

Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom

Towards a Progressive Bahá'í Theology

Wolfgang A. Klebel

Introduction

In writing a paper on Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, an attempt is made to appreciate some aspects of this Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh in a personal reflection on His Revelation. He has called this Revelation a "*Beauteous*," (KA 61¹) and a "*Most Potent Revelation*" (GWB 95) and has encouraged us to explore this "*Mysterious and Transcendent*," (GWB 325) this "*Perspicuous and Luminous Revelation*." (GWB 196) We experience often enough this Revelation as "*Bewildering and Challenging*." (GWB 254)

This commentary should be understood as an attempt to respond to this bewildering challenge, to see the perspicuity and the transcendent mystery of this Revelation and how to solve the apparent contradiction between the terms "mysterious and transcendent" on the one hand and "perspicuous and luminous" on the other². Responding to the Revelation of the Manifestation becomes the center and standard of our philosophical and theological discourse; the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh must be the point of departure of all Bahá'í theological thinking and only in this sense, and in following the Covenant³, will theological studies promote unity rather than disunity, as it has happened in previous Dispensations.

No external criteria can be used to judge any Divine Revelation; it is the internal consistency and the life- and world-changing power that gives proof of the reality and truth of the Manifestation. Bahá'u'lláh states

Say: The first and foremost testimony establishing His truth is His own Self. Next to this testimony is His Revelation. For whoso faileth to recognize either the one or the other He hath established the words He hath revealed as proof of His reality and truth. (GWB 105)

Shoghi Effendi called this process a revolution in the life of mankind:

For no more convincing proof could be adduced demonstrating the regenerating spirit animating the Revelations proclaimed by the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh than their power to transform what can be truly regarded as one of the most backward, the most cowardly, and perverse of peoples into a race of heroes, fit to effect in turn a similar revolution in the life of mankind. (ADJ 18)

It needs to be noted that these reflections on the Tablet of Wisdom do not attempt to describe or comment on the Tablet as a whole, the author would neither be able to provide this, nor does he have the linguistic requirements to make such an attempt. Consequently, this paper selects specific topics from this Tablet and reflects only the thoughts of this writer to these verses, not at all presenting a complete commentary of this Tablet or any kind of official interpretation of the Sacred Writings of the Bahá'í Faith.

To select special verses from this Tablet for reflection appears to be justified, when considering the statement of Bahá'u'lláh “*that in each verse of the Tablet of Hikmat an ocean is concealed.*” This statement is reported by Adib Taherzadeh in his book *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*.⁴ Therefore, every verse of this Tablet has an inexhaustible multitude of meanings and the presented reflections are only one way of understanding a particular verse.

This, of course, implies that whenever meaning is found in the Writings, there is always an immeasurable amount of truth, revealed in these Writings, either not known at all, or not yet understood. Whatever is confirmed and communicated in this paper, we should never forget the warnings expressed by Bahá'u'lláh, not to reject what cannot be understood at this time and to implore God to open our hearts to a more true understanding and a deeper appraisal of the inexhaustible treasure of this Revelation, as He stated:

O servant! Warn thou the servants of God not to reject that which they do not comprehend. Say, implore God to open to your hearts the portals of true understanding that ye may be apprised of that of which no one is apprised. Verily, He is the Giver, the Forgiving, the Compassionate. (TB 188)

Consequently, the reader is encouraged, in true consultation, to add her/his understanding of these verses to this paper;⁵ in a communication of different opinions the truth will become clearer and the depth of meaning can be more richly explored. This paper, therefore, is nothing else than a preliminary attempt to understand today's thinking and philosophizing in the light of this “*Mysterious and Transcendent,*” (GWB 325) this “*Perspicuous and Luminous*” Revelation. (GWB 196)

While most of these reflections are presented here following the sequence of the Tablet of Wisdom, which is commented upon in its overall structure and sequence, the following special issues will be elaborated more thoroughly, whenever these issues seem to be presented in the Tablet.

We will specifically comment on the idea of Progressive Theology; on the consequences of Philosophical Error; and on the theory of Form and Matter and other similar oppositional concepts. Another question will be raised about the Fundamentals of Philosophy and what a True Philosopher is, according to Bahá'u'lláh. Finally, the issue of Spiritual Materialism will be discussed in this context and the Philosophy of Dialogical Thinking will be applied to the understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Ultimately, the heuristic value of these findings for a Bahá'í philosophy will be suggested, not so much in definite conclusions, but rather in the direction in which such a potential philosophy may develop.

Progressive Theology

This topic is not directly mentioned, but implied in the Tablet, and it is presented here in the beginning, as it appears to this writer to be an integral part of the following reflections on the Tablet. The term Progressive Theology is obviously coined in relation to the term of Progressive Revelation, which is a Bahá'í principle. This principle indicates that the successive appearances of the Manifestations of God throughout history are for the purpose of progressively revealing the mysteries of God to humankind throughout the ages.

In the Bahá'í understanding of religion, there is only one religion of God and all major religions are consecutive and progressive steps of this one religion. Consequently, the concept of Progressive Revelation corresponds with the idea that humankind is evolving and maturing over time and every Revelation of God is presented at the level of understanding, which humanity has at that specific period. Corresponding to the Progressive Revelations that occurs every five hundred to one thousand years, there is a process during the period from the appearance of one Manifestation to the next, where theology or the understanding of this Revelation makes progress, which is here called Progressive Theology.⁶

During this period humankind is improving spiritually, philosophy and sciences are progressing, the understanding of the world is growing, and this will further promote a better understanding of the previous Revelation.⁷ What has to be stressed in this context is the fact that the human progress of spirituality,

philosophy and science is not independent of the previous Revelation, as it is usually assumed by secular historians. In the Tablet of Wisdom, Bahá'u'lláh specifically mentions the fact that it is the Manifestation who aids philosophers, when He said:

A true philosopher would never deny God nor His evidences, rather would he acknowledge His glory and overpowering majesty which overshadow all created things. 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. (TB 150)

Further, Bahá'u'lláh stated that the Manifestation of God is directing and causing the prevalence of philosophy in one country or in one period of time:

Consider Greece. We made it a Seat of Wisdom for a prolonged period. However, when the appointed hour struck, its throne was subverted, its tongue ceased to speak, its light grew dim and its banner was hauled down. Thus do We bestow and withdraw. Verily thy Lord is He Who giveth and divesteth, the Mighty, the Powerful. (TB 149)

That the Manifestation of God is the cause of all scientific progress is clearly stated by Bahá'u'lláh:

O Inmost Heart of this Temple! We have made thee the dawning-place of Our knowledge and the dayspring of Our wisdom unto all who are in heaven and on earth. From thee have We caused all sciences to appear, and unto thee shall We cause them to return. And from thee shall We bring them forth a second time. Such, indeed, is Our promise, and potent are We to effect Our purpose. Erelong shall We bring into being through thee exponents of new and wondrous sciences, of potent and effective crafts, and shall make manifest through them that which the heart of none of Our servants hath yet conceived. (SLH 35, emphasis added)

These quotes indicate that it is the Manifestation Who bestows and withdraws, Who aids and causes the progress of philosophy, Who promotes the progress of human science and understanding in general. It is the Manifestation of God Who initiates and promotes this process of increasing understanding we call Progressive Theology.

This process is circular: the Manifestation through His Revelation promotes human progress and this progress then assists in

better understanding the Revelation of the Manifestation, which again improves the scientific inquiry. In this paper this circular process is presupposed and it is the key to this presentation.

As a matter of fact, it is this writer's personal experience that has pointed to this conclusion. Contemporary philosophical writings were recognized and found almost verbatim in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, improving their philosophical meaning. At other times the opposite happened; modern philosophical thoughts were better understood by this writer after a deepening in the Bahá'í Revelation.⁸

That this progress of science and philosophy can provide insight into the Bahá'í theology and in a circular process improves the science and philosophy as well, has been stated by the Universal House of Justice:

Those believers with the capacity and opportunity to do so have repeatedly been encouraged in their pursuit of academic studies by which they are not only equipped to render much needed services to the Faith, but are also provided with the means **to acquire a profound insight into the meaning and the implications of the Bahá'í Teachings**. They discover also that the perceptions gained from a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh clarify the subjects of their academic inquiry. (UHJ, 1998 Mar 19, Compilation on Scholarship; emphasis added)

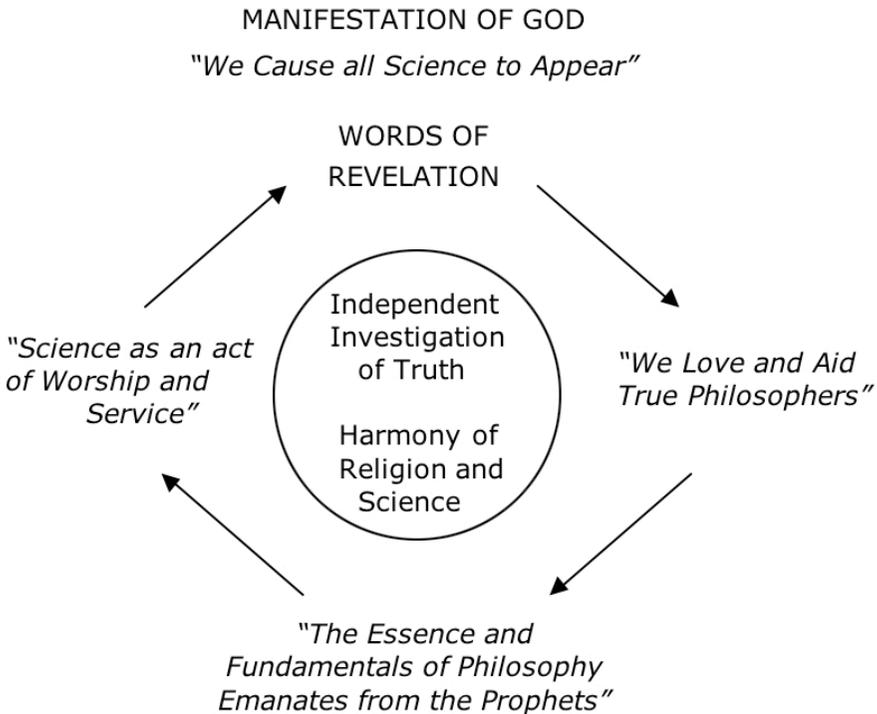
Most recently, the Universal House of Justice has mentioned the same idea again and included not only religious people but even those who do not have a religious inclination in this process of increasing understanding:

Bahá'ís will come to increasingly appreciate that the Cause they serve represents the arrowhead⁹ of an awakening taking place among people everywhere regardless of religious background and indeed among many with no religious leaning. (OCF p. iii, emphasis added)

The Bahá'í Faith is the "arrowhead," of an awakening; the tip of the process of change in the thinking of humanity, and it is noted that this awakening, this re-thinking, is not restricted to Bahá'ís, or religious people, but even includes many "with no religious leaning." As will be pointed out, the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh is the cause of this new thinking, this revolutionary development of science and philosophy, as He stated when He wrote "*We caused all sciences to appear.*" (ibid, footnote 8)

It needs to be noted again that this is a circular and ongoing process. The Revelation causes the sciences and arts to develop; the study of these sciences and arts provide means to better understand the Revelation; and this better understanding will improve the academic inquiry of the research and study.

The figure below describes this circular process in the words of Bahá'u'lláh on top, at the right side and at the bottom of the figure; and on the left side in the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, Who implies in the concept of worship and service the value of arts and sciences in assisting of a deeper understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. This deeper understanding will again aid the philosopher to improve his/her thinking and will assist in clarifying the inquiry as the Universal House of Justice has pointed out. The guiding principles in this process are the Independent Investigation of Truth and the Harmony between Science and Religion.¹⁰



Nevertheless, in the same way that an individual Bahá'í goes through a process of progress in the understanding of the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh during her/his lifetime, the Bahá'í community in its theological thinking will go through the same process over time. The Bahá'í principle of "independent investigation of truth" does not stop once a believer accepts the

Faith; it is an ongoing process. Adherence to the Covenant¹¹ will guarantee the unity and relevance of this theological development.

In the following table these two processes are placed besides each other with the distinction that the process of Progressive Revelation takes place over five hundred to thousand years, while the process of Progressive Theology is an ongoing process during these five hundred or thousand years. Another distinction is the fact that Progressive Theology is a substantially different process and totally dependent on the previous Revelation and its official interpretation.

Progressive Revelation	Progressive Theology
Humankind Maturing	Humankind Improving
Successive Manifestations bring Progressive Revelations in History	Ongoing Progress of Philosophy and Science through the Power of the previous Revelation
Unity of the Manifestations	Unity of Theology in the Covenant
Progressive Understanding of the Divine	Progress in Understanding the World
Progressive Unity of Humanity	Progress in Understanding Humanity
Spiritual Progress of Humankind	Spiritual and Theological Progress in Understanding the Revelation
Every 500 – 1000 years	Ongoing until the next Revelation

Consequences of Philosophical Error

The Tablet of Wisdom begins with an introduction to the addressee¹² and with a succinct and brief description of today's world, in which Bahá'u'lláh illustrates the grievous situation of humanity.

We exhort mankind in these days when the countenance of Justice is soiled with dust, when the flames of unbelief are burning high and the robe of wisdom rent asunder, when tranquility and faithfulness have ebbed away and trials and tribulations have waxed severe, when covenants are broken

and ties are severed, when no man knoweth how to discern light and darkness or do distinguish guidance from error.
(TB 137)

In the last sentence of this narrative Bahá'u'lláh seems to be describing different philosophical views prevalent in these days. These views of the human inability to know truth were presented in many philosophical systems; most of them are rather widespread today. The following theories can be counted among these views: in ancient times pre-Socratic sophism, today modern agnosticism, relativism and post modernism, and in some ways nominalism and conceptionalism, all of which deny the possibility of distinguishing truth from falsehood, good from bad, light from darkness and guidance from error. It appears that these are the basic causes of the above mentioned problems of today's world such as injustice, unbelief, global tribulations and lack of trust in society.

The conclusion from these statements points to the fact that not all philosophy and scientific theory is equally valid and beneficial to humankind. There are certain differences among theories, ideologies, and philosophical assumptions that influence a whole civilization, leading either to its betterment or to its downfall. This fact was clearly demonstrated during the last century, where the clash of different ideas about "who is man" resulted in two world wars, in continuing ideological conflicts and terror, and worldwide disunity and in the death of about 10 percent of the world population.¹³

In the next section, which we will not specifically comment upon,¹⁴ Bahá'u'lláh calls on the peoples of this world to "*forsake all evil and hold fast that which is good.*" (TB 138) Following that He makes reference of the sorrow that the present situation of the world has provided for Him and how He was mistreated by the rulers of His day. He closes this section with the statement that "*the people have perpetrated a grievous injustice.*" (TB 140)

At this point Bahá'u'lláh responds to the question that was put to Him about the beginning of creation.¹⁵ He describes this beginning with several seemingly contradictory statements in order to indicate the inscrutable truth about creation, such as a beginning without beginning and an end without end. Both statements are presented as truth, the statement of the creation as having existed forever and the statement of a beginning of creation. The conclusion of this section is the explanatory statement for the contradiction mentioned above, which will not be followed up here further.

*And in the station of 'I did wish to make Myself known',
God was, and His creation had ever existed beneath His
shelter from the beginning that hath no beginning, apart*

from its being preceded by a Firstness which cannot be regarded as firstness and originated by a Cause inscrutable even unto all men of learning. (TB 140)

The World of Existence, Form and Matter and the Integration of Opposites

In the following paragraph, which will be the next topic to be reflected upon in more detail, Bahá'u'lláh uses some known philosophical terms in explaining the beginning of creation. He talks about preexistence¹⁶ of the world of creation and how it came into being:

The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. (TB 140)

This statement could be compared with the philosophical concepts of form and primal matter as the scholastic tradition has explained it, following the Aristotelian metaphysic. Bahá'u'lláh seems to use the terms of what is usually called the peripatetic school of philosophy as presented by Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. These philosophical concepts were further developed in the Scholastic philosophy during the medieval period.¹⁷

The first note to be added here is that Bahá'u'lláh described beings as coming into existence not only through the information of the primal matter, through form and matter, as the classic philosophy will have it, but He introduces the function of heat in this process. In other words, He states that this coming together of the active force and its recipient is caused by energy, i.e. heat, which brings the world of existence into being. We can see in this formulation an indication that the world of existence, as Bahá'u'lláh sees it, is not a static and substantive world, but a dynamic and evolutionary one, to speak in modern terms.¹⁸ It is energy, it is heat which brings the world into being. 'Abdul-Bahá speaks about attraction and love in this context, stating:

All created things are expressions of the affinity and cohesion of elementary substances, and nonexistence is the absence of their attraction and agreement. Various elements unite harmoniously in composition, but when these elements become discordant, repelling each other, decomposition and nonexistence result. Everything partakes of this nature and is subject to this principle, for the creative foundation in all its degrees and kingdoms is an expression or outcome of love. (PUP 123)

This seems to imply that it is not matter giving the form its existence by information, but it is the *attraction* and *cohesion* between *elementary substances* (active force and recipients, form and matter) that creates concrete actuality. In the same way, lack of this *attraction*, which is basically an *expression of love*, will cause decomposition and nonexistence. While in this picture some elements of the Platonic or Neoplatonic philosophies are incorporated, the structure is essentially different. Here it is not that forms or ideas – existence in potential – give existence to matter, but rather both potential and form are brought into existence through love and attraction. Teilhard de Chardin, a century later, similarly expressed that the ever-higher unification and convergence of reality is caused by love, or spirit, which is always part of reality.

The most penetrating interpretation we can give of the world – the interpretation we find in much the same terms in all mystical and philosophical systems – is to regard the world as a movement of universal convergence, within which the plurality of matter is consummated in spirit. This view of things takes into account the fundamental and creative role of erotic attraction.¹⁹

Besides the introduction of heat in the process of coming into existence, Bahá'u'lláh explains the subject further and differently. He defines the relation between that which is the active form and its recipients in an altogether new way, when He adds, “*These two are the same, yet they are different.*” (TB 140) This can only mean that the form and the matter are in one way the same and in another way different. Being the same while simultaneously being different does not necessarily constitute a contradiction; as a matter of fact, one could say more pointedly, the more they are the same, the more they are different. Generally, when we oppose two concepts, we assume that an increase on one side will cause a decrease on the opposing side. Yet there is another kind of relationship, which is called polarity or “integral opposition,” as one could translate the German term *Integraler Gegensatz*.²⁰ In this term two rather opposing concepts are combined, are integrated. Integration is typically not placed together with opposition, yet in this understanding these two opposing concepts are deliberately united, or as it could be said, they are integrated, indicating that both the integration and the opposition is present, i.e., when these two concepts are united, they form a logical unity of a higher level of reality. This process is formed similar as the Hegelian dialectic, but the process is seen differently; there is no need for a Thesis, Antithesis and Synthesis, which are abstract concepts, an idealistic formality. Here we talk about a concrete integration. In other words it could be said that in these concepts reality is described as it actually is, not separated as

reality appears in the thinking process, but reality as it is in concrete actuality.

The Bahá'í concept of Unity in Diversity is formed in the same way: two logically contradictory terms are combined to describe a higher level of reality. In the quote of 'Abdu'l-Bahá above, a similar logical process is at work, when He says "*Various elements unite harmoniously in composition, but when these elements become discordant, repelling each other, decomposition and nonexistence result.*"

We have a unity of various and different elements, not by forcing these elements into unity, not by eliminating these elements in order to establish unity, but by respecting and promoting the different elements in the new unity of a higher order.

In this dynamic structure, out of different elements a higher unity and harmony is produced, through unification and love, yet this structure would decompose as soon as there is the opposite of harmony and attraction; as soon as there is discord and absence of harmony, the structure decomposes. Extrapolating from these statements one could postulate that this is the structure of the universe, where in a dynamic unification new structures are continuously created, structures in which diverse and multiple elements are united in a new unity. This principle of dynamic unification of multiple elements does solve the age-old question about the whole and the part. Which is first, which is more important, the whole or the part? Contrary to this static view, in which for example Aristotle stated that the whole is prior to the part, we must now state that the whole is through the part and the part is through the whole. They both are united through this attraction, this spiritual element that is internal to all material structures.

We can find thoughts like this in the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin and more recently in Xavier Zubiri and Ken Wilber²¹. The recent book of Sen McGlinn, *Church and State*, applies this concept to the relationship between religion and government, following the Bahá'í Writings. While he calls the relationship organic unity, philosophically he describes the same relationship in the picture of the living organism, which was used in the Writings of 'Abdu'l-Bahá.²²

In this polar relationship, both sides are increasing together, like in a magnet, where both poles become stronger when the magnet's strength increases; or, the more opposition the more integration. This is certainly known in personal matters. The more I know and accept another person as different, as "the other", the deeper and stronger the unity with this person can become.

When the differences are disregarded the result is not unity but uniformity, or disorder and anarchy at the other side of the extreme, both demonstrating the lack of unity. The importance of moderation and the danger of the extremes were described by Bahá'u'lláh, who stated at many occasions in His writings this problem of moderation and the excesses:

If carried to excess, civilization will prove as prolific a source of evil as it had been of goodness when kept within the restraints of moderation. (GWB 342)

The same relationship applies in the Bahá'í understanding of the concepts of "Unity in Diversity." When people unite they become more the same in their unity, yet at the same time their differences will become more marked and this will contribute to the overall value of the unity. They are the same, therefore they are in unity; they are different, and therefore they are diverse. The more unity, the more diversity is possible, and vice versa. This mutual enhancement in a polar relationship is an indication of a spiritual relationship. In a material relationship, it is simple, the more money I give away, the less money I will have. With spiritual values it is the opposite, the more love I give away, the richer I get in love.

It should never be forgotten that this Unity in Diversity has to be applied in moderation. When the unity is stressed to the extreme, it results in uniformity; when diversity is pursued excessively, anarchy and disorder results. The balance of this principle is moderation. Both the unity and the diversity have to enhance each other in order to make this principle functional.

That diversity of the world is not in opposition to its unity but rather is promoting unity, was expressed by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in the picture of the garden in which the diversity of flowers, of colors and scents, increases the beauty and unity of the garden. Summarizing this concept He states:

This difference and this variation strengthen love and harmony and this multiplicity is the greatest aid to unity. (BWF 295)

In fact, as history and psychology can teach us, uniformity can only be sustained through violence and terror, while a loving and trusting relationship, accepting diversity, will strengthen itself. This human and political wisdom was already understood by the Chinese Sage Mencius, (Meng-tzu: 4th century BC) when he stated:

To pretend Force is Humanity – that's the mark of a tyrant, and a tyrant needs a large country. To practice Humanity through Integrity – that's the mark of a true emperor, and a true emperor doesn't need a large country.

If you use force to gain the people's submission, it isn't submission of the heart. It's only a submission of the weak to the strong.

But if you use Integrity to gain the people's submission, it's a submission of the sincere and delighted heart.²³

Any system of morals is built on this relationship. On the other hand, the classic capitalist system assumed that the selfishness of the individual will enrich the world.

Daniel Bell²⁴ has formulated this, stating "For Adam Smith, individual exchange, in which each man pursues his own self-interest, is the basis of freedom, self-satisfaction, and mutual advantage, when rationally pursued through the division of labor, it is also the basis of accumulation and wealth." This just does not happen, or if it happens, it happens only for the capitalists who are enriched, not the worker.

The same is true for the opposing moral system of communism, as described in the *Communist Manifesto* by Marx and Engels²⁵ as "an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". This assumes that the more people are materialistically equal in the same class, and the more other classes are suppressed, the more they will be uniform and happiness in freedom will prevail; in other words, the less some individuals or classes are valued, the richer the collective becomes for the prevailing class, i.e., the proletariat. In none of the different Communist States, no matter of their different nationality or culture, was this actually realized. The only people who prospered were the party members, not the proletariat or the country as a whole.

Neither of these two extreme materialistic philosophies of freedom through opposing economic developments panned out, and both produced the opposite result. In both forms, in rampant capitalism and in militant communism, only the leaders are free, not the people. It is interesting to note that capitalism could develop and flourish as soon as it accepted social constraints and moderation. The same did not happen with communist states, except in what is called democratic socialism as practiced in Europe. As soon as both systems reach some level of moderation and acknowledge a more spiritual understanding of the human condition, they will abolish their extreme position and be more functional²⁶.

Bahá'u'lláh initiates a new understanding of the relationship between form and matter, which uses the Aristotelian terms and formulates the issues by using scholastic concepts, but transcends this understanding in the context of this new and "most potent Revelation". This understanding is not a special situation, but a

general principle in this Revelation²⁷. Bahá'u'lláh states in the Kitáb-i-Íqán:

Please God, that we avoid the land of denial, and advance into the ocean of acceptance, so that we may perceive, with an eye purged from all conflicting elements, the worlds of unity and diversity, of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment, and wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God. (KI 160, emphasis added)

In order to understand “the world of unity and diversity” (Sameness and Difference) as well as the world of “variation and oneness” (parts and whole) and “limitation and detachment” (material aspect of creation and the spiritual detachment from it), we have to leave the land of denial, the mindset of denying the spiritual realm, and reach “the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God”, which is the Revelation of the Manifestation.

The polarity of unity and diversity, as well as variation and oneness, is here integrated in the “ocean of acceptance” of the Revelation, after the eye is purged from all conflicting elements of materialistic thinking. In this statement the philosophical tradition that is expressed in the opposition of form and matter, of spirit and matter, of whole and part, of the one and the many, of individual and collective as well as the seemingly opposition of the self and the other, of the I and the Thou is transcended and integrated.

In the *Seven Valleys*, Bahá'u'lláh has presented the four states of the self as Outwardness and Inwardness, as Firstness and Lastness.

And thus firstness and lastness, outwardness and inwardness are, in the sense referred to, true of thyself, that in these four states conferred upon thee thou shouldst comprehend the four divine states, and that the nightingale of thine heart on all the branches of the rosetree of existence, whether visible or concealed, should cry out: “He is the first and the last, the Seen and the Hidden...” (SV 27²⁸)

First and Last, or Firstness and Lastness, are opposites that are dependent on each other and not only opposed, but also related, so we can formulate the following list of opposed categories, which are integrated in the Spiritual Reality:

First	Last
Spirit	Matter

Unity	Diversity
Whole	Part
One	Many
Individual	Collective
Self	Other
“I”	“Thou”

This integral opposition or polarity of these concepts needs to be clearly understood, not as opposed, as classical logic would have it, or as being set against each other, as political partisanship demonstrates, but rather as existing through each other. They are increasing and decreasing not in opposition but in mutual harmony. The categories of Self and Other, of “I” and “Thou,” are in need of some further explanation. What is here opposed is not the I of one person to the Thou of another, but the fact that one person is an I for her/himself and the same person, at the same time, is a Thou for all others. The same is true for the Self and the Other. We are always both. The understanding of this opposite relationship follows strictly from Bahá'u'lláh's statement in relation to first and last, preceding the above quoted section where He says:

For instance, let thine Eminence consider his own self; thou art first in relation to thy son, last in relation to thy father. In thine outward appearance, thou tellest of the appearance of power in the realms of divine creation; in thine inward being thou revealest the hidden mysteries which are the divine trust deposited within thee. (SV 26)

This means the same person is First and Last, depending on his relationship, the same can be applied to all the above opposites. A person is Spirit, is First, is Whole, is an Individual, is a Unity and a Self in relation to his/her parts or subordinates, or lower entities or his family; at the same time he/she is Matter (potential), Last, is Part of a Collective, is an Other to Many, is Diverse and Different to Others in relation to all higher units and organizations, as well as to his family of origin.

It is this writer's opinion that this relationship of opposites is the basis of a Bahá'í cosmology, and he has presented a paper on this topic with the title “True of Thyself”²⁹. This assumption needs certainly further investigation, but will not be followed up here.

This philosophical understanding of the concrete reality of being was presented in the last century by a number of European authors, some of them, which I am familiar with, will be mentioned here:

- Vladimir Solov'ev (1853-1900) formulating "Full freedom of Parts in Perfect Unity of the Whole"
- Leo Gabriel (Vienna 1902-1987) in his book: *Integral Logic, The Truth of the Whole* 1965
- Romano Guardini (Munich, Germany 1885-1968) in his book *Opposition: an Attempt to a philosophy of the Living-Concrete*
- Teilhard de Chardin, S.J. (France and China: 1881-1955) who developed an "Ontology of Unification" according to Karl Wucherer
- Karl Rahner, S.J. (Innsbruck, Austria 1904-1984) in his book: *Ontology of the Relationship between the Individual and the Community*, 1960
- Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld, (Vienna Austria, born 1929), who stated in the quoted book the "Integral Opposition of Unity and Plurality," which is a fundamental principle of his philosophy.³⁰

None of these authors were familiar with the Bahá'í Writings,³¹ they do not mention these writings and do not get their understanding directly from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. And yet, they live and philosophize in the shade of this Revelation, they are, as stated above, under the influence of this "Most Potent Revelation." It needs to be noted here that the four last of these authors are Catholic theologians, and the first two are philosophers from Catholic or Orthodox background. Their understanding of the relationship between the one and the many, the integral opposition of these concepts of unity and plurality, makes it easier for us to understand the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Here the circle of the Progressive Theology closes in a new and better comprehension of the Revelation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá has elucidated this same relationship between the part and the whole. (Note that for increased clarity these verses are displayed here different from the authorized English translation, where the whole section forms one paragraph.)

Consider; we plant a seed. A complete and perfect tree appears from it, and from each seed of this tree another tree can be produced.

Therefore the part is expressive of the whole, for this seed was a part of the tree, but therein potentially was the whole tree.

So each one of us may become expressive or representative of all the bounties of life to mankind.

This is the unity of the world of humanity.

This is the bestowal of God.

This is the felicity of the human world and

This is the manifestation of the divine favor. (BWF 219)

What is so remarkable in this formulation by 'Abdu'l-Bahá is the fact that the *unity of the world of humanity* is not something social, legal, political, or established by a contract, as we would normally assume. To the contrary, the unity of the world of humanity is a personal, individual and spiritual matter; it is a gift, a *bestowal of God*. It is based on the fact that *each one of us* must become *expressive or representative of all the bounties of life to mankind!* Only that is the unity of the world of humanity as presented in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh!

This aspect has not been considered by the theologian and philosophers mentioned above, it is specific to the Bahá'í Revelation. Additionally, it brings a new meaning to the integral philosophy and it predicts that only this understanding and this evolution can work. The circular process of progressive theology is here again demonstrated. The philosophical considerations of modern philosophers and theologians help us to better understand the meaning of the Revelation. At the same time the Revelation brings new and unexpected aspects into these philosophies improving them and giving occasion to further development.

It might be said that this relationship between being the same and being different is not only a Bahá'í principle, usually formulated as unity in diversity, but it is also, and this is true of all Bahá'í principles, a basic structure of the world of existence, of reality and of human awareness, or reason, which is able to recognize this basic structure. This ontological structure, these categories of being, could philosophically only be fully understood after the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. And this very Revelation is at the same time improving and completing the philosophical understanding.

Bahá'u'lláh continues in the next sentence to point out the importance of this understanding. It is a structure which is specifically announced by Him, when He says "*Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure (TB 140).*" Note that Bahá'u'lláh is the Great Announcement and He calls the structure He describes here "glorious," which indicates the importance of this new and revolutionary Revelation.

Again one should note that this structure of reality and its dynamism has been later somehow recognized independently by Xavier Zubiri in his book about the *Dynamic Structure of Reality*, when he stated:

In this sense the Universe would be absolutely dynamic in itself Now, the various realities that compose the universe, as I was saying, are not precisely substances, but structural systems. Reality is composed not so much of underlying things, but of structural things: of structures.³²

It needs to be emphasized that Zubiri was familiar with modern physics and modern physicists, such as his friend Heisenberg. The philosophical implications of this “*glorious structure*”, in relation to modern physics and cosmology, are certainly another point of interest, but will not further be pursued here.

In the next sentence of the Tablet, Bahá’u’lláh indicates as the origin of this process the “*Word of God, which is the Cause of the entire creation.*” (TB 140) In describing the Word of God, Bahá’u’lláh again describes this Word as being “*higher and far superior to that which the senses can perceive*” i.e., to all sense perception and it is being “*sanctified from any property or substance.*” (TB 140-1) This higher and sanctified reality can be called spiritual and it is clearly distinguished from material property and substance.

Here we must use the term spiritual not as being opposite, or on the same level as sense perception, i.e., spiritual is not seen in contradiction of material, it is the transcendent aspect, the inner reality of all material existence. One is reminded at the formulation of Teilhard de Chardin who stated:

It (the spirit) in no way represents some entity which is independent of matter or antagonistic to it, some force locked up in, or floating in the physical world. By spirit I mean ‘the spirit of synthesis and sublimation’, in which is painfully concentrated, through endless attempts and setbacks, the potency of unity scattered throughout the universal multiple: *spirit which is born within, and as a function of matter.*³³ (Italics in original)

In the Bahá’í Writings, a distinction is made between the seen and the unseen, or the manifest and the hidden, and this distinction applies to the whole creation, it is predicated about the world, about man and about the Manifestations of God.³⁴ While the definition of Teilhard does not exactly correspond with this understanding, it comes rather close, considering the general understanding of what is called spirit or spiritual.

Generally the term ‘spiritual’ is used when indicating another, a transcendent and immanent, a different reality, which cannot be placed at the same level of reality as the material, sensible world.

Moreover, in this context spirituality is often commonly seen as something like matter, but subtler, more “spiritual.”

Contrary to this, the world of existence is here seen as not simply the world of the sense perception with some added spirituality. Reality is essentially and primary spiritual, and the material is only another aspect of this reality. This understanding is certainly new in Western tradition, even though it was anticipated in the Neoplatonic philosophic tradition, but it is better compatible with modern quantum physics and other developments of science.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá has expressed this understanding of spirit in the biblical sense, which will be further discussed in a later section of this paper in the Chapter on Dialogical Thinking.

Therefore, the proceeding of the human spirits from God is through emanation. When it is said in the Bible that God breathed His spirit into man, this spirit is that which, like the discourse, emanates from the Real Speaker, taking effect in the reality of man. (SAQ 206)

At former times, when many physical events had no material explanation they were explained “spiritually”: things like growth, life, thunder, waves, wind etc. were all ascribed to the gods, were placed in the spiritual realm, while the gods themselves were represented in the form of material statues. As soon as modern science “secularized” these concepts, the world lost its spiritual values, it was demystified. Eventually, and definitely in the Darwinian explanation of the development of man, the “spiritual” was replaced by material causes such as random selection and the survival of the fittest. That way, spiritual values were reduced to material things. In other words, the child was thrown out with the bathwater. The crucial issue is the error of either negating the existence of the spiritual, or of reducing it to the material or of treating spirituality like material things, and that is what we will later call Spiritual Materialism.

The next section is like a commentary on the Prolog of the Gospel according to John. Bahá’u’lláh describes the Manifestation of the Word “*without any syllable or sound*” and describes it as the “*Command of God, which pervadeth all created things.*” (TB 141) He further states:

It has never been withheld from the world of being. It is God’s all-pervasive grace, from which all grace doth emanate. It is an entity far removed above all that hath been and shall be. (TB 141)

The reality of the Word of God is prior and above all that has been and shall be, and it is the Word of God, which is the cause of creation and cause of the continuous existence of the world.

Philosophy and Philosophers

Here Bahá'u'lláh interrupts His explanation and mentions the unbelievers, who would only misunderstand Him to cavil against God. He further remarks that because of their inability to attain to the mysteries of knowledge and wisdom, they rise in protest and burst in clamor. The reason for this lack of understanding is the fact that they object only “*to that which they comprehend,*” (TB 141) and not to the Revelation, which they do not understand. The only thing they understand is the material, as one could say in this context.

In other words, they do not accept the Revelation; they don't understand it because of their materialism. Consequently, not understanding the truth presented by the Word of God, they only object to what they can imagine and they eventually have to eliminate the gods they have erected in their own imagination. It could be said that this is a straightforward explanation of modern atheism. This confrontation with modern atheism, of a Nietzsche, Freud or Marx, who reject their own construction of the reality of religion³⁵ and the spiritual, seems to be implied in this statement. As Bahá'u'lláh says, “*Their objections, one and all, turn upon themselves, and I swear by thy life that they are devoid of understanding.*” (TB 141)

After this paragraph, Bahá'u'lláh returns to the issue of the beginning and states that “*Every thing needs have an origin and every building a builder*” (TB 141) And He indicates that the Word of God is the Cause which hath preceded the contingent world, as it was stated in the Prolog of the Gospel according to John. Later He states that Nature “*in its essence is the embodiment of My Name, the Maker, the Creator*” (TB 142) and states further: “*Nature is God's will,*” (TB 142) referring to the primal Will in the Islamic tradition. God's Will, God's Word is the cause of creation and Bahá'u'lláh remarks that Nature itself is lost in bewilderment before its Revelation.

Turning to humankind, Bahá'u'lláh now talks about the rebirth of man (another theme from the Gospel of John) and admonishes the reader:

Walk thou high above the world of being through the power of the Most Great Name, that thou mayest become aware of the immemorial mysteries and be acquainted with that wherewith no one is acquainted. (TB 142-3)

This walking in the mystery can be interpreted as the spiritual life of the believer. Consequently, Bahá'u'lláh admonishes the reader: "*Teach thou the Cause of God.*" (TB 143)

After this explanation of the spiritual life, Bahá'u'lláh returns to the theme of nature, describing it in a materialistic and atheistic sense and calling it "*Nature as it is in itself.*" (TB 144) People who have rejected God, and therefore cling to this concept of nature, are called "*far astray and falling short of the ultimate purpose.*" (TB 144) In the following Bahá'u'lláh then explains:

When the eyes of the people of the East were captivated by the arts and wonders of the West, they roved distraught in the wilderness of material causes, oblivious of the One Who is the Causer of Causes, and the Sustainer thereof.
(TB 144)

The arts and wonders of the West are technology and scientific progress, all based on the understanding of material causes. The West has by and large forgotten "*the One Who is the Causer of Causes.*" In a similar way the idea of God as the Causer of Causes was expressed by Teilhard de Chardin, the French Jesuit, who formulated it differently, stating two generations later: "Properly speaking, God *does not make: He makes things make themselves.*"³⁶ (Italics in the original) In other words God is not a material cause in this world; He is the Causer of these Causes. The theological implications of this statement, and how it is an expression of the fact that God is beyond any human understanding and has no causal connection with the created world, is here assumed and will not be followed up in this paper.

After this declaration, Bahá'u'lláh turns to the core message of this Tablet, stating

Now We have, for the sake of God, the Lord of Names, set Ourselves the task of mentioning in this Tablet some accounts of the sages, that the eyes of the people may be opened thereby and that they may become fully assured that He is in truth the Maker, the Omnipotent, the Creator, the Originator, the All-Knowing, the All-Wise.
(TB 144)

The eyes of the people are directed away from "*clinging to Nature as it is in itself,*" (TB 144) and are directed toward God, towards the Word of God, who is the Manifestation of God's Names as the Maker, the Omnipotent, the Creator, the Originator.

Here follows a description of philosophy and of contemporary men of learning. Bahá'u'lláh clearly makes two important statements in this paragraph:

Most of the modern knowledge has been acquired from the sages of the past, for it is they who have laid the foundation of philosophy, reared its structure and reinforced its pillars.

...The sages aforetime acquired their knowledge from the Prophets, inasmuch as the latter were the exponents of divine philosophy and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries.
(TB 144-5)

In order to prove His point, He states in the next paragraph that Empedocles was a contemporary of David while Pythagoras lived in the days of Salomon. (TB 145) This statement has been interpreted by historians that Bahá'u'lláh is affirming that there was a material, a physical and literal connection between these philosopher and Prophets. This supposition was developed by Peter Terry.³⁷

There are two issues related to this statement. Bahá'u'lláh distinguishes between the Manifestation and the secondary prophets who depend on the Manifestation, such Salomon and David, when He states about the Manifestations of God:

Every one of them is a mirror of God, reflecting naught else but His Self, His Beauty, His Might and Glory, if ye will understand. All else besides them are to be regarded as mirrors capable of reflecting the glory of these Manifestations Who are themselves the Primary Mirrors of the Divine Being, if ye be not devoid of understanding.
(GWB 73)

The question is, did Bahá'u'lláh state in this sentence only a historical fact or did He imply more than that?

The first things to note is that neither David nor Salomon are independent Manifestations of God; their prophesies are derived from Moses, who is seen in the Bahá'í Faith as the Manifestation of Israel, receiving the Revelation from God. All following prophets of the Old Testament are secondary messengers of God, and are dependent on the original Prophecy of Moses.³⁸ Here they are described as contemporary of these philosophers, as living at the same time and receiving the Revelation of Moses through David and Solomon, i.e., the philosophers receiving the essence and fundamentals from the prophets. As we will see later, it is the power of the Manifestation, who directs and influences the true philosophers, either through direct contact or through the spiritual influence of every new Revelation.

'Abdu'l-Bahá explains the difference of influence or emanation of spirituality independent from physical contact on the example of the Apostles: Judas was physically in the presence of Christ, but Paul

never had contact with Christ during his earthly mission, and yet Paul was preaching the Gospel of Christ. (Rom 15:19 and 1 Cor 9:18)

Physical nearness or remoteness is of no importance; the essential fact is the spiritual affinity and ideal nearness. Judas Iscariot was for a long time favored in the holy court of His Holiness Christ, yet he was entirely far and remote; while Paul, the apostle, was in close embrace with His Holiness. (TAB 719)

The following statement of Bahá'u'lláh needs to be understood in the same way of *spiritual affinity and ideal nearness* of the philosophers to the Prophets. This influence is here called emanation.

The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets. (TB 145)

Additionally, in the next sentence Bahá'u'lláh gives us the reason why this statement creates confusion and misunderstandings. He appears to say that the issue is clear but people differ and misunderstand His statement:

That the people differ concerning the inner meanings and mysteries thereof is to be attributed to the divergence of their views and minds. (TB 145)

From this quote it seems to be not totally clear what is actually meant here; does Bahá'u'lláh speak primarily of the essence and the fundamentals of philosophy or does He speak of the way the philosophers have learned from the prophets? Again, a careful reading of the next section gives us the answer.

Bahá'u'lláh reports a case where an inspired Prophet made a spiritual statement that was then thoroughly misunderstood in a material or literal way.

He exclaimed: 'Lo! All are filled with the Spirit.' From among the people there was he who held fast unto this statement and, actuated by his own fancies, conceived the idea that the spirit literally penetrateth or entereth into the body, and through lengthily expositions he advanced proof to vindicate this concept; and groups of people followed in his footsteps. (TB 145)

So it is not the actual hearing of the message but the way it is heard, spiritually or literally that makes the difference in understanding.

Bahá'u'lláh even adds that He could give detailed account thereof, but feels that this would depart from the main theme. It appears that in this context He has clearly pointed out that spiritual statements cannot be interpreted in a material way, cannot be

understood with the means of material methods of knowing or methods of science, even of Western historical science.

It could be concluded that the important fact is not if the message is heard literally or not; the important fact is the spiritual affinity or understanding of the one who hears the message, either physically or spiritually, which makes the difference. In either case, the fundamentals of philosophy emanate from the prophet, as Bahá'u'lláh stated above.

One could also say that there are two different ways of thinking as Teilhard de Chardin has pointed out:

However, it is just at this point, in fact, that we meet an initial split in the thinking mass of mankind....

Beneath an infinite number of secondary differentiation, caused by the diversity of social interests, of scientific investigation or religious faith, there are basically two types of minds, and only two: those who do not go beyond (and see no need to go beyond) perception of the multiple – however interlinked in itself the multiple may appear to be – and those for whom perception of this same multiple is necessarily completed in some unity. There are only, in fact, pluralists and monists: those who do not see, and those who do.³⁹

Bahá'u'lláh speaks of inspired speech and literal interpretation. He clearly points out the difference between these two ways of thinking, a difference based on the acknowledgment of the Word of God, of the Manifestations and of the fact of Creation and Revelation.

The other way of thinking is described as the Western way, which “*roved distraught in the wilderness of material causes oblivious of the One Who is the Causer of Causes.*” (TB 144) Teilhard’s formulation of thinking in the perception of the multiple versus thinking of the same multiple as “completed in some unity” comes close to this understanding of Bahá'u'lláh. This should not be surprising when we consider that Teilhard sees the goal of creation in the point Omega, which is the return of Christ, an independent Manifestation of God in Bahá'í understanding. Therefore, one can conclude as well that Teilhard’s philosophical understanding is based on a Prophet, i.e. on the “Universal” or “Cosmic Christ”⁴⁰.

The process of seeing the spiritual in material and literal ways is described in the concept of spiritual materialism. Actually, the concept of spiritual materialism goes even farther, because spiritual materialism describes a philosophical view that attempts to conquer

and manipulate spirituality in material ways. In the following, this term will be further explained.

Spiritual Materialism

Spiritual Materialism is a new term that was introduced by Toegel in his dissertation about transpersonal psychology in general and about Ken Wilber specifically, among others. He uses this term mentioned in the title of a book by Chögyam Trungpa,⁴¹ in a very specific sense and defines it the following way.

Spiritual Materialism is a specific spiritual attitude, which approaches the transcendental aspect of reality basically as if it was material.⁴²

Following this definition Toegel describes the basis of this worldview, stating:

The basic materialistic attitude started from the idea that everything, which is not specifically human, and sometimes even that, can be grasped which concepts of the material world. From this results a specific demeanor that is supported by the superiority of the circumstances and the physical world. This attitude understands humans, their thinking and understanding as being elevated above all levels of reality. The universe might be infinitely large, but the investigating mind is unquestionably above it. Respect or humility towards the unknown is totally unknown in this way of thinking.

If this attitude is directed towards the transcendental area, then they will research it in the same way the material area is researched. This attitude will make one “travel” in it, will make a “cartographic picture” of it, will even “conquer” it and will try to “possess” it. Moreover, they will attempt to subdue this area with the same tools and methods that are successful in the physical world.

In this attempt, modern science plays a very specific role. In the perception of humanity, the idea of science has already developed “religious” dimensions. If it is said today that something is scientifically proven, than this statement will satisfy thinking and feeling at least as well, as in the olden days the statement “Roma locuta, causa finita”⁴³ Therefore, what seems to be more appropriate, then using this fountain of truth and knowledge, this collective consciousness, in order to research the transcendal aspect of reality as well?⁴⁴

This modern attempt to not only understand the spiritual, but to try to conquer and use it has been alluded to by Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Wisdom, where He stated:

The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets. That the people differ concerning the inner meanings and mysteries thereof is to be attributed to the divergence of their views and minds.
(TB 145)

It is crucial to understand this sentence right. It is not likely that the meaning of this sentence is that we always could follow a literary trace from the Prophet's writings to the statements of specific philosophers. There might not be any historical connection between the Prophets and the philosophers, but Bahá'u'lláh still claims that the essence and fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets. By 'emanate' we have to understand a spiritual causation, which in the Writing is usually explained by the comparison with the rays of light emanating from the sun.

The assumption in this comparison is the fact that the rays come from the sun but are not diminishing the sun. This may not be correct physically, but this is the common-sense understanding from which this attribution is made. The essence and fundamentals of philosophy come from the prophets like the rays come from the sun, and the connection is not necessarily a physical, causal or literal but a spiritual relationship. This is explained by Bahá'u'lláh in the next passage of this paragraph, which was mentioned before and is here reprinted in its entirety,

We would fain recount to thee the following: One of the Prophets once was communicating to his people that with which the Omnipotent Lord had inspired Him. Truly, thy Lord is the Inspirer, the Gracious, the Exalted. When the fountain of wisdom and eloquence gushed forth from the wellspring of His utterance and the wine of divine knowledge inebriated those who had sought His threshold, He exclaimed: 'Lo! All are filled with the Spirit.' From among the people there was he who held fast unto this statement and, actuated by his own fancies, conceived the idea that the spirit literally penetrateth or entereth into the body, and through lengthy expositions he advanced proofs to vindicate this concept; and groups of people followed in his footsteps. To mention their names at this point, or to give thee a detailed account thereof, would lead to prolixity, and would depart from the main theme. Verily, thy Lord is the All-Wise, the All-Knowing. There was also he who partook of the choice wine whose seal had been

removed by the Key of the Tongue of Him Who is the Revealer of the Verses of thy Lord, the Gracious, the Most Generous. (TB 145-6)

This paragraph clearly describes what was described as spiritual materialism, as Bahá'u'lláh points out that this 'philosopher' took that spiritual statement literally and described the spiritual experience of being filled with the Spirit in a physical or materialistic relationship so that the spirit penetrated or entered into the physical body. Bahá'u'lláh then points out that this "philosopher" would describe this process in detailed account thereof and would find many followers.

Referring to the idea that spiritual materialism tries to conquer and manipulate spirituality in a materialistic way describes as well the method of some Sufis and other Mystics, who felt that their methods of meditation and their mystical experiences are the path to God and are in no need of the prophets. This view was contradicted by Bahá'u'lláh in the *Seven Valleys* when He said about the Sufis:

They who soar in the heaven of singleness and reach to the sea of the Absolute, reckon this city – which is the station of life in God – as the furthestmost state of mystic knowers, and the farthest homeland of the lovers. But to this evanescent One of the mystic ocean, this station is the first gate of the heart's citadel, that is, man's first entrance to the city of the heart; and the heart is endowed with four stages, which would be recounted should a kindred soul be found. (SV 40)

Bahá'u'lláh sets His understanding apart from the traditional Sufi idea of being able to reach God and indicates that all of this "spiritual" effort does only bring the soul to the city of heart, which is the Manifestation.⁴⁵

It should be noted here that the surprising success of Ken Wilber's integral philosophy, besides its many interesting and exciting aspects, can be explained by a similar understanding of the mystical tradition, as Toegel has pointed out.⁴⁶ Modern man, who basically thinks in materialistic ways, is given in Wilber's philosophy the ability to belong to the elite and to a new and higher level of being.

Man can improve himself and mankind through spiritual techniques that can be scientifically studied and this possibility, as presented by Wilber, is certainly seductive. Wilber's extension of modern developmental psychology into the future improvement of the human condition through a mystical technology is expressed in the statement:

And every I becomes a God, and every WE becomes God's sincerest worship, and every IT becomes God's temple⁴⁷.

Wilber presents a Promethean, Mystical Technology and Pantheism for postmodern humanity. This ambitious program needs to be pointed out; nevertheless, Wilber summarizes modern developmental psychology in a very comprehensive way and does clarify many basic and valuable philosophical principles, certainly contributing to the advancement of philosophy today. This must not be overlooked, when the shortcomings of his philosophy are criticized and his theological arguments are refuted.

Contrary to this vain imagining of a direct mystical access to God through philosophy and meditation, Bahá'u'lláh states:

Verily, the philosophers have not denied the Ancient of Days. Most of them passed away, deploring their failure to fathom His mystery, even as some of them have testified. Verily, thy Lord is the Adviser, the All-Informed. (TB 146)

Then Bahá'u'lláh describes several philosophers starting with Hippocrates, “*who believed in God*” (TB 145), and Socrates, whom He praises “*as indeed wise, accomplished and righteous.*” (TB 145) He describes Socrates' message:

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. (TB 146)

Following this description, He mentions Plato and Aristotle, stating:

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. 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. (TB 146)

After that, Bahá'u'lláh describes the philosopher Balinus, who praises God as the Creator and who follows the “*hermeneutic writings*” originated by “*the first person who devoted himself to philosophy.*”⁴⁸ (TB 148) This appears to be a reference to the origin of philosophy, indicating that the first philosophers established their knowledge on the acknowledgement of God, the Creator. Next, Bahá'u'lláh describes the process of inspiration that allows Him to

read books that appear to Him “*in the form of a Tablet.*” (TB 149) This interesting fact will not be followed up here.

Bahá'u'lláh mentions another remarkable fact. He states that the Lord, the “All-Wise,” does distribute the knowledge to different lands, saying “*Thus do We bestow and withdraw, Verily the Lord is He who giveth and divesteth, the Mighty, the Powerful.*” (TB 150) He presents as an example the history of Greek philosophy:

Consider Greece. We made it a Seat of Wisdom for a prolonged period. However, when the appointed hour struck, its throne was subverted, its tongue ceased to speak, its light grew dim and its banner was hauled down. Thus do We bestow and withdraw. Verily thy Lord is He Who giveth and divesteth, the Mighty, the Powerful. (TB 150)

It is not only true that “*the essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the prophets,*” (TB 145) as Bahá'u'lláh has stated above, it is also true that the place and the time frame in which philosophy is preminent in a country is determined by the Prophets, by God. Obviously, this is not a scientifically provable fact, this is not something that historians can research and find evidence for in a scientific investigation. It is rather a fact of Revelation, of Faith and of acknowledging the station of the Manifestation and the fact that God's wisdom and providence is guiding this world. Without this religious truth and believe, the statement simply makes no sense.

This fact can be described in the following example. If we find in nature something, let's say an unusual rock formation or interestingly looking piece of wood, of which we do not know if it is a product of human creation or if it is something that comes out of “*nature as it is,*” we would not be able to distinguish the difference easily. Even a detailed analysis will not always make it clear what it is, unless we find signs and marks of human activity on this piece of nature. If the assumed human producers of this piece of evidence were sophisticated in hiding their handiwork, we might never be able to prove scientifically how this product was made or how it did develop. On the other hand, if we are told by a trustworthy witness that it is a human creation, we most likely could interpret the marks and find it possible, if not most likely that this is a human creation.

In other words, the scientific inquiry would follow the testimony and therefore only reinforce the known facts, but not prove them. In the same fashion, scientific and historical investigation can follow the truth of a Revelation, reinforce scientifically and historically its truth, without being able to prove it independently. This is, as a matter of fact, the scope and object of the present investigation.

Considering that God, the Knower, the Maker and the Creator has created this world, and that His marks are the most hidden of the hidden, they only become the most manifest of the manifest if we trust the witness to the fact of creation. We are, in so many words, reaching the limits of any scientific or human investigation. No spiritual materialism will prove anything here. It is the acceptance of the truth of the Prophet which will answer this question. Even philosophy cannot penetrate this veil, unless man assumes hypocritically that his reason and intellect is the final and only way to find the truth.

Dialogical Thinking

In this perspective, the new dialogic thinking can provide the philosophical bridge to understand the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. Bernhard Casper describes in his book "The Dialogical Thinking"⁴⁹ the following three thinkers: Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner, and Martin Buber. Unfortunately, only some works of Buber have been translated into English⁵⁰. It has to be noted that Rosenzweig and Buber are from a Jewish background, Ebner was Catholic.

Thinking in the dialogical sense is in opposition to the Cartesian "I think," (*cogito*) which was the historical basis of modern thinking and modern science, and which can be called substantial thinking.⁵¹ According to Ebner this kind of thinking is caused by the "Solitude of the I" (*Ich-Einsamkeit*, a concept coined by Ferdinand Ebner, following Kierkegaard) as well as by the Western individualism or thinking from Descartes' individually based "cogito, I think." This substantial thinking, which is expressed in the third person, he, she or it, and relates to things, describes things and is therefore the legitimate way of thinking of modern science and physical causality. Yet it is inappropriate when used in terms of personal thinking. As a matter of fact, in every day language we find it impolite and rather offending when somebody speaks about a present person in the third person i.e., speaks about him or her when they are present. In proper speech we use either the name or the personal pronoun "you" and always speak to the person and not about him or her, as if they were not present.

Ferdinand Ebner builds his philosophical system on four basic thoughts, which will be presented here⁵²:

1. Human existence basically has spiritual meaning, i.e., man is spiritual because he is fundamentally designed towards something spiritual outside of him, through which and in which he actually exists. The I is constituted by the relation to the Thou.

2. How does this become apparent? The expression of the spiritual existence of man is the fact that man is a speaking being. This is objectively demonstrable.
3. Therefore, the thought must be contemplated that this "I – Thou" relationship is given (a) through the Word, (b) in the Word, and (c) as Word.
4. That means, this relationship exists in the actuality of the spoken word, in the situation of being spoken to, which is in Talk, in Dialogue.

When I speak to you, I constitute myself as a spiritual being that is able to communicate with you, (or Thou; this singular term is preferred as it is not a polite plural which 'you' is in the English language). And both understand themselves and each other, as spiritual beings; this relationship is therefore the origin of human spirituality. Then again, the "I" neither creates the "Thou" nor the "Thou" the "I". This spirituality is only possible because the eternal Thou, the Creator, has given the Word to man. Therefore, when we speak to the eternal Thou, that is when we pray to God, we speak from the human spirituality in the spirituality of Faith, as 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains:

The human spirit which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names – the human spirit and the rational soul – designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets.
(SAQ 208-9)

From this "I – Thou" relationship and its origin in the relationship with the human I to the Creator, Ebner finds his way to the Word of God that was in the beginning with God, as stated in the Prolog of John's Gospel.

Several conclusions must be drawn from this thought, which is the basis of every understanding of man as a spiritual being. Ebner gives it a most important place in understanding of man, when he writes:

It became clear to me what it means that man is the only speaking creature that he is in the middle of a mute world

the only one, who 'has the word.' It became clear to me that man is through the word, what he is, a human being.

That in the word is the key to his spiritual life.

This basic thought is essentially a 'revolutionary' thought, it is the most revolutionary thought, humankind will ever think. But this thought is not from me, and from whom it is, it is not only a thought, but a life: 'The Life'.

In the last word, Ebner refers to the Prolog of the Gospel of John, (1-5) where it is said:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.

It needs to be noted here that Ebner's concept of the word as key of spiritual life has been expressed by Bahá'u'lláh a century before, when He said:

The Word is the master key for the whole world, inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked. No sooner had but a glimmer of its effulgent splendour shone forth upon the mirror of love than the blessed word 'I am the Best-Beloved' was reflected therein. It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. (TB 173, emphasis added)

Ebner developed this relationship of man, who has the word, with the Word that was in the beginning and was the light of men in many of his fragments. Human spirituality is based on this fact and founded in the Word of God.

Bahá'u'lláh clearly states that all knowledge of God is the knowledge of Him, the Manifestation of God, and that we have to look at Him in His Words and in His Writings, not with any other eyes or understanding, i.e., it is a personal knowledge gained in accepting the person of the Manifestation in word and deed.

If it be your wish, O people, to know God and to discover the greatness of His might, look, then, upon Me with Mine own eyes, and not with the eyes of any one besides Me.
(GWB 272)

The human spirit is, therefore, based on the “I – Thou” relationship, which is the starting point of any philosophizing. It needs to be noted that in this relationship, both the human I and the Thou are equal, there is no prevalence of the active over the passive, of the form over matter, of male over female, as in the perennial Philosophy; the “I” can only be in dialogue if there is a “Thou”, and vice versa.

Following Ebner's thoughts this writer would like to add these considerations. From this relationship one must understand the equality of man and women, which is the life giving “I” – “Thou” relationship, on which the physical unity of mankind is based. In all previous philosophical and biological understanding man was the active and woman was only the receiver, and these two were never equal. Aristotle has stated that clearly and it is still an understanding lurking in the psychological underground of our culture. Aristotle's main thrust was to explain the nature of things as they are seen to be. From the subject and low status of women he deduced their inferiority by nature. Caroline Whitbeck⁵³ stated:

The reason for women's inferiority lies in a defect. “*Women are defective by nature*” because they cannot reproduce *semen* which contains a full human being. When a man and a woman have intercourse, the man supplies the substance of a human being (the *soul*, i.e. the *form*), the woman only the nourishment (the *matter*).

It must be remembered that Bahá'u'lláh clearly states the equality of both, of form and matter or of the active and the passive principle of being, whom He calls different and the same, when He said:

That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today. The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. (TB 140)

It is interesting to note that the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh integrates many concepts and ideas of previous philosophies, but does this in a totally new way, creating a perspective that could not be seen before. This new perspective has found, at least in this writer's opinion, already some reflections in the philosophers who have lived since, even though they might never have heard the name of Bahá'u'lláh. This obviously is only the beginning of a process that will last a thousand years at least, as was predicted by Bahá'u'lláh.

The new dialogical thinking concludes in the fact that neither the human I nor the human Thou is able to fundamentally establish this relationship, which constitutes human spirituality, so it must have

been established originally by an eternal Thou, by the Divine Word, by the Creation of God. Consequently, Ferdinand Ebner⁵⁴ refers to the Prologue of the Gospel of John, to bring his philosophical thinking about the Word, and about man, as being given the word, to its apex.⁵⁵

The following example should illuminate this relationship and the astounding parallels between the Bahá'í Revelation and another dialogical thinker, Rosenzweig.

Compare this sentence from the *Selections from the Writings of the Báb* (1819-1850):

I have known Thee by Thy making known unto me that Thou art unknowable to anyone save Thyself. (SWB 196)

with this statement of Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929):

Of God we know nothing.

Yet, This Not-Knowing is Not-Knowing of God,

As such, this is the beginning of our Knowing of Him.⁵⁶

Referring to the word “the Fashioner” in the Tablet, Bahá'u'lláh continues to explain that “a true philosopher would never deny God nor His evidences, rather would He acknowledge His glory and overpowering majesty which overshadow all created things.”

He continues to explain that the true philosopher is not thinking independently and as an individual as stated in the “I think, therefore I am” proposition of Descartes, but that such a philosopher is aided and loved by the Prophet, indicating that He, Bahá'u'lláh, in His Revelation provides the essence and fundament of any true philosophy of today.

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. (TB 150)

What was stated above about the relationship between philosophy and Revelation is here repeated and applied to what Bahá'u'lláh calls the “true philosopher”. According to Bahá'u'lláh, a “true philosopher would never deny God” and “promote the best interest of humanity.” Additionally, we can recognize true philosophers if we can detect in their philosophy the fact that they were loved and aided by Bahá'u'lláh. This love and aid can be recognized by the Bahá'í scholars insofar as the findings of such a true philosopher, either in part or in total, demonstrate analogies and similarities to the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

It is the opinion of this writer, that the philosophers quoted in this paper are falling into these categories of “true philosophers” according to Bahá'u'lláh. This seems true for a number of modern philosophers such as Teilhard de Chardin Ferdinand Ebner, Martin Buber and certainly others as well.⁵⁷

This statement again points to the spiritual connection of philosophy with the Revelation of the Prophet and is based on the potency of the Revelation and not necessarily on any literal connection or reference. So the statement mentioned above about the essence and fundamentals of philosophy is here based on the potency of the Revelation and the Purpose of the Manifestation of God.

In His final section of the Tablet Bahá'u'lláh again addresses Nabil, stating that this Tablet is an irrefutable and weighty exposition:

My Nabil! Let nothing grieve thee, rather rejoice with exceeding gladness inasmuch as I have mentioned thy name, have turned My heart and My face towards thee and have conversed with thee through this irrefutable and weighty exposition. Ponder in thy heart upon the tribulations I have sustained, the imprisonment and the captivity I have endured, the sufferings that have befallen Me and the accusations that the people have levelled against Me. Behold, they are truly wrapped in a grievous veil. (TB 151)

Concluding this Tablet Bahá'u'lláh reveals a prayer summarizing all the blessings of the Revelation and He let the faithful say:

Make me as a lamp shining throughout Thy lands that those in whose hearts the light of Thy knowledge gloweth and the yearning for Thy love lingereth may be guided by its radiance. (TB 151)

Conclusions

Some very tentative and preliminary conclusions are drawn from this paper and only sketched out here for further consideration, following the chapters of this paper.

1) Progressive Theology

The value of this concept for a Bahá'í theology needs to be further investigated and developed, especially in comparison with other scriptural texts,

2) Consequences of Philosophical Error

This consideration is based on a verse of this tablet and needs to be followed up throughout the Bahá'í Scripture. Any

philosophical school of thought that denies a hierarchical value system and that denies the difference between good and bad, seems to undermine civilization and therefore would be unacceptable for the consideration in the Bahá'í understanding of philosophy.

3) Form and Matter

The way how oppositional concepts are seen in the concrete world is of importance as the consequences of different philosophical solutions have demonstrable consequences for civilization. The logic of this new understanding needs to be developed and added to the traditional logical systems. The concept of Unity in Diversity can function as the watchword of this new conceptualization of reality.

4) Philosophy and Philosophers

Bahá'u'lláh has stated clearly the criteria of a true philosopher.

Two philosophical criteria

- i) True philosophers will never deny God the Creator
- ii) True philosophers will promote the best interest of Humanity

Two theological criteria

- i) True philosophers are loved by the Manifestation of God
- ii) True philosophers are aided through the potency of the Manifestation

In any evaluation of a philosopher or of any philosophical system these criteria can be applied and will give a sure footing for their evaluation. This applies to a whole system or an independent part of a philosophical system. It applies to all philosophers disregarding their specific religious affiliation.

5) Spiritual Materialism

This concept seems to be the touchstone of the evaluation of modern thinkers.

Any thinking that does make the human reason the “measure of all things” and does not accept anything that is above, or beyond, transcendent or hidden, will have missed the true human condition and therefore will have detrimental consequences, even if it is presented with a high level of “spirituality”.

The understanding of spirituality needs to be further researched in the writings of the Bahá'í Faith, the system of dialogical thinking may be of assistance in this effort.

6) Dialogical Thinking

This new understanding of human spirituality in the Word of God can be used to understand the seeming contradiction in the Bahá'í Revelation, where it is said that man is created to know God but yet God is defined as unknowable. The difference between substantial or third person understanding and personal or first and second person communication needs to be developed and might be useful in better understanding the solution to the above-mentioned apparent contradiction. The fact that all knowledge of God is manifest in God's Prophets, i.e. in a personal way and not in abstract and substantial thought processes seems to indicate the correctness of this distinction.

7) Final Thoughts

The most important conclusion of this paper is the obligation to look at modern philosophy and distinguish between the findings and statements of modern philosophers. There are philosophies that are words leading to words and thereby satisfying only the intellectual mind in a Spiritual Materialism dealing only with "that which they comprehend".

On the other hand, there are modern philosophers and theologians, philosophical ideas and visions of contemporary thinking, which are based on the essence and the fundamentals that have been revealed by and emanate from the Prophets of the past and by the Prophets of today, the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. And there are certainly some philosophers who are in the middle, having only partially recognized this spirit of the Prophet.

In every case it is the task of the student of Bahá'í theology to use discrimination and apply it according to the Pauline statement: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good."⁵⁸

The same truth has been expressed in the Tablet of Wisdom:

Forsake all evil and hold fast that which is good. (TB 138)

Establish the Word of Truth with eloquence and Wisdom (TB 139)

... *When no man knoweth how to discern light and darkness or to distinguish guidance from error.* (TB 138)

NOTES

- ¹ All quotes from Bahá'í Writings are from the "Ocean Personal Research Library" available at bahai-education.org
- ² It should be noted that these descriptions of Bahá'u'lláh's Revelation are logically contradictory. Consequently it is called "Bewildering and Challenging." The meaning of these contradictions will be explained later in the paper.
- ³ The Covenant in the Bahá'í Faith is the adherence of all believers to the Prophet Founder, Bahá'u'lláh, to His son 'Abdu'l-Bahá as the Master, and to His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, as the Guardian of the Faith, and to the Universal House of Justice. After Shoghi Effendi's death the Universal House of Justice was established following the Instructions of Bahá'u'lláh, 'Abdu'l-Bahá and Shoghi Effendi. This sequence was established in Their written testaments and is the guarantee of the unity of the Bahá'í Faith, which was upheld in spite of serious challenges.
- ⁴ Adib Taherzadeh: *The Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh*, Volume four, George Ronald, Oxford, 1987, page 39. Taherzadeh has extracted this quote from the Tablet *Áthár-i-Qalam-i-A'lá*, see note 11, on page 447
- ⁵ All response to this paper can be made to the author at waklebel@msn.com and will be received with gratitude
- ⁶ This writer is not aware of ever finding this concept of Progressive Theology in other writings and presents this idea for the first time in this paper. If this concept has been used before, please give notice of this fact.
- ⁷ Only most recently are we finding out that even basic human concepts have undergone progressive development throughout history. The point is made by Mathew D. Lieberman and Naomi I. Eisenberger in their paper "Conflict and habit: A Social Cognitive Neuroscience approach to the Self." (In *Psychological Perspective on Self and Identity*, Vol. 4. available online at www.scn.ucla.edu/under4053_c004Lieberman.pdf) that the understanding of the self has made drastic changes during the last few hundred years, talking about historical changes in self concept formation, p.78. Carl Zimmer has summarized this new research in *Scientific American*, November 2005 p. 93 -101
- ⁸ This writer was rather surprised and yet excited by these events and needed time and consideration to understand their meaning. There is always the possibility of subjective opinions influencing such experiences and only a careful comparison with the Writings can assure their value. Nevertheless, if these experiences are true and correct they can provide a spiritual nourishment that cannot be communicated easily, but will promote and assist in further deepening in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

⁹ The comparison of the progress of civilization and the awakening of humanity with the flight of an arrow is a picture that is not found in the Bahá'í Scriptures (as compiled in Ocean). It needs to be noted that this comparison is presented in the writings of Teilhard de Chardin, when he describes the evolution of humanity as an arrow (see *La Vision du Passé*, Paris 1957, p. 101) and in *L'Apparition de l'Homme*, (aris,1956, page 297) where Teilhard compares the goal directed evolution of humanity with an arrow. A similar use of a Teilhardian concept was presented by the Universal House of Justice in the statement "The Promise of World Peace" (Bahá'í Publishing Trust, Wilmette, 1985), where Teilhard is quoted as a "Great Thinker" and his term of "the planetarization of mankind" is directly quoted in that statement.

¹⁰ It needs to be noted here that this process is not simple and unilateral. Peter Terry, in an electronically transmitted comment to this concept has noted the following: "Abdu'l-Bahá reminds us that after the Manifestation of God departs from this world, during the interval between His passing and the advent of the next Manifestation of God, human understanding of His Message decreases and human beings become increasingly far-fetched in their doctrinal formulations, resulting in literalism, superstition, fragmentation among believers, and exclusion (sometimes persecution) of those who have alternate views." How these two processes interact and how they are related to each other, especially in the diverse historical religions, is a question certainly needing further consideration. It seems to me that it denotes the difference between the ossification and deterioration of the religion and a simultaneous progress of humanity. The history of modern times could certainly be understood that way.

¹¹ See footnote 6

¹² According to Adib Taherzadeh (ibid, volume 4 page 33) the Tablet of Wisdom was addressed to Nabil-i-Akbar, "a man of great knowledge and learning" on the occasion of his pilgrimage to 'Akká.

¹³ Stephane Courtois et al. in: *The Black Book of Communism, Crimes, Terror, Repression*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts, London, England, 1999.

These are the "cold" statistics of the victims of communism as described in this book on page 4:

U.S.S.R	20 million deaths	Eastern Europe	1 million deaths
China	65 million deaths	Latin America	150,000 deaths
Vietnam	1 million deaths	Africa	1.7 million deaths
North Korea	2 million deaths	Afghanistan	1.5 million deaths
Cambodia	2 million deaths		

¹⁴ Adib Taherzadeh comments on this section more extensively, ibid, pp. 35-39.

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- ¹⁵ The reader is again referred to the lengthy commentary by Adib Taherzadeh on this topic, *ibid.* pp.39-46.
- ¹⁶ This preexistence of the world (as stated above: “*His creation has ever existed in His (God’s) shelter*”) is usually understood in Neoplatonic terms by Bahá’í scholars. It is this writer’s opinion that this understanding has some merits, but is by no means a full explanation of this view.
- ¹⁷ This term is used by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá to indicate the philosophical tradition originated by Aristotle and Plato: “As for the second balance, which the Illuminati and the peripatetics (followers of Aristotle) rely upon, it is the balance of reason (*al-mízánu’l-‘aql*). In like manner, the other schools of the first philosophers in the ancient and middle centuries depended upon it. They said that that which is judged by reason is firmly established, clear and indubitable, and that there is no doubt or defect either in its foundations or its outcomes.” (Quoted from a paper by Peter Terry, *Bahá’í Epistemology: ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, Tablet on the Inmost Heart*, provisional translation by Steven Phelps and William McCants, March 2000; Persian text in *Min Makatib ‘Abdu’l-Bahá*, pp. 83-86)
- ¹⁸ It is noteworthy that this understanding of heat or energy as being the element that brings the world of existence together is not unlike the modern description of the origin of the world. An article by W. Wayt Gibbs, “Cosmic CATScan” (in *Scientific American*, August 2005, page 23) states for example: “In the beginning, the universe was a void full of energy but without form. And so it remained for millions of years – exactly how long is still a major mystery of cosmology – until the first stars condensed from the fog of matter and lit up with a blue nuclear flow.”
- ¹⁹ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Towards the Future*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, London 1973, page 82
- ²⁰ This concept has been described by Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld in the article “Zur neueren Geschichte des integralen Gegensatzes von Einheit und Vielheit” (About the newer history of the integral polarity of unity and plurality) pages 434-445 in *Ursprüngliche Erfahrung und personales Sein*, (Original experience and personal being); Böhlau, Vienna 1997. This polar relationship has been elaborated in what is called integral philosophy as developed by Leo Gabriel, Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld and others in Austria, based on the view presented by Solovjev et al. Romano Guardini, the Catholic theologian, has described this polarity in *Der Gegensatz, Versuch zu einer Philosophie des Lebendig-Konkreten* (Polarity, Attempt towards a philosophy of the living-concrete) Mainz 1952
- ²¹ See below footnote 40 for Zubiri and the concept of “holon” by Ken Wilber, *passim*, especially in *Integral Psychology*, Shambhala, Boston and London, 2000, page221, note 7
- ²² Sen McGlinn, *Church and State, a postmodern political theology*, published by the author, University of Leiden, the Netherlands;

distributed by Kalimát Press as Volume Nineteen of the series *Studies in the Bábí and Bahá'í Religions*

- ²³ Mencius, Translated by David Hinton, Counterpoint, Washington, D.C., 1998, p.52
- ²⁴ Daniel Bell: *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism, Twentieth Anniversary Edition*, Basic Books; A Subsidiary of Perseus Books, L.L.C. New York, 1978, 1996, p. 253
- ²⁵ Karl Marx, *Karl Marx selected writings*. Edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press, 1977, "The Communist Manifesto", page 238.
- ²⁶ Cf. the paper by this writer: "Towards a Criticism of Marx's Criticism of Religion in the Bahá'í Faith" Presently evaluated for publication, available on request at waklebel@msn.com.
- ²⁷ Sen McGlinn (ibid, p. 255) claims that this concept of unity in diversity is not a difference in essence but only a superficial difference like in race relations. He does not appreciate the statement of Bahá'u'lláh as quoted below, that indicate that this concept is the basis of the organic unity as described in McGlinn's book. Consequently this concept was called by the Guardian a bedrock of Bahá'í belief and the watchword of the Law of Bahá'u'lláh. (WOB p. 115 and p. 41 respectively)
- ²⁸ This verse was the topic of my presentation at Bosch in 2004, under the title "True of Thyself", which will be published in *Irfan Magazine*.
- ²⁹ At the Irfan Colloquium May 2004 at Bosch Bahá'í School in California. Published in *Lights of Irfan Book Six*
- ³⁰ The authors mentioned here are from a brief description of this way of thinking presented by Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld in *Ursprüngliche Erfahrung und personales Sein* (Original Experience and Personal Existence) Böhlau Verlag, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 1997, in "Zur neuern Geschichte des integralen Gegensatzes von Einheit und Vielheit" (About the new history of the integral Opposition of Unity and Plurality)
- ³¹ The fact that these authors were not knowledgeable of the Bahá'í faith at all can be proven in the case of Wucherer Huldenfeld, who is a personal friend of mine and we studied together theology. Only recently have I told him about the Bahá'í Faith, many years after he wrote about this philosophy of "Integral Opposition of Unity and Plurality,".
- ³² The concept of structure was philosophically developed by Xavier Zubiri in his book *Dynamic Structure of Reality*, Translated by Nelson R. Orringer, University of Illinois Press, Urbana and Chicago, 2003, pages 35 and 82
- ³³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, London, 1996, pp. 107-108
- ³⁴ See my paper in *Lights of 'Irfán Book Six*, ibid.

- ³⁵ “The criticism of religion is the presupposition of all criticism.” Karl Marx, “Towards a Critique of Hegel’s Philosophy of Right” in “Karl Marx selected writings”. Edited by David McLellan, Oxford University Press, 1977, page 63
- ³⁶ In *Christianity and Evolution*, A Harvest Book, Harcourt Brace & Company; San Diego, New York, London, 1969, page 28; (Italics in the original)
- ³⁷ Chronological Issues in the Lawḥ-i-Hikmat of Bahá'u'lláh. by Peter Terry, Published in *Lights of Irfan: Papers Presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia and Seminars* Book 1, pages 121-142, Wilmette, IL: Irfan Colloquia, 2000
- ³⁸ Following Bahá'u'lláh, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, (SAQ 164) distinguishes as well between independent prophets and dependent prophets, whom He calls followers and promoters: *“For the independent Prophets are founders; They establish a new religion and make new creatures of men; They change the general morals, promote new customs and rules, renew the cycle and the Law. Their appearance is like the season of spring, which arrays all earthly beings in a new garment, and gives them a new life.*
- With regard to the second sort of Prophets who are followers, these also promote the Law of God, make known the Religion of God, and proclaim His word. Of themselves they have no power and might, except what they receive from the independent Prophets.”*
- ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, (‘Abdu’l-Bahá in London, p. 42) stated that even Greek philosophy is dependent on the Prophets: *“God sends Prophets for the education of the people and the progress of mankind. Each such Manifestation of God has raised humanity. They serve the whole world by the bounty of God. The sure proof that they are the Manifestations of God is in the education and progress of the people. The Jews were in the lowest condition of ignorance, and captives under Pharaoh when Moses appeared and raised them to a high state of civilization. Thus was the reign of Solomon brought about and science and art were made known to mankind. Even Greek philosophers became students of Solomon's teaching. Thus was Moses proved to be a Prophet.”* This passage clearly indicates that the teaching of Solomon, which has even reached the Greek philosophers, did prove the prophethood of Moses, who was the independent Prophet for Israel.
- ³⁹ Teilhard, “How I believe” page 101 in *Christianity and Evolution*, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego, New York, London 1969,
- ⁴⁰ Confer Sion Cowell, *The Teilhard Lexicon*, Sussex Academic Press, Brighton, Portland, 2001, pages 27-28 and 30, which concept is as close to the Bahá'í understanding of the Divine Manifestation as Teilhard could come.
- ⁴¹ *Cutting through Spiritual Materialisms*, Shambhala, Boston, 1979
- ⁴² Johannes Toegel, *Eine Theologie des Zeitgeistes, Darstellung und Kritik am Beispiel der Transcendentalen Psychologie* (A theology of the

spirit of the time, a presentation and critique using the example of transcendental psychology). PhD Diss. (28,684) Univ. of Vienna, 1991, p. 170. (All quotes from Toegel translated by this writer). Toegel reports that for three years he had tried the same approach while living in a cave in Tibet, where he eventually met a true master and realized that true mystical experiences consist in trust and acceptance and not in striving to higher transpersonal techniques.

⁴³ Freely translated that means: when the religious authority has spoken, there is no more discussion and no question.

⁴⁴ Ibid., page 173

⁴⁵ The difference between Bahá'u'lláh's mystical writings and the Sufi understanding of the mystic travel was clearly pointed out by Nader Saiedi in *Logos and Civilization* in the Chapter "Theology or Revelation and Critique of the Unity of Existence", (University Press of Maryland; Maryland, 2000 pages 89-78.) and by Ghasem Bayat, in the article "A Journey through the Seven Valleys of Bahá'u'lláh" in *Lights of 'Irfán Book III*, Bahá'í National Center, 1233 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201 USA, passim.

⁴⁶ Toegel, *ibid.*, pages 344-246

⁴⁷ Ken Wilber; *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, The Spirit of Evolution*, Chapter: "The Unpacking of God", page 550

⁴⁸ In a footnote of the edition of the Tablets, the editor refers to another Tablet of Bahá'í and to the Qur'an, where the origin of philosophy is described and Iris, or Hermes, and their follower Balinus is mentioned. It appears that these passages indicate the origin of philosophy, indicating that these philosophies were based on the belief in God.

⁴⁹ This new philosophical thinking was comprehensively described by Bernhard Casper, *Das dialogische Denken. Eine Untersuchung der religionsphilosophischen Bedeutung Franz Rosenzweigs, Ferdinand Ebners und Martin Bubers*, (The dialogical thinking, an investigation of the meaning of Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber in the study of a philosophy of religion) Freiburg/B. 1967.

⁵⁰ Martin Buber, *Between Man and Man*, Routledge Classics, London New York 2002

⁵¹ Simon Blackburn, the author of the *Oxford Dictionary of Philosophy* has in his book *Think* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, New York, 1999) described in a very lucid and commonly understandable way this way of modern thinking. He gives the reader a sense of how "the great historical figures such as Descartes, Hume, Kant and Wittgenstein have approached its central themes." While describing the classical tradition in philosophy, he does not include philosophers such as Husserl and Heidegger in his treatise, and seems to be coming to conclusion about God and man, more in the tradition of Bertrand Russell than of the more modern thinkers. He follows, one could say, the substantial way of thinking.

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- ⁵² The brief explanation follows the introductory work to Ferdinand Ebner's thinking by Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld: *Personales Sein und Wort, Einführung in den Grundgedanken Ferdinand Ebners* (Personal Being and Word, Introduction into the basic principle of the thinking of Ferdinand Ebner); Böhlau, Vienna, Cologne, Graz 1985; pages. 23-32
- ⁵³ Caroline Whitbeck, 'Theories of Sex Difference', in Gould and Wartofsky (eds.), *Women and Philosophy*, New York 1976, pp. 54-80; M.Maloney, 'The Arguments for Women's Difference in Classical Philosophy and Early Christianity', pp. 41-49.
- ⁵⁴ The understanding of Ferdinand Ebner's philosophy is mainly based on the studies of Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld, *Der Grundgedanke Ferdinand Ebners*, (the basic thought of Ferdinand Ebner) 78-87; Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld, *Personales Sein und Wort. Einführung in den Grundgedanken Ferdinand Ebners*, Wien-Köln-Graz 1985;
- ⁵⁵ This relationship is here only briefly indicated and certainly would need a much longer exposition.
- ⁵⁶ Quoted in Bernard Casper *ibid.*, page 92
- ⁵⁷ Ian Kluge has made similar connections with the philosophies of Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Teilhard. De Chardin, and Whitehead in several of his papers. See Ian Kluge, *Bahá'í Ontology: An Initial Reconnaissance*; iankluge@netbistro.com,
- ⁵⁸ Thessalonians 5:21