (*Malakút-i-suflá*), or the realm of the particular souls (*'álam-i-nufús-i-juz'íyyih*), also referred to as the Scrolls or Tablets of self-effacement and self-restoration (*Al-wáh-i-maḥw wa ithbát*), the realm of preordainment or destiny (*'álam-i-qadar*), the green Vale (*Darriyi khadrá'*), and the imaginal world‡ (*'álam-i-mithál*), and the green Pillar (*Rukn-i-akhḍar*).
6. The mortal world, the realm of *násút*, also known as the physical realm (*'álam-i-mulk*), the world of nature (*'álam-i-ṭabí`at*), the realm of the visible (*'álam-i-shahádat*), the crimson Vale (*Darriyi ḥamrá'*), and the crimson or red Pillar (*rukni- aḥmar*)

‘Abdu’l-Bahá explains the following in *Some Answered Questions*:

Know that the degrees of existence are finite—the degrees of servitude, of prophethood, and of Divinity—but that the perfections of God and of creation are infinite. If you examine the matter with care, you will see that even in their most outward sense the perfections of existence are infinite; for it is impossible to find any

* T.N.: This concept of lights is derived from the doctrine of ‘Illuminationism’ (*Ish-ráqiyyún*) whose principles were propounded as an ancient science of lights (*'ilm al anwar*). According to *Suhrawardi*, the human soul is a luminous substance, namely the regent light.

† T.N.: With reference to the same doctrine of ‘Illuminationism’, it is referred to as the governing or lordly lights, since it is the command center of the being. (*Isfahbud*: derived from the words *sepah*: army, and *bud*: master).

‡ T.N.: also known as realms of symbols or similitudes, or the world of analogies; *mundus imaginalis*.

created thing such that nothing superior to it can be imagined. For example, one cannot find in the mineral kingdom a ruby, or in the vegetable kingdom a rose, or in the animal kingdom a nightingale, such that an even better specimen cannot be imagined.

*As the grace of God is limitless, so too are the perfections of man. If it were possible for the reality of anything to reach the very summit of perfection, then it would become independent of God and the contingent reality would attain to the station of the necessary reality. But every created thing has been assigned a degree which it can in no wise overpass. So he who occupies the degree of servitude, no matter how far he may progress and acquire endless perfections, can never reach the degree of divine Lordship. The same holds true of all other created things. No matter how far a mineral may progress, it can never acquire the power of growth in the mineral kingdom...**

Further in the same book He states:

... those who have thoroughly investigated the questions of divinity know of a certainty that the material worlds terminate at the end of the arc of descent; that the station of man lies at the end of the arc of descent and the beginning of the arc of ascent, which is opposite the Supreme Centre; and that from the beginning to the end of the arc of ascent the degrees of progress are of a spiritual nature. The arc of descent is called that of "bringing forth" and the arc of ascent that of "creating anew". The arc of descent ends in material realities and the arc of ascent in spiritual realities. The point of the compass in describing a circle does not

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 265, chapter 62.

*reverse its motion, for this would be contrary to the natural movement and the divine order and would disrupt the regularity of the circle...**

In a Tablet addressed to ‘Alí Qulí Khán, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá writes:

O thou close companion of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá! Thy letter addressed to Jináb-i-Manshadi was perused and the contents were noted. Thou hadst written regarding the statement of a certain Indian. Gracious God! How strange is such a statement, what an empty supposition it is, how utterly false! In the realm of being, certain souls appeared in this nether world Who became the Educators of humankind. They shone forth like the sun, and were adored by the peoples of the world. They were the Repositories of Divine Revelation in the form of the human Temple, and the Daysprings of the Light of Truth. Consider what loftiness, what sublimity that is! And then there are those human beings who bow down before stone and clay, that is to say the lowest form among all created things; the mineral! Ponder and reflect what abject abasement that is, to worship the basest of all beings; the stone, rock, and a clod of earth. How can the two be compared? By God! How dire is such slander!

The outward is the symbol of the inward. No matter how far each of the different species may progress, it will never reach the rank above its own. For instance, no matter how much the mineral may develop, it will not attain to the power of growth within the vegetable kingdom. Likewise, no matter how far the vegetable may evolve, it will never develop the sense of feeling. Similarly, no matter how much an animal be trained and developed, it will never achieve the reasoning power of the mind.

* ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 330, chapter 81.

*Thus, it hath become evident that each and every created thing doth possess a particular station within which it advanceth. Similarly, every human being hath a spiritual station, and doth progress in its own station and rank. The one who is stunted of mind, no matter how intense a discipline he may endure, no matter how diligently he may strive, and how regenerated he may become, he will never attain to the station of the Daysprings of Revelation and the Dawning-Places of Inspiration. The bitter tree will never become a lofty palm tree, and the colocynth will never bear sweet fruit. What vain imagining, and what idle fancy this is! How very strange that people hearken unto such superstitious notions!**

Furthermore, He writes in a Tablet addressed to Mrs. Isabella Brittingham:

*O thou who art attracted to the Divine fragrances! Thy letter hath been received... Thou hast written a description regarding the 'seven days'. This is one of the meanings intended in the Holy Book.[†] But the second meaning is that such days refer to stations or degrees. The first station is that of the mineral kingdom, the second the vegetable kingdom, the third the animal, the fourth the realm of man's rational soul, the fifth the domain of the intellect, the sixth the world of the spirit, that is to say the Kingdom, and the seventh station is the realm of Absolute Oneness[‡], of Godhead[§], of Divinity^{**}, and that marketh the culmination of the seven stations. The [first] six pertain to the world of creation, and are part of this contingent world. The seventh station is the realm of God, and is sanctified beyond the bounds of creation. Thus it is*

* Provisional translation from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

† T.N.: The Bible.

‡ *Aḥadíyyat*.

§ *Rubúbíyyat*.

** *Ulúhíyyat*.

*that this Holy Dispensation is situated at the seventh degree: it is the Great Cycle, the New Resurrection, the Supreme Day of Judgement, the Most Glorious Paradise, where the Tree of Life is planted. Thus, in reality, it hath no limit nor any end...**

SYLLOGISM: (*Qiyás* - قياس)

See: Deduction by Analogic Reasoning

TANGIBLE REALITIES: (*Maḥsúsát* - محسوسات)

See: Sensible Realities

THEISTS: (*Iláhiyyún* - الهيون)

Theists believe that beyond the natural powers and material beings there also exist supernatural powers and non-material beings. They do not consider the world and its happenings to be merely material and dependent upon material powers, but rather, they believe in spiritual and divine existences.

THING: (*Shay'* - شىء)

A 'thing' refers to an entity, an object or a substance. In common usage, a 'thing' is what can be imagined or can be described or talked about, by which is meant a being or an existence, in contrast to nothingness. The existence of a 'thing', albeit an abstract one, can be asserted by the mind.

THOUGHT: (*Taşavvur* - تصور)

See: Conception

TRANSCENDENCE: (*Tanzih* - تنزيه)

The doctrine of transcendence is the belief that God, by virtue of His essence, is in no way whatsoever alike His creation. It affirms that He

* Provisional translation from a Tablet of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.

is sanctified and exalted above the world of creation. As divine attributes are unlimited, and given man's limited attributes, man is powerless to fathom the limitless attributes of God, for divine attributes and those of man are in no wise similar. As such, the essence of God transcends the attributes ascribed to Him by man. As stated in the Qur'an: *Glorified be thy Lord, the Lord of Majesty, from that which they attribute unto Him.** Elaborating on this principle, 'Abdu'l-Bahá states:

Know that the reality of the Divinity and the nature of the divine Essence is ineffable sanctity and absolute holiness; that is, it is exalted above and sanctified beyond every praise. All the attributes ascribed to the highest degrees of existence are, with regard to this station, mere imagination...†

TRANSIENT: (*Hádith* - حادث)

See: Contingent

UNIVERSAL REALITY: (*Haqiqat-i-i-Kullíyyih* - حقیقت کلیه)

'Universal Reality' is another term used for the Divine Essence, and for the Manifestation of the Divine Essence. 'Abdul'-Bahá states:

...How, then, could the universal Reality of God, which transcends all descriptions and attributes, resolve itself, notwithstanding its absolute sanctity and holiness, into the forms and realities of the contingent world, which are the very source of imperfections? This is pure fantasy and untenable conjecture‡.

And describing the Manifestation of the Divine Essence, He adds:

...The first thing to emanate from God is that universal reality which the ancient philosophers termed the 'First Intellect' and which the people of Bahá call the 'Primal Will'. This emanation,

* *Qur'an* (Pickthall tr.), Surah 37 'as-Saffát' (the Rangers) verse 180.

† 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 37, p. 165.

‡ 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 342, chapter 82.

*with respect to its action in the world of God, is not limited by either time or place and has neither beginning nor end, for in relation to God the beginning and the end are one and the same. The pre-existence of God is both essential and temporal, while the origination of the contingent world is essential but not temporal... Though the First Intellect is without beginning, this does not mean that it shares in the pre-existence of God, for in relation to the existence of God the existence of that universal Reality is mere nothingness—it cannot even be said to exist, let alone to partake of the pre-existence of God...**

UNVEIL: (*Kashf* - كشف)

See: Discover

WEALTH: (*Ghaná* - غنا)

See: Independence

WILL: (*Irádih* - اراده)

The resolution or power to carry out a specific action in pursuit of a goal is known as determination or will power. It requires an aim and the necessary means for achieving that aim. An intended or a deliberate act is the result of a decision developed in the mind prior to the act. In the view of some philosophers, determination or will power is an independent quality, unaffected by external conditions and influences. The Marxist view considers it to be the result of knowledge, experience and education.

* 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 235, chapter 53.

WISDOM, THEOSOPHY, PHILOSOPHY: (*Hikmat* - حکمت)*

In the past, wisdom (*hikmat*) was generally synonymous with philosophy, with the terms philo-sophia literally meaning ‘lover of wisdom’. In general terms, it referred to subjects related to God, the universe, and man. Jurjání defines *hikmat* as ‘The science that examines, within human ability, the realities of things in the world of existence.’†

‘Divine philosophy’ or ‘divine wisdom’ (*hikmat-i-iláhi*) consists in a system of knowledge that draws inspiration from and is sustained by the fulfilment of divine grace. In providing a definition of such philosophy ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states:

Philosophy consisteth in understanding the reality of things even as they are, and the knowledge of this reality and its comprehension is not possible save through divine philosophy.‡

The word ‘wisdom’ (*hikmat*) has been used frequently in the Bahá’í Writings. Apart from its specific philosophical significance, it also has been used to describe the state of ‘rational or discrete action’, ‘sagacious judgment’, ‘tact and prudence’, and ‘the need for moderation in all matters’. Other connotations of wisdom are: reason, cause, purpose, discretion, good sense or caution, and usefulness.§ The use of the word *hikmat* in the sense of tact and prudence, and the injunction provided in the Writings to ‘exercise wisdom and discretion’ in the everyday affairs of the believers refer to the need to act according to the conditions of the time and place. In explaining the numerous meanings of the word

* T.N.: Other terms frequently used are: Metaphysics, Mystical Philosophy, and Traditional Islamic Philosophy.

† Jurjání: *Ta`rifát*, p. 96.

‡ Provisional translation, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 2, p. 129.

§ To see the selection of Writings from which these concepts have been extracted, the reader is referred to the book *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 3, pp. 107-129.

wisdom as revealed in the Quranic verse: ... *he unto whomsoever wisdom is given, he truly hath received abundant good...** , Bahá'u'lláh elucidates the following:

Consider that which hath been revealed in the Qur'an: 'He giveth wisdom unto whom He will, and he unto whom wisdom is given, he truly hath received abundant good'.

Some believe that by 'wisdom' is meant the Laws of God that have been revealed in the Book. Others consider wisdom be the science of medicine, and say that whoso attaineth thereunto hath indeed received abundant good, for such knowledge is the science of human bodies and pertaineth unto man. They regard it to be the noblest of all sciences because of these exalted words uttered by the Tongue of Wisdom in the past: 'Science is of two kinds: the science of human bodies and the science of religions'.[†] In this blessed statement, the science of human bodies is given precedence and indeed it should have priority, inasmuch as the Revelation of God and His Teachings have been and will ever be for the education and progress of man, and to ensure the protection and security of the peoples of the world. It is evident and manifest, therefore, that whatsoever leadeth to the security, the health and wellbeing of the peoples of the world hath been and will continue to be, of primary importance.

Yet, some are of the opinion that wisdom consisteth in the comprehension of the reality of things, and he who attaineth unto such knowledge shall occupy a sublime station. Still others maintain that wisdom is to act in accordance with that which can profit mankind, and believe that whoso achieveth this end is the possessor of abundant good. Some people say that wisdom is that which guardeth man from all that may lead to his abasement, and

* *Qur'an*, Sura 2 – The Cow, 269.

† T.N.: A saying ascribed to Prophet Muhammad.

guideth him unto that which causeth his exaltation. Another group regardeth it to be the art of consorting with people, and of showing forbearance to others without transgressing the limits of moderation. Others say that wisdom is the science of theology and the knowledge of those laws prescribed by the sages of the past. Moreover, some have stated that wisdom is the science of atoms and accidental attributes, and similarly, others say that it is the science of astronomy and the like. Furthermore, there are those who believe that wisdom is the knowledge of the means of livelihood in the world. And while some consider wisdom to be the science of principles and laws, others think it to be the rulings of justice, by which is always meant ‘rendering unto each and every one his due’. There are those who regard wisdom to be the science of alchemy, and believe that whoever attaineth unto such a science is the possessor of abundant good. And yet still others associate it with the science of geometry and the like.*

Each group, according to the measure of its capacity, hath proposed arguments and proofs to demonstrate the truth of that which hath been mentioned. But to delve into this theme would cause weariness. Praise be unto Him Who proclaimeth this Most Sublime Word: ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God’.[†] For the fear of God and true piety prevent man from committing that which is the cause of humiliation and abasement, and impel him instead to hold fast to whatsoever leadeth to nobility and exaltation. A wise man, therefore, shunneth all vile and contemptible acts, inasmuch as he can foresee the retribution that shall follow.[‡]

* T.N.: *‘Ilm-i-jawáhir wa a`râd* (atomism), a physical theory of kalám.

† T.N.: From the Islamic *Hadíth* (Traditions) attributed to Prophet Muhammad, as well as Proverbs 9:10: *The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*

‡ Provisional translation of a Tablet of Bahá’u’lláh, *Iqtidárát* pp. 279-282 – Also see: *Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A`lá*, vol. 6, pp. 95-103.

Notes

1. For the English text see: Peter Mühlischlegel, *Auguste Forel and the Bahá'í Faith* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1978), translated by Hélène Neri, pp. 1-5; and John Paul Vader, *For the Good of Mankind* (Oxford: George Ronald, 1984), pp. 14-15. (hereafter “Peter Mühlischlegel’s book” and “John Paul Vader’s book”, respectively.) The translation of Dr. Forel’s letter in Persian is published in *Forel: Nábighiy-i Bahá'í [Forel, the Bahá'í prodigy]* by Nosratollah Mohammad-Hosseini. The first and last pages of Dr. Forel’s original letter in French are printed at the end of this preface. The original copy of the letter is preserved in the Archives of the Bahá'í World Centre in Haifa.
2. After receiving the English and French translations of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s Tablet and Shoghi Effendi’s letter, Dr. Forel responded to Shoghi Effendi: “Your kind letter together with the translations of the words of the Master, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, in reply to my letter dated January 1921 [meant 28 December 1920] were recently received.” (N. Mohammad-Hosseini, p. 55).
3. A copy of the Letter of the Guardian in his own handwriting is published on pages 18-19 of John Vader’s book.
4. Peter Mühlischlegel’s book, page 1.
5. Surprisingly, on page 6 of Peter Mühlischlegel’s book, in which he himself confirms (on page 59) that he has extracted and quoted the translation of the Tablet to Dr. Forel from vol. VX of *The Bahá'í*

World (pp. 37-43), he uses the name “Dr. F.” instead of the name “Dr. Fischer”, clearly stated on page 37 of *The Bahá’í World*.

It would be useful here to provide a brief explanation about Frau Dr. Fallscheer, and her notes of the Talks of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Mrs. Josephine Theresa Zürcher, known as Josephine Fallscheer after her marriage to Mr. Heinrich Fallscheer, was born on 1 October 1866 in Zurich. She graduated from the Zurich University Medical School in 1891. Dr. Auguste Forel who taught psychotherapy there was one of her tutors. After graduating, she travelled to the east where she met her husband; they were married on 27 June 1899. Mr. Fallscheer was of German descent, and was born in Jerusalem, the son of a Christian missionary who had moved to Palestine in 1858. Frau Dr. Fallscheer practiced medicine in Haifa between 1905 and 1912. After the settlement of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá and His family in Haifa in 1908, she became the doctor to the family of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. Frau Dr. Fallscheer moved to Nablus and Jerusalem, and returned to Germany in 1917, taking up residence in Stuttgart.

In Haifa, Frau Dr. Fallscheer regularly attained the presence of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. She apparently never accepted the Bahá’í Faith, nonetheless, she harboured deep respect and great reverence for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá. In 1910, Dr. Fallscheer asked the Master several questions and compiled notes on their conversations and His replies. On 28 August 1910 she wrote down some of Abdu’l-Bahá’s explicit references to the possibility of the outbreak of a world war, the military clash of superpowers and the shedding of innocent blood.

The reference made by Dr. Forel to the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá addressed to Frau Dr. F. perhaps was an indication of these statements which had reached Dr. Forel via Wilhelm Herigel. The most likely fact is that Mrs. Fallscheer was not the recipient of any Tablet by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá but rather, as mentioned above, she prepared a

- compilation of His statements, as yet unpublished, and entitled: *From the Treasure of Memoires of Abdul-Baha*.
6. The book of Dr. N. Mohammad-Hosseini, pp. 48-49.
 7. It should be borne in mind that the *Tablet to Fisher (Makátib*, vol. 3, p. 451) is dated "1909". This date was probably inserted by the publisher at the end of the Tablet; a replica of the Tablet available in the Research Department at the Bahá'í World Centre was archived on 27 *Muḥarram* 1327 S.H. (19 February 1909), corroborating the date 1909. As seen above, the Master refers to sending the Tablet to Dr. Fisher in 1910, in which case the date of the Tablet must have been 1909.
 8. *Makátib-i-'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol.3, page 450.
 9. The Tablet with the opening verse: *Ay bandiy-i Ástán-i-Muqaddas...*, quoted in the Tablet to the friends in London was addressed to Áqá Asadu'lláh Báqirov Yazdí in 'Ishqábád. The text of that Tablet was published in *Star of the West*, year 5, issue 8, first page of the Persian section.
 10. In a Talk dated 5 September 1912, and another dated 26 October 1912, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explicitly mentioned the grievous perils of the war and stated that 'Europe had become like unto a battlefield of ammunition ready for a spark'. For the full text of this Talk, see: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 317, and 376.
 11. For a study of the life and works of Dr. Forel, see, *Auguste Forel and the Bahá'í Faith* by Peter Mühlischlegel; *Forel: Nábighiy-i Bahá'í [Forel, the Bahá'í Genius]* by Nosratollah Mohammad-Hosseini; and *For the Good of Mankind* by John Paul Vader, A list of the most important sources for the study of his life and works are provided on pages 104 and 105 of the latter book.
 12. The biography and works of Dr. Dávudí have been published in the opening section of the book *Insán dar Á'in-i-Bahá'í* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press 1987), pp. 28-53, and thus are not repeated in this

volume. For the study of the life and works of Dr. Dávudí cf. these three books previously published:

- *Insán dar Á'in-i-Bahá'í* (Los Angeles: Kalimat Press, 1987)
- *Ulúhiyyat va Mazhariyyat* (Bahá'í Studies, 1991)
- *Maqálát va Risálát dar Mabáhiṭhi Mutinavvi`ih* (Bahá'í Studies, 1993)

13. For further passages regarding this theme, see: *Amr va Khalq*, pp. 304-8; *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, par. 77 p. 48; *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* (*Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd*); *The Epistle to the son of the Wolf*, pp. 19 and 26; *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 2.
14. For further reading see: *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 48, pp. 213-219.
15. For further passages in the Writings in relation to the categories of spirits, see: *Amr va Khalq*, vol. 1, pp. 204-211, *Tablets of 'Abdu'l-Bahá*, vol. 1, p.115, and *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 55, p. 241.
16. In *Some Answered Questions*, after providing the reasons and proofs for the existence of God, 'Abdu'l-Bahá adds: These are theoretical arguments adduced for weak souls; but if the eye of inner vision be opened, a hundred thousand clear proofs will be seen. Thus, when man feels the indwelling spirit, he is in no need of arguments for its existence; but for those who are deprived of the grace of the spirit, it is necessary to set forth external arguments. ('Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 7).
17. In His Tablet to Dr. Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá defines nature as the *inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things*. The Master has also extended this definition to other subjects such as Divine Law [*Shari`at*]. See Glossary.
18. Among the various explanations and definitions of *Shari`at* given in *Farhang-i-Ma`arif-i-Islámi*, is the one describing it as: "the religious duties the glorious Lord has prescribed unto His servants

through the Prophet, consisting of sayings and doings and ordinances, obedience to which leads to the ordering of the affairs in this life and in the resurrection, causes the attainment of perfections, and is applicable to high and low alike, all people have their part in it, as the *Shari`at* is the manifestation of the grace and mercy of God to all.” (*Farhang-i-Ma`arif-i-Islami*, vol. 3, p. 90).

19. In a number of discourses, Dr. Dávúdí discusses the subject of *Materialists* and their beliefs in detail, demonstrating their limitations. These talks have not yet been prepared for publication.
20. While referring to the human spirit, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: ... This spirit is the discovering power that encompasses all things. All the wondrous signs, all the crafts and discoveries, all the mighty undertakings and momentous historical events of which you are aware, have been discovered by this spirit and brought forth from the invisible realms into the visible plane through its spiritual power. Thus it abides upon the earth and yet makes discoveries in the heavens, and deduces that which is unknown from known and visible realities. (‘Abdu'l-Baha, *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 36, p. 162).
21. For selected passages on man’s inability to fathom the nature and essence of God, see: *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 59, p. 253-56. *Amr va Khalq* (Persian) v.1, pp. 30-42.
22. Attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad: “Glorified art Thou, we have not recognized Thee, O Lord, as befitteth Thy Lordship”. (*‘Awaliya’l-La’ali*, vol. 4, page 132).
23. See Note IV of chapter One.
24. For further sources of talks by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá regarding the three types of formation or compositions, see: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 423, *Bahá’i World Faith*, p. 342, *Divine Philosophy*, p.105, and *Some Answered Questions*, chapter 47, pp. 207-12.
25. Regarding the fact that the philosophers partake of the knowledge of the Divine Manifestations, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states: ... [T]heir [the

children of Israel] sciences and arts advanced to such a degree that even the Greek philosophers journeyed to Jerusalem to sit at the feet of the Hebrew sages and acquire the basis of Israelitish law. According to eastern history this is an established fact. Even Socrates visited the Jewish doctors in the Holy Land, consorting with them and discussing the principles and basis of their religious belief. After his return to Greece he formulated his philosophical teaching of divine unity and advanced his belief in the immortality of the spirit beyond the dissolution of the body. Without doubt Socrates absorbed these verities from the wise men of the Jews with whom he came in contact. Hippocrates and other philosophers of the Greeks likewise visited Palestine and acquired wisdom from the Jewish prophets, studying the basis of ethics and morality, returning to their country with contributions which have made Greece famous. ('Abdu'l-Baha, Baha'i World Faith – 'Abdu'l-Baha Section, p. 271).

Also in another Tablet He writes:

O thou handmaid of God! It is recorded in eastern histories that Socrates journeyed to Palestine and Syria and there, from men learned in the things of God, acquired certain spiritual truths; that when he returned to Greece, he promulgated two beliefs: one, the unity of God, and the other, the immortality of the soul after its separation from the body; that these concepts, so foreign to their thought, raised a great commotion among the Greeks, until in the end they gave him poison and killed him. And this is authentic; for the Greeks believed in many gods, and Socrates established the fact that God is one, which obviously was in conflict with Greek beliefs. The Founder of monotheism was Abraham; it is to Him that this concept can be traced, and the belief was current among the Children of Israel, even in the days of Socrates. The above, however, cannot be found in the Jewish histories; there are many facts which are not included in Jewish history. Not all the events of the life of Christ are set forth in the history of Josephus, a Jew, although it

- was he who wrote the history of the times of Christ. One may not, therefore, refuse to believe in events of Christ's day on the grounds that they are not to be found in the history of Josephus. Eastern histories also state that Hippocrates sojourned for a long time in the town of Tyre, and this is a city in Syria. ('Abdu'l-Baha, *Selections from the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Baha*, p. 54).
26. Attributed to Imám 'Alí, mentioned in the dawn prayer published in *Miftáhu'j-Jannat* [*The Key to Paradise*], v.1, pp. 113-117.
 27. 'Abdu'l-Bahá states in the Tablet to Dr. Forel: *We regard knowledge and wisdom as the foundation of the progress of mankind, and extol philosophers that are endowed with broad vision.* ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Tablet to Auguste Forel*, p. 7).
 28. The text of the quote is as follows: Verily I say, fear of God is the greatest commander that can render the Cause of God victorious, and the hosts which best befit this commander have ever been and are an upright character and pure and goodly deeds. (Baha'u'llah, *Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p. 222), [TN]: There are numerous passages similar to the following one: ...Persevere thou in helping His Cause through the strengthening power of the hosts of wisdom and utterance.... (*Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p. 249), and ... Summon then to their assistance the hosts of wisdom and utterance that they may exalt Thy Word amongst Thy creatures and proclaim Thy Cause amidst Thy servants... (*Tablets of Baha'u'llah*, p.59).
 29. The text of this exhortation is: The knowledge of such sciences, however, should be acquired as can profit the peoples of the earth, and not those which begin with words and end with words... (Baha'u'llah, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 26). For further reading on this subject, refer to Amr va Khalq, vol. 3, pp. 350-358.
 30. For more on this subject, refer to Chapter 6 of the *Persian Bayán*.
 31. For further reading on this topic, see pages 66 and 67 of the article on Parsí literature in the Bahá'í Writings, published in *Khúshih há'í az kharman-i-adab va hunar*, vol. 1.

32. In a Letter dated 1 January 1929, addressed to Alí Qulí Khan Nabilu'd-Dawlih, The Guardian writes: "...The individual believers are free in expressing their personal view points, as long as these do not harm or impair the fundamental Principles of the Faith..." [Provisional translation].
33. In a Letter dated 4 May 1929 addressed to Áqá Isfandiýár Madjzoub, the Guardian states: "... At the present time, all that is decided by the Spiritual Assemblies on matters that are not expressly recorded, is acceptable and is to be respected. As far as possible, the trustees of the Assemblies must have the utmost regard for the individual freedom of the believers; they must refrain from setting down trivial laws and regulations, and must not become bound by various stipulations..." (*Tawqí`át-i-Mubárah*, vol. 3, p. 82). [Provisional translation].
34. The brief mention made by Dr. Davoudi about this subject might be a reference to the dismissal of some of the theosophical views, as stated in certain Works of the Báb such as *Risáliy-i-Dhahabíyyih*.



The Kingdom of Existence

(*Malakút-i-Vujúd*)

.....

Dr. *Auguste Henri Forel (1848-1931)* was one of the most prominent scientists of the 19th and early 20th centuries. He converted to the Bahá'í Faith and began corresponding with 'Abdu'l Bahá, the spiritual leader of the Bahá'í community. One of the outstanding works of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, written and sent to Dr Forel on September 21, 1921 in response to one of his letters, is the celebrated work known as "*'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet addressed to Dr. Auguste Henri Forel*". This tablet, which has been translated and published many times and in different languages, was carefully studied by the distinguished Bahá'í scholar, Dr. 'Ali Murád Dávúdí, who composed commentaries on its contents and delivered various lectures which are collected in this book. Therefore, this volume, in addition to Dr. Forel's biography and the text of the tablet addressed to him by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, contains Dr. Dávúdí's extensive studies of the aforementioned tablet, as well as a glossary of terms that offers more explanations about its contents.



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