

# The Word is the Master Key for the Whole World

## The Bahá'í Revelation and the "Teaching and Spirit of the Cause" in Dialogical and Personal Thinking

Wolfgang A. Klebel

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

The title of this paper concerns the revealed Word of Bahá'u'lláh: "*The Word is the master key for the whole world...*" This inquiry is about the meaning of this statement, and especially about the following statement, which further develops the meaning and role of the Word: "*...inasmuch as through its potency the doors of the hearts of men, which in reality are the doors of heaven, are unlocked.*" (TB 173)

In other words, the Word is like a key, actually, like the master key, that is a key that opens all doors and is, at the same time, the origin of all other keys. This key assures, uniquely and dependably, the opening to the meaning of the whole world and its relationship to heaven. The Word is this special key to the hearts of men, to the human spirit, which opens this world towards the doors of heaven.

In a prayer Bahá'u'lláh has described the power of the Word of God for the believer and connects it to unity, knowledge, assurance and steadfastness:

*I implore Thee, O my God and my Master, by Thy word through which they who have believed in Thy unity have soared up into the atmosphere of Thy knowledge, and they who are devoted to Thee have ascended into the*

*heaven of Thy oneness, to inspire Thy loved ones with that which will assure their hearts in Thy Cause. Endue them with such steadfastness that nothing whatsoever will hinder them from turning towards Thee. (PM 188)*

In the same way ‘Abdu’l-Bahá explained the biblical and Bahá’í meaning of “heaven” connecting it to the Word, which He calls the supreme station and the seat of the Sun of Truth:

*He (Christ) said: “I came down from heaven and likewise will go to heaven.” By “heaven” is not meant this infinite phenomenal space, but “heaven” signifies the word of the divine kingdom which is the supreme station and seat of the Sun of Truth. (TAB 192)*

To follow the meaning of this momentous and weighty statement about the Word of God in the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh is the purpose of this paper.

The method used is to first explore the meaning of these concepts in the Bahá’í Writings and then, in a second section, to compare the Sacred Words with the writings of Ferdinand Ebner and others, who have developed what is called a philosophy of dialogical and personal thinking.

This philosophy seems to be inspired, at least in the understanding of this writer, by the Revelation of Bahá’u’lláh, even though Ferdinand Ebner, as well as his interpreters, have most likely never heard of this Revelation. The fact that this is possible is based on the statement of Bahá’u’lláh when He said in the “Tablet of Wisdom”:

*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)*

Certainly, Ferdinand Ebner would neither deny God nor His evidences, and since his philosophy corresponds so widely with the Bible and Bahá’í Writings, as will be demonstrated in this

paper, this writer makes the personal assumption that he was not only aided but also loved by Bahá'u'lláh. Should we not apply this sentence to the philosophers who lived after the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh, as well as, to the philosophers before Him, whom He extolled, praising the merits of philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle?

The idea, that there might be a correspondence between modern philosophy and the Bahá'í Revelation, is not much explored by Bahá'í writers and researchers. Nevertheless, there are courageous attempts made in this direction.<sup>2</sup>

It is interesting to note that, for example, Terry Culhane<sup>3</sup> never raises the question of how to explain the similarity of ideas when comparing thoughts of Ken Wilber with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh. In his otherwise excellent book he describes Ken Wilber's theory about modernity, and he noted parallels in the writings of Bahá'u'lláh without any further consideration so that a reader could possibly believe that both Wilber and Bahá'u'lláh are inspired by the same source. The uniqueness of the Bahá'í Revelation is lost, and its world-moving and world-creating influence can easily be overlooked. In other words, what Bahá'u'lláh said about His Revelation is not really taken into account.

This writer has in another paper<sup>4</sup> not only described the similarities of Wilber's thoughts with some Bahá'í principles, but has also noted the substantial differences between their basic philosophical understanding. Wilber's philosophy is basically pantheistic, and in his mystical tendencies he attempts to find a way to God through the development of the human rational ability, independent of all Manifestations. Wilber explains that the previous founders of religions were constrained by pre-scientific thinking, and he regards them as unimportant and irrelevant. Therefore, his thinking can be described as "spiritual materialism," because the goal of his meditations are to reach the divine through higher developed spiritual abilities of man. He does not speak of a personal God, but of "the all-pervading World Soul," and he states that: "every I becomes a God, and every WE becomes God's sincerest worship, and every IT becomes God's temple."<sup>5</sup>

This paper is another endeavor of this kind, and while certainly provisional, and on the level of a personal opinion; it follows a statement written on behalf of the Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith, which said:

It is specially gratifying to see you realize the fact that when the world has developed and been enlightened enough through the unseen Powers of the Almighty, to be led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause, it will be our shameful task to go round proclaiming such principles as we were taught so many years before and none of which we had lived up to. (MSEI 56)

Can it be denied that the unseen powers of the Almighty *can and have* actually influenced philosophers who lived after this Revelation to be led to the teachings and the spirit of the Cause? And should we avoid the admittedly shameful task, as the Guardian instructed his secretary to write, to proclaim the principles of the Faith by using the enlightened findings of these philosophers? And when the above quote continues by stating that we have not lived up to these principles, it seems to point a finger at the sore spot of our present situation, which has not changed much since these words were written.

What easily is overlooked is the fact that we have no absolute choice in the philosophical assumptions and preconceptions we bring to the Faith. We are frequently warned by Bahá'u'lláh that knowledge can be a veil preventing understanding of His revelation, nevertheless, we in the West come from post-Christian, Christian and often Protestant backgrounds, and carry the eggshells of our previous understandings with us.

Consequently, we think and perceive the world in the light of our philosophical tradition and tend to explain the Writings in that sense, often enough without reflecting on that fact. As much as most Bahá'ís try to think in the way of the Writings, traditional influences can never be totally avoided. Therefore, any modern philosophical vision, which is critical of these assumptions and which seems to be closer to the original Christian and Bahá'í Revelations, can be very helpful indeed.

As a matter of fact, it is the purpose of this paper to show that the Bahá'í Revelation has changed the way we need to think

about the basic reality of this world, to change the ontological assumptions of traditional philosophy. The Bahá'í Revelation has (we can describe it in a dialectic process) abolished the old forms of understanding, has conserved their perennial truth and has elevated them to a new understanding. And it is now our obligation to find a new philosophical footing in the Bahá'í Writings. Cannot what Shoghi Effendi said (below) about the religions of the past also be applied, *mutatis mutandis*, to the philosophies of history?

*These divinely-revealed religions, as a close observer has graphically expressed it, "are doomed not to die, but to be reborn ... 'Does not the child succumb in the youth and the youth in the man; yet neither child nor youth perishes?'"* (WOB 114)

The basic and underlying thought presented in this paper can be stated here, anticipating its final conclusions.

- If the reality of the world is fundamentally personal and spiritual and not substantial and material, and
- if the Word is the cause, the mediator and key to all spiritual reality

**Then** it follows that

- *The Word and only the Word* is the cause and origin of all reality.
- It brings into being all creative change in this world.
- The Word is further the cause of the beginning and end of the world,
- as well as being the cause of and creating the New World Order.

Before this comparison of the Writings and the dialogical thinking can be made, it is necessary to explore the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh in this new area of understanding. What does He say about the Word; what is His understanding of the relationship between the Word, between spirituality or what He calls the doors to heaven? The first three chapters are dedicated to this task, yet, it must be mentioned that this

research was done with some understanding of Ebner's philosophy, because without this new understanding, the traditional approach would act like a veil, preventing one from having insight into the sacred Words.

This is actually not only a philosophical consideration; it was a very personal experience. The book that introduced me into Ebner's writings was given to me when I had only an initial knowledge of the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. At that time I could not understand the writings of Ferdinand Ebner and laid the book aside, without attempting to read more than a few paragraphs. Ten years later, when I accidentally looked again into this book, I was fascinated by its philosophy and could not prevent comparing it with many statements of the Bahá'í Faith, reading and re-reading it and finding other books about this seminal philosopher and others who presented similar ideas.

In fact, the understanding of the Faith led me to an understanding of Ferdinand Ebner's thoughts. The correspondence was evident after I had only read the first chapter, and it fascinated me throughout the reading. The meaning of this experience can be best explained with the words of the Guardian, as quoted above. I personally was surprised by the idea that the power of the Almighty could have enlightened Ferdinand Ebner among others,<sup>6</sup> who, after the devastating experience in the ditches and battle lines of World War I, had developed this philosophy based on a new understanding of the Christian faith.

The other basic statement of Bahá'u'lláh about philosophy is equally verified where He said: *The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets.* (TB 145) Ferdinand Ebner bases his thinking on the Christian message, mainly following Kierkegaard, yet developing his thinking further. In a new and original way, he based his thinking on the Prolog to the Gospel of John about the Word that was in the Beginning with God. Of this passage 'Abdu'l-Bahá had said:

*Consider the statement recorded in the first chapter of the book of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." This*

*statement is brief but replete with the greatest meanings. Its applications are illimitable and beyond the power of books or words to contain and express.*  
(PUP 154)

While starting out from the philosophical understanding of the word in concrete speech, all of Ferdinand Ebner's philosophy concludes in this statement, and when he speaks about his philosophical findings about man, he states that it is not original to him, because it has been stated before in the Gospel of John.

It became clear to me that man is through the word, what he is i.e., 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.'<sup>7</sup>

With these words he is referring to John 1:1-3

*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.*

It has to be clearly stated in the beginning of this paper that this writer is not an expert in the philosophy of Ferdinand Ebner. As a matter of fact, Ebner's original opus<sup>8</sup> is not even available to him. He basically relies on two excellent descriptions of Ebner's work in which a rich selection of Ebner's statements are quoted, giving quite a thorough understanding of Ebner's original writings.<sup>9</sup>

Nevertheless, even in this form the parallels with the Bahá'í Scriptures cannot be overlooked, and many concepts of Ebner allow a better understanding of Bahá'í principles compared to the attempt to understand the Writings with the tools of classical and traditional philosophies.

The claim frequently made that the Bahá'í Writings are presented in the frame of Platonic or Neo-platonic philosophy will be especially clarified and criticized. The difference between an idea and the word; between idealistic or substantive thinking and dialogical and personal thinking, is clearly developed by Ebner and seems to distinguish Platonic or Neo-platonic thinking from the new dialogical thinking.

Without going any further into this issue at this point, the traditional understanding of the Christian message needs to be questioned as well, as far as "the Word" of the Gospel of John is concerned. Has it not suffered the same fate, being understood in the Platonic tradition, rather than the biblical Tradition of Genesis?

Ebner anticipated the critique of traditional metaphysic by Heidegger, but placed it strictly in the frame of substantial thinking versus dialogical thinking, as will be explained below. If the statement of Bahá'u'lláh in the title of this paper would be following the Platonic tradition, He would have to say that the "Idea is the master key to the whole world." But it is not the idea and/or the realm of ideas, but rather the Word, like in the biblical tradition.<sup>10</sup> The fact that the Greek word *logos* can mean reason, idea and word has been one of the causes of this confusion. With Ebner we must interpret the *logos* in the tradition of Genesis 1:3 "*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light;*" and it seems that this is the interpretation which is indicated in the Bahá'í Writings as well.<sup>11</sup>

Ebner's critique on traditional metaphysic and philosophy, therefore, is helpful in understanding the Writings of the Faith. This will become clearer in the section about dialogical and personal thinking.

## **Bahá' u'lláh**

In the following three sections some Writings of Bahá'u'lláh are presented, which indicate the connection of His Revelation with the Revelation of Christ, especially as it is expressed in the Prolog to the Gospel of John. The second chapter will compare the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh with the New Heaven and New Earth of the book of Revelation, and will present a different

understanding of Revelation in the light of the Words of Bahá'u'lláh. The final section will relate these findings to the concept of the unity of the spiritual and material world.

## The Word of Bahá'u'lláh

A high number of quotes can be found about the meaning of the “Word” and the “Word of God” in the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh. Here only a few and significant samples are mentioned to get a comprehensive look of how the “Word” is used in the Writings. The first is a description of the Word of God, as used in the title of this paper, and what it means.

*O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable. It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being. The Great Being saith: 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. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.<sup>12</sup>*

The above paragraph is divided and commented on below, sentence by sentence, to demonstrate its meaning.

*O friend of mine! The Word of God is the king of words and its pervasive influence is incalculable.*

In this first sentence the Word of God is called the king of words and its influence is called incalculable. How do we understand that? A king is not only representative of the whole country; in him the country is embodied and supported. So the Word of God is representative of all words; it is also the origin and cause of all words. It is, in other terms, the necessary and sufficient condition of all spoken words between humans. The

emphasis is here on the spoken word, which will be clearer in the section about dialogical thinking. The word is used not in a metaphysical, symbolic or abstract way and does not include derivatives such as mind, thought, reason and imagination. It is not used in the specific way of Platonic or Hellenistic thinking, in the way the term “logos” of John 1:1 was often interpreted.

*It hath ever dominated and will continue to dominate the realm of being.*

What is said in this sentence is an explanation of the absolute royalty of the Word of God. It dominates not only thinking and reasoning, nay; it dominates the realm of being. Quite simply, the Word of God relates not only to the words of man but to the whole realm of being, that is, the whole world, in the past, present and future. In other words, all that exists is dominated by the Word of God, not only the spiritual realm, but matter equally so. There are no exceptions, whatever is; whatever exists, is dominated by the Word of God. That this understanding has implications towards the realm of being, towards the ontological understanding of the world, is evident and will be described later.

*The Great Being saith:*

*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.*

Here another aspect of the Word of God is described. The picture of the master key (interestingly enough the term “key” for the word is used by Ebner several times in a similar context) is describing the fact that the Word of God opens up the meaning of the whole world, brings us into the middle of what is important in this world, and by doing so, leads us through the hearts of men into heaven, into the realm of God.

Without this Master Key, the world becomes opaque, dark and incomprehensible, no matter how many inventions and natural laws modern science may detect.<sup>13</sup> We must consider that in the process of secularization the inner world of man has become more obscure and less understandable in spite of all the

progress in the sciences and in psychology and anthropology. The most important aspects of the Word of God are the fact that it originates and dominates the realm of being; that it opens up the understanding of what is and makes manifest the relationship this world has with its creator, with heaven.

*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.*

Again, here we have a specific, spoken word used to demonstrate the effect and meaning of the Word of God. Another important point of this sentence is the fact that the Word of God in its splendor is related to love and affection.

It is the creative Word of God that through love and affection brings the world into existence and keeps it in existence. The actual word quoted here, "*The Best-Beloved*," is not just any word, it is the Word said by the Maid of Heaven<sup>14</sup> bringing Bahá'u'lláh the message of His mission as a Manifestation of God while He was imprisoned in Teheran, which event He describes in the following words:

*While engulfed in tribulations I heard a most wondrous, a most sweet voice, calling above My head. Turning My face, I beheld a Maiden – the embodiment of the remembrance of the name of My Lord – suspended in the air before Me. So rejoiced was she in her very soul that her countenance shone with the ornament of the good pleasure of God, and her cheeks glowed with the brightness of the All-Merciful. Betwixt earth and heaven she was raising a call which captivated the hearts and minds of men. She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honoured servants.*

*Pointing with her finger unto My head, she addressed all who are in heaven and all who are on earth, saying: By God! This is the Best-Beloved of the worlds, and yet ye comprehend not. This is the Beauty of God amongst you, and the power of His sovereignty within you, could ye but understand. This is the Mystery of God and His Treasure, the Cause of God and His glory unto*

*all who are in the kingdoms of Revelation and of creation, if ye be of them that perceive. This is He Whose Presence is the ardent desire of the denizens of the Realm of eternity, and of them that dwell within the Tabernacle of glory, and yet from His Beauty do ye turn aside.* (SLH 5)

We have interrupted the sequence of the sentences of the paragraph from the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh with this statement in order to explain what the Word *'The Best-Beloved'* means. It needs to be mentioned here, that this Word, like other Words in the Revelation of God, can only be heard and really understood by the inner ear, the ear given by the Manifestation. And yet it is a word spoken to the inner and outer being, as Bahá'u'lláh stated above. This is stated by Bahá'u'lláh in the Valley of Unity: "*With the ear of God he heareth, with the eye of God he beholdeth the mysteries of divine creation.*"<sup>15</sup>

Here we have the question of how a spiritual hearing, a hearing *with the ear of God*, transfers to the *outer being*, to the rational mind and to external perception. This certainly is an important theological question, which will not be further pursued here. What needs to be mentioned here is the fact that this issue presupposes the unity of spirit and matter, which finds in man its highest expression and which has been described by the mystics of all times.

It may suffice here to recognize that Bahá'u'lláh describes the message of the Maid of Heaven in the following words: "*She was imparting to both My inward and outer being tidings which rejoiced My soul, and the souls of God's honoured servants.*" With these words He describes the mystical experience of His soul as a spiritual (inner) and as a sensory (outer) experience. The others, who do not listen with this ear, are, as it is said here, unable to comprehend, unable to understand and perceive, and so they will turn aside.

These Words to Bahá'u'lláh can be compared with the Words of God in the Bible spoken to Adam, Abraham and Moses, and the Words spoken to Christ during His baptism by John the Baptist: "*This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*"

(Matthew 3:17) The vocation of Paul on his way to Damascus can be seen as another Word spoken by God.

We can follow the modern Bible Critique, which claims that all these words are invented by the writer and only meant symbolically, i.e., that they were never spoken, but only recorded to convey a spiritual meaning. That way of misinterpreting what the Scriptures actually says is more difficult in the case of Bahá'u'lláh, because He recollects these words Himself, and reports them as spoken to Him, and He mentioned them several times in His Writings, even though in different ways of description.<sup>16</sup>

Many times in this paper, the reader is asked to make a choice. It is the choice indicated in the words of the Maid of Heaven. Do you hear these words and accept them, or do you not understand and turn aside? That this is not only a religious decision which is asked, but also a decision that encompassed the whole of man, his body, his mind, his intellect and spirituality, is obvious. Equally evident is the fact, that the whole life of a person depends on this choice, as well as all the other choices and decision he will make. So it is not a question of exegesis, it is a question of the fundamental aspect of being human. This fundamental aspect of man, i.e., his spirituality and its connection with the word, will further be clarified in the section on Ferdinand Ebner.

Turning back to the last sentence from the paragraph of the Tablet of Bahá'u'lláh we read about the Word of God:

*It is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom. High, immeasurably high is this sublime station, in whose shadow moveth the essence of loftiness and splendour, wrapt in praise and adoration.*

Two essential things are said here about the Word: that it is inexhaustible and comprehends all things, and that nothing that is perceived can be perceived independently from it. The other statement is the fact that it is sublimely elevated, beyond understanding, and that in His shadow all splendor, all praise, and adoration is presented.

From this paragraph, several important conclusions can be drawn in order to understand what Bahá'u'lláh means when He speaks about the Word of God. We will present the following conclusions here:

1. The Word of God is the actually spoken Word to the Manifestation and to mankind.
2. The Word of God is the Manifestation.
3. All that exists, all that is created, is created by this Word
4. Therefore all that exists is a creation of God and can be perceived only on that basis. The Word is the vehicle of all creative processes; of the existence of the world and the vehicle of the possibility to understand and perceive the world in its condition as creation.
5. Consequently, all other understanding and scientific inquiry is secondary to this understanding of the Word of God.

While these words could be interpreted to mean that God and the world are one, this pantheistic misunderstanding is clearly refuted by Bahá'u'lláh. He states:

*No tie of direct intercourse can possibly bind Him to His creatures. He standeth exalted beyond and above all separation and union, all proximity and remoteness. No sign can indicate His presence or His absence; inasmuch as by a word of His command all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, which is the Primal Will itself, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible. (KI 98)*

The absolute separation of God from His creation is affirmed, and then it is stated that the Word of God is the cause of creation. The Word is identified as God's Will, or His Primal Will in which reality is becoming real, "out of nothingness." So both the biblical and the Islamic tradition said the same, using different terms, the Word of God for the Bible and the Will of God for Islam. Bahá'u'lláh combines these two traditions in the above sentence and in other places. The

Báb already had made statements applying the Word as well as the Primal Will to Himself and to all Manifestations or Prophets, saying:

*Verily I am none other but the servant of God and His Word, and none but the first one to bow down in supplication before God, the Most Exalted; and indeed God witnesseth all things.*<sup>17</sup>

And He identifies the Manifestation with the Primal Will as well.

*It is this Primal Will which appeareth resplendent in every Prophet and speaketh forth in every revealed Book.*<sup>18</sup>

While the theology of the Word and the Primal Will are an important part of the Faith, it is here mentioned mainly as basis for understanding the ontological questions about the being of this world and its fundament. The crucial difference of this understanding with the understanding of the Platonic or Neo-Platonic school of thought is the difference between the idea as something that can be thought about (by God and by man) and the word as a personal and dialogical statement from the "I" to the "Thou," establishing both in their spirituality, as Ebner would say. This difference will be closer examined below.

The second aspect to be considered here is the fact that the perception of reality is fundamentally dependent on the Word of God, which means that it depends on the word and not on reason or intellect, that is, the faculties of perception. The relation between the word and reason will have to be followed up in the section on dialogical and personal thinking.

Consequently, the Word of God is the cause of existence, and all that was created was created by the Word as stated in John 1:3: "*All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.*"

There is another important verse of Bahá'u'lláh about the Word of God which will be mentioned here. It describes the unifying effect of the Word in relation to the multiplicity of this world. This issue was presented by this author previously in his paper about the Tablet of Wisdom.<sup>19</sup>

In the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* Bahá'u'lláh stated:

*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)

Again, this paragraph will be described in its pertinent sections.

*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...*

Here it is pointed out how to approach the truth presented in the following verse. Bahá'u'lláh states the negative conditions, which would prevent the understanding of the following statement, and then mentions one positive condition for this understanding.

Living in the land of denial and having eyes contaminated by conflicting elements makes it impossible to understand the following statement. This land of denial is, in this writer's opinion, the materialistic and scientific misunderstanding of reality. The contamination of the eye is the inability to see the whole, as well as being confined to the area of the particular, which consequently results in a reductionistic understanding of the universe, and ignores all meaning and final causes of being. The land of denial is a description of living a life that denies all higher values, all spiritual realities, and consequently reduces all to its material aspect.

The best expression of this view and its consequences is presented by Teilhard de Chardin, who has clearly described the limitation of modern science (in an allusion to Darwin, who speaks about the evolution of men's bodily frame or bones<sup>20</sup>), when he stated:

We know the history of his [of man's] bones: but no ordered place has yet been found in nature for his reflective intelligence. In the midst of a cosmos in which primacy is still accorded to mechanism and change, thought – the redoubtable phenomenon which has revolutionized the earth and is commensurate with the world – still appears as an inexplicable anomaly.<sup>21</sup>

If, in the Darwinian worldview, man is an anomaly, then something must be wrong with this view, which is based on a cosmology of material mechanism and change. Consequently, Darwin's explanation of evolution, as dependent on random change and natural selection, must be fundamentally incorrect if it cannot explain the phenomenon of man. These are the scientific findings of the Teilhard de Chardin, who in his book "*The Phenomenon of Man*"<sup>22</sup> has explored the evolutionary understanding of the world and starts with the phenomenon of man, describing an evolutionary vision which cumulates in this phenomenon, rather than the vision that reduces the phenomenon of man to material causes and mechanical systems.

If we live in this materialistic and reductionistic understanding of reality, we cannot understand what is said next about this world, which is described in these three statements. Bahá'u'lláh states that we may perceive "*the worlds of unity and diversity, of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment.*"

In the logic of the traditional understanding these three statements are contradictory. Unity is the opposite of diversity, variation is the opposite of oneness, and limitation and detachment are not related. Only when we leave the land of materialistic denial and reductionistic understanding of this world, only when we raise our minds above the scientific abstraction<sup>23</sup> of reality, could we possibly understand these words. They place opposites not against each other, but perceive one through the other and combine them to express a better, more real and, what could be called, a more spiritual understanding of reality. This is made clear in the next section, where we are encouraged to "*wing our flight unto the highest*

*and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God."*

It is here made quite clear what allows us to understand the integration of the opposites in the previous statements; it is the inner meaning of the Word of God. This is described as the highest and innermost sanctuary of human understanding. Any lower level of understanding is not necessarily wrong, but it cannot see the true reality of this world. So we must ask here, what is this reality?

The Bahá'í principle of unity in diversity in all its different applications becomes a more adequate and functional principle of understanding this world. This will be further explained later in this paper. The same is true about variation and oneness, which is the old philosophical question about what is prior, that is, what is more important, the whole or the parts? This philosophical question has vast social applications, which reach from absolute dictatorship to anarchy as the guiding principle of human society.

We have seen during the last century the pernicious and devastating effects of any one-sided understanding of reality, where the whole is given priority over the parts or the part over the whole. In the first case the parts, the individuals, are not only neglected, but often disregarded and eliminated when perceived to be in the way of the false understanding of unity, of the whole. This happened in the monolithic and uniform social arrangement in Nazism and Communism. The opposite position, held in the world of individualism and gross capitalism, has equally brought devastation and reduction of human beings to means of production in this more particularistic understanding of social relations.

This one-sided understanding of society and of the relation between people can only be corrected through the *inner meaning of the Word of God* as Bahá'u'lláh stated.

The conclusion to be made here and later in this paper is the fact that the Word is the key of reality, and only in the proper application of the Word is the reality seen correctly, so that social and individual evil and wide spread devastation can be prevented.

## The New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh and the New World of the Book of Revelation

In this section the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh are discussed which speak about the New World Order and their relation to biblical statements in the book of Revelation about the new heaven and new earth to come with the return of Christ. Shoghi Effendi himself quotes this passage (Revelation 21:1-2) as a prediction for the coming New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh, and the real unity of mankind, when he states:

The writer of the Apocalypse, prefiguring the millennial glory which a redeemed, a jubilant humanity must witness, has similarly testified:

*“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I, John, saw the holy city, the New Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.”*  
(Revelation 21:1-2)<sup>24</sup>

It will be shown that these statements are accepted as signs for the return of Christ, which is fulfilled in the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

Bahá'u'lláh has interpreted this statement about the new heaven and earth in a new way, different from the common Christian understanding, by stating:

*On the contrary, by the term “earth” is meant the earth of understanding and knowledge, and by “heavens” the heavens of divine Revelation. Reflect thou, how, in one hand, He hath, by His mighty grasp, turned the earth of knowledge and understanding, previously unfolded, into a mere handful, and, on the other, spread out a new and highly exalted earth in the hearts of men, thus causing the freshest and loveliest blossoms, and the mightiest and loftiest trees to spring forth from the illumined bosom of man. (KI 47)*

Clearly the new heaven and earth, as well as the new Jerusalem coming down from heaven, is the new divine Revelation of the Manifestation, and the earth is the understanding and

acceptance of this new Revelation. This is an understanding of this word from the book of Revelation that is different from what Christians usually believe.

The common Christian understanding of this passage implies that at the return of Christ, the whole physical world will change into a heavenly world. The passing away of the first earth and the coming down of the new heaven and earth are understood materialistically and physically. Consequently, the return of Christ becomes the end of this world, which interestingly is contrary to the actual words of the bible, which speak of the end of an eon, not the end of the world. This difference is not noted in most translations where the Greek word: “the end of ‘αιωνος’ (aiwnos), eon,” is translated as end of the world, instead of the end of an eon, of a long period of time. (See Matthew 24:3 and 28:20)

At the conclusion of the gospel of Matthew, Christ did not say: “*I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen,*” as translated in the King James Bible (Matthew 28:19). The original Greek words of the Bible have Christ actually say: “*I am with you always; even unto the end of the eon. Amen.*” This fact demonstrates how easily a theological preconception can influence translation and understanding of the actual words of the Bible.

This understanding of the end of the world at the return of Christ is based on the theological assumption that there will be no other Revelation of God after the Christian Revelation. The same assumption is made in the Islamic theology. In the *Kitáb-i-Íqán* Bahá'u'lláh stated that this interpretation has more to do with the influence and power of the clergy, rather than with the words of Christ.<sup>25</sup>

Contrary to that, Bahá'u'lláh addresses the followers of Christianity and Islam, who believe that God's Revelation is closed with their respective Books, with the Bible or the Qur'an, in these words:

*Think ye, O My servants, that the Hand of My all-encompassing, My overshadowing, and transcendent sovereignty is chained up, that the flow of Mine ancient, My ceaseless, and all-pervasive mercy is*

*checked, or that the clouds of My sublime and unsurpassed favors have ceased to rain their gifts upon men? Can ye imagine that the wondrous works that have proclaimed My divine and resistless power are withdrawn, or that the potency of My will and purpose hath been deterred from directing the destinies of mankind?*

*Why have ye struggled to hinder the Manifestation of the Almighty and All-Glorious Being from shedding the radiance of His Revelation upon the earth? Were ye to be fair in your judgment, ye would readily recognize how the realities of all created things are inebriated with the joy of this new and wondrous Revelation, how all the atoms of the earth have been illuminated through the brightness of its glory. Vain and wretched is that which ye have imagined and still imagine! (GWB 323)*

This difference in the understanding of the return of Christ and the end of the world is crucial for the understanding of what the world is in reality, and creates a different ontological view of this world.

The traditional Christian theological view of the world places the reality of the world into the physical world, and then a spiritual or supernatural realm is superimposed on this physical world. Heaven and Earth are understood as those two components of the world; the physical earth of man is contrasted with the divine heaven, where God and all supernatural entities are housed, and where the saved humanity eventually will find its mansions.

Consequently, the origin of the world in the Word is understood symbolically, and Christ is identified with God, so that there is no need to explain the words of the gospel of John because the Logos, the Word, or Christ is part of God in the Trinity and is in heaven, so that the earth is the physical realm where man lives and where God (Christ) descended to save man in order that all saved ones can go to that very heaven. Christ will return and complete this process, and then there will no longer be a physical world and the history of this world will have been ended.

In this theological worldview, Bahá'u'lláh's declaration that He is the return of Christ makes absolutely no sense, because with His arrival, the world did not end and the physical explanation of the book of revelation does not make sense under these assumptions.

The only way of making sense of Bahá'u'lláh's statement is to base the existence of this world on the Word of God, as John 1 seems to do. If the Word is the basis of reality and not the physical, material world, the substance of beings, then the Word can change, renew and create a new world whenever it is spoken anew by God. And that is exactly what Bahá'u'lláh said in this prayer:

*I testify that no sooner had the First Word proceeded, through the potency of Thy will and purpose, out of His mouth, and the First Call gone forth from His lips than the whole creation was revolutionized, and all that are in the heavens and all that are on earth were stirred to the depths.*

*Through that Word the realities of all created things were shaken, were divided, separated, scattered, combined and reunited, disclosing, in both the contingent world and the heavenly kingdom, entities of a new creation, and revealing, in the unseen realms, the signs and tokens of Thy unity and oneness.*

*Through that Call Thou didst announce unto all Thy servants the advent of Thy most great Revelation and the appearance of Thy most perfect Cause. (PM 295)*

Again, note that in this statement the Word is not understood symbolically, it is “out of His mouth,” and “gone forth from His lips”: it is the actually spoken words, spoken to the world, spoken to humankind. This Word causes a revolution of the realities of all created things, of the whole creation; it shakes, divides, separates, scatters the whole reality of this world and finally combines and reunites it.

It needs to be emphasized that the reality of the whole creation includes both the contingent and the heavenly kingdom.

This process caused by that Word is explained as a new creation of the contingent and heavenly kingdom, and in these seen and unseen realms are revealed the signs and tokens of God's unity and oneness. God's unity and oneness are unseen, are spiritual, and are present in both worlds, in the contingent and in the heavenly world. One could formulate this vision meaning that God's Word creates the unity and oneness of these two kingdoms; it unites the contingent world with the spiritual word.

In other words, the spiritual world, caused by the Word is the uniting factor of this contingent, diverse and manifold world. And it has far reaching ontological implications, basically replacing the concept of substance with the concept of the Word, implying the spiritual aspect of the contingent world. This spiritual understanding is the new world of the book of Revelation. This description is actually the condition of the possibility to understand the new heaven and earth coming from heaven with the new Manifestation.

It is clear that the traditional interpretation of the end of the world with the returning Christ will prevent us from even conceiving of the possibility that Christ has already returned. This situation is similar to the position of the Jews at the time of Jesus, who expected the Messiah to liberate Israel and destroy the Romans. Since Christ did not do that, He could not be the true Messiah. In the same way, since Bahá'u'lláh has in no obvious way changed the physical world as we know it; He cannot be the returned Christ.

On the other hand, if the new heaven and new earth is not the physical renewal but a renewal of heaven and earth, of the contingent and heavenly kingdom in a spiritual way, than these questions remain: what does this say about heaven and earth; what does this say about the ontological question; and, what is the being of this universe? In order to be able to accept the words of Revelation, we have to search for a different understanding of the world – of earth and heaven, as the Bible calls it.

The gospel of John gives us the key. If all what was created was created by the Word of God, then the creation must be understood from the Word and not from its physical and

substantial reality. This is, in this writer's opinion, the revolutionary aspect of which Bahá'u'lláh speaks when talking about His New World Order.

It is quite clear that the coming of Bahá'u'lláh has in no obvious way changed the physical world where we live. The reality we face in our life, as well as the reality science is exploring, seems to be the same than before, and all changes in the spiritual understanding of this world and the meaning of life do not seem to amount to such a drastic statement, that is, the old world has passed away and the new world has come down from heaven with the Revelation of Bahá'u'lláh.

In other words, we must ask, is this statement of Revelation only a spiritual truth, or is it an ontological statement, explaining what created being is and what the fundament of our physical world is. It could be formulated as the question about what is material and what is spiritual and how these two concepts belong together.

In his article on Bahá'í Ontology, Ian Kluge<sup>26</sup> makes a point in his rejection of Phenomenalism, quoting 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement:

*Some think that the body is the substance and exists by itself, and that the spirit is accidental and depends upon the substance of the body, although, on the contrary, the rational soul is the substance, and the body depends upon it. If the accident – that is to say, the body – be destroyed, the substance, the spirit, remains.*<sup>27</sup>

What is stated here certainly does use the term substance in the traditional meaning, but it makes a drastic difference to the understanding of this term. In Idealism (of Hegel) the substance is the spirit ("der Geist"), in materialism (by Marx) the substance is matter. 'Abdu'l-Bahá seems to indicate that they are not separated, and if the term substance needs to be used, it better applies to the spirit rather than to matter, which He describes as being accidental to the spirit, the soul. It is this writer's opinion that this statement has to be based on the principle that the Word is the key to the understanding of this relationship between spirit and matter, body and soul, which is

clearly expressed in the Writings, as exposed above. In this context, the words about substance are not indicating that the substance is the final and ultimate element of being, which Kant has criticized, distinguishing between noumenon and phenomenon, and this distinction will be explained below in the section of Ebner, who places the emphasis on the Word, as the Writings seem to do as well.

This question, about what is the substance and what is the world, leads us into the next chapter about the Unity of the Material World and the Spiritual World, of the contingent kingdom and the heavenly kingdom.

### **Unity of the Material World and Spiritual World**

The thoughts presented in this chapter have been developed by this author in a paper called “Unity and Progressive Revelation, Comparing Bahá’i Principles with the Basic concepts of Teilhard de Chardin” at the Irfán Colloquium 2003 in Bosch, California<sup>28</sup> and will be presented here abbreviated and further developed. The reason why Teilhard was chosen in this comparison is similar to the reason for choosing Ferdinand Ebner for this paper, as explained in the Introduction to this paper (above). In this paper (Klebel, 2003) it was stated:

Teilhard de Chardin was chosen for this investigation as representing the progressive movements of today. While writing in the first halve of the last century Teilhard has a rather significant following today. It has been shown that he is the most quoted author in the writings of the “New Age” literature and does seem to attract many seeking souls of today.<sup>29</sup> In addition there is a rather significant influence of his thinking in today’s discussion of religion and of the future of the world, which makes him an author, whose importance might be rising, rather then diminishing. There are a number of books available about him and his books are available in new editions.

Two statements were compared about this issue, from Teilhard and ‘Abdu’l-Bahá.

Teilhard:

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.*<sup>30</sup>

'Abdu'l-Bahá presents the following understanding of the relationship between material things and the spiritual world, and He claims that even the smallest particles in the world of being are manifesting the grace and bounty of God, indicating the union of spirit, or grace of God and matter:

*From separation doth every kind of hurt and harm proceed, but the union of created things doth ever yield most laudable results. From the pairing of even the smallest particles in the world of being are the grace and bounty of God made manifest; and the higher the degree, the more momentous is the union.*<sup>31</sup>

The conclusion from this comparison is the fact that unity of spirit and matter was expressed in the Bahá'í Writings and is found as well in modern philosophy by Teilhard and others. As pointed out above, Bahá'u'lláh stated "*the worlds of unity and diversity, of variation and oneness, of limitation and detachment*" can only be understood when we elevate our thinking, "*and wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God.*"<sup>32</sup> This flight is necessary in order to understand the world as seen by Bahá'u'lláh, and this world is the New Heaven and New Earth of Revelation, or the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

The Unity of humanity and of all nations is one of the familiar principles of the Bahá'í Faith. This author attempts to show how this unity is not only a political and social phenomenon, but an ontological principle that pervades the Bahá'í Revelation, even though it is mainly expressed in the principle of the Unity of Mankind. This development is, in this

writer's opinion, already clearly stated in the Writings, but usually not noticed theoretically.

Ferdinand Ebner has expressed this idea of the unity of mankind as an ontological principle, which follows from the "I" – "Thou" relationship between God and man, when he stated:

*In this world we people live separately from each other as millions of 'I-s' – what a desperate word formulation – only connected through love. Yet, before God we are all – absolutely all: criminal and saint, good and bad, mentally healthy and mentally ill – one unique 'I' towards the unique 'Thou.' Because the 'I' and the 'Thou' does not know 'plurality.'*

This unity of humankind is based on the ontological unity of the creation; it seems to be the opposite of the statement of Jesus:

*Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows. (Luke 12:6-7)*

Again, this looks like a contradiction that before God humankind is a unity; nevertheless, all the hairs of our heads are numbered by God. Nevertheless, it just gives us an understanding what unity in diversity really is, the more unity, the more the diversity and specialty of the individual is possible. This understanding of unity in diversity is only possible when we "*wing our flight unto the highest and innermost sanctuary of the inner meaning of the Word of God,*" as Bahá'u'lláh stated.<sup>33</sup>

It has to be noted that this understanding of the ontological spiritual unity of reality was communicated basically to all Bahá'ís who met Bahá'u'lláh and believed in Him. Their readiness to martyrdom can hardly be explained any other way. In their love for Bahá'u'lláh they knew and were certain that the spiritual world of Unity with God is real and present, and the material life is only a temporary situation that can easily be sacrificed for this heavenly value, as Bahá'u'lláh stated in a prayer:

*Thou art He Who, through a word of Thy mouth, hath so enravished the hearts of Thy chosen ones that they have, in their love for Thee, detached themselves from all except Thyself, and laid down their lives and sacrificed their souls in Thy path, and borne, for Thy sake, what none of Thy creatures hath borne.*<sup>34</sup>

The Báb before Him had said something similar about those who exalt the Word and Unity of God:

*How numerous the souls raised to life who were exposed to dire humiliation in Thy Path for exalting Thy Word and for glorifying Thy divine Unity! How profuse the blood that hath been shed for the sake of Thy Faith to vindicate the authenticity of Thy divine Mission and to celebrate Thy praise!*<sup>35</sup>

At this point it is necessary to further explain how this ontological principle needs to be understood. These are the conclusions of this section about the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, made in the first chapter of this paper:

1. The Word of God is the actually spoken Word to the Manifestation and to mankind.
2. The Word of God is the Manifestation.
3. All that exists, all that is created, is created by this Word
4. Therefore all that exists is a creation of God and can be perceived only on that basis, the Word is the vehicle of these processes, of the existence of the world and the vehicle of the possibility to understand and perceive the world in its condition as creation.
5. Consequently, all other understanding and scientific inquiry is secondary to this understanding of the Word of God.

The second chapter explained that the New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh is the direct explanation of the Words of Revelation, as stated by Shoghi Effendi.

6. The New World Order of Bahá'u'lláh is a new understanding of this world of being and is based on

Bahá'u'lláh as the return of Christ and His statement of the fundamental renewal of the whole world.

7. This New World Order is created through the Word of God, coming out of the mouth and from the lips of the Manifestation, dissolving and renewing the ontological existence of this world.

In the last chapter again the relationship of the world of contingency and the world of unity was explained, and the philosophy of Teilhard de Chardin was used to put these thoughts into modern terms. Therefore we can conclude that

8. The Unity of Humanity is based on the understanding of the fundamental unity of matter and spirit as a new ontological principle, which is based on the Word of God as expressed in the Bahá'í Writings, and before in the Prolog of the Gospel of John.

## “Teachings and Spirit of the Cause” in Today’s Thinking

In the following sections we pursue the words written on behalf of the beloved Guardian stating that:

*the world has developed and been enlightened enough, through the unseen Powers of the Almighty; to be led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause.*<sup>36</sup>

What is understood here by “world”? We have to interpret this statement in the context of another description of the world today:

*Such simultaneous processes of rise and of fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos, with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other, are but aspects of a greater Plan, one and indivisible, whose Source is God, whose author is Bahá'u'lláh, the theater of whose operations is the entire planet, and whose ultimate objectives are the unity of the human race and the peace of all mankind.*<sup>37</sup>

These processes, “authored” by Bahá'u'lláh, are presently overshadowing the world. There are forces, views and thoughts

that lead into fall, disintegration and chaos of the old order, simultaneously intermingled with the opposite forces of integration, rise and order, all leading to the unity of mankind and the new World Order of Bahá'u'lláh.

We must conclude, therefore, that it is required for us to distinguish between these opposite forces and to judge today's thoughts and worldviews on this line of demarcation. The Writings of the Prophet are the guidelines we need to use. Any judgment must follow the statement of Bahá'u'lláh in the Tablet of Wisdom quoted above about the true philosopher: that he "*never deny God,*" that he "*promote the best interests of humanity,*" and that he is "*loved*" and "*aided*" by Bahá'u'lláh.<sup>38</sup> It is understood that such a judgment, unless clearly supported by the Writings, is personal, individual and tentative. In no way is it authoritative, and therefore it is open to consultative dialogue and revision, yet we are encouraged by the Guardian not overlook this fact.

Several different developments are considered here in this light. Being a professional psychologist, I start with psychological writers, presenting this new understanding, and after that the philosophical thinkers of it will be discussed. The selection is personal and limited, yet it is hoped that in the future others can be added and the topic can be expanded.

First the psychological understanding of human reality by D. W. Winnicott<sup>39</sup> is selected in his concept of play and culture, and the analysis of the therapeutic situation in Robert Lang's<sup>40</sup> thoughts about the Bipersonal Field. Both think in the psychoanalytic tradition but are expanding Freud's thoughts into the area of culture and dialogue. What is here called culture as a psychological concept opens up the discussion into the area of religion and spirituality.<sup>41</sup> We conclude this section with some new findings of the new science of neurocardiology, indicating the role of the heart in this process.

Another important thought to be considered here is that modern physics, especially quantum mechanics, does provide a philosophical basis of a new understanding of reality, which is more congenial to the Bahá'í Writings than the Newtonian worldview of a mechanical system in space and time.

The next step in this process of finding the forces of integration, rise and order in today's psychological and philosophical thinking is to turn to those philosophers who have developed the personal-dialogical thinking. We will concentrate our investigation on Ferdinand Ebner as the representative of this thinking that comes closest to the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh, as will be shown below.

It needs to be noted that this list is neither comprehensive nor is it optimal, due to the fact that it is personally developed by this writer, and needs to stand the test of time and critical evaluation. Another issue is the fact that there needs to be more time to be able to overlook the present development of the world's thinking and to make a more definite judgment. On the other hand it appears that this sorting out of modern thinkers has to start and is most valuable in the process of discriminating and understanding the above mentioned process of integration and disintegration, of order and chaos in today's world, which must be applied, not only to politics and economics, but also to philosophy and thinking.

## **New Findings in Psychology and Neurocardiology**

### *Psychology*

This section will be relatively short and more descriptive than explorative. Winnicott<sup>42</sup> describes the origin of the cultural space in the developing child. He calls this space "the place where we live," indicating the ontological and personal aspect of it. He describes that this space is initiated in the child, sitting on the lap of her mother, looking at her, touching her, and eventually listening and talking to her, and in this process recognizing the otherness of mother, and eventually the selfness of herself.

This rather enchanting developmental picture indicates that culture and all other experiences of the "inner" space "where we live" are originated and developed in the dialogue between mother (or the mothering one) and the child, and that the establishment of the cultural space is based on this interaction, on this in-between, as Winnicott calls it. This is the place where the growing child finally is able to call herself "I" and

speak to the “You” (or “Thou” as used forthwith), in the other, recognizing herself in the other. This experience originates the development of the conscious self and the cultural realm of this consciousness, which in the Bahá’í Writings is called the inner, the hidden or the unseen realm of reality, which can be called the spiritual realm as well.

The question of where culture comes from originally is not addressed by Winnicott but can be answered in many ways. Today in science the answer is often given in the Neo-Darwinian sense, that culture developed through accidental mutation and selection of the fittest in the struggle of survival.

This is a gratuitous assumption, which certainly cannot and has not been proven by science.<sup>43</sup> This assumption is made by all who refuse to accept anything higher than the material, who do not see the unity and wholeness of this world, and who have to find an explanation for things not material, therefore relying on the understanding as presented in the philosophy of reductionism, i.e., reducing the higher to the lower, and explaining the development of the higher through an accidental aggregation of the lower.

Consequently in this materialistic view, the higher concepts, such as culture, have no independent existence, are really “not real,” and therefore are often compared to fairytales like Santa Claus. Winnicott sees the whole human being and asks how does it develop and brings the example of a tradition of culture from one generation to the next. The question of the origin of culture does not come into his view.

The Bahá’í Writings speak of the new, spiritual civilization which is brought about by every Manifestation. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His speeches in Europe mentioned the fact that the Christian Civilization was originated by Christ, and that even the material civilization is dependent on the Prophets, following a statement of Bahá’u’lláh that the “*The essence and the fundamentals of philosophy have emanated from the Prophets.*”<sup>44</sup> So ‘Abdu’l-Bahá stated:

*The philosophers have founded material civilization.  
The Prophets have founded divine civilization. Christ  
was the Founder of heavenly civilization. Mankind*

*receives the bounties of material civilization as well as divine civilization from the heavenly Prophets.*<sup>45</sup>

He affirms the same for the Jewish civilization and the civilizations of the East, when He stated:

*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.*<sup>46</sup>

*In former days, in the time of the Buddha and Zoroaster, civilization in Asia and in the East was very much higher than in the West and ideas and thoughts of the Eastern peoples were much in advance of, and nearer to the thoughts of God than those of the West.*<sup>47</sup>

Concluding this train of thought, it can be stated that the Bahá'í Writings clearly attribute the origin and the renewal of all human civilization (and culture, we might add) to the Founders of the world religions, and not to any accidental change that allowed better adjustment in the struggle of survival. In the present debate between the “intelligent design” and the so-called “scientific” understanding of the world, this distinction would be helpful.

Back to psychology. Robert Langs<sup>48</sup> has developed the communicative approach in psychoanalysis. He starts with an analysis of the dialogue between therapist and client, and develops some remarkable insights into this process that have never been studied as closely and systematically before. Here only some of his findings will be commented about. One is the importance of what he calls the Bipersonal Field, a concept he developed. The in-between space between the therapist and the client is not unique; it is only more specific and can be studied easier than the space or field in which all serious dialogues occur.

The interesting point to be made here is the fact that in this dialogue, even if factual issues are discussed, the deeper meaning is always personal, or as Langs says it, there is always an adaptive context involved, and this context relates directly to the other in this dialogue. What does that mean in the frame of this paper? What Langs has shown so convincingly and elaborated so thoroughly is the fact that all communication is

primarily personal, and only secondarily conferring information about other things.<sup>49</sup> It is the word that creates this ability of communicating between the “I” and the “Thou” between the patient and the therapist in this case. Philosophically, it appears to be legitimate to expand this concept of the Bipersonal Field to all meaningful communication, but only a few consequences of this expansion will be followed up here.

A. Bonac has developed a study on child development following Langs’ communicative approach, and he established, among others, an interesting principal theorem, stating that “The capacity to unconsciously perceive interactions with others in a veridical manner is an inborn capacity of the human mind”<sup>50</sup> He applied the principles of the communicative approach to the study of children and found that to unconsciously perceive interactions with others in a veridical manner is true even for newborn children in their interactions with their mother. There is, therefore, an inborn ability to relate, to truly, even if unconsciously, relate to the other. This is the psychological pre-condition not only of therapy, but also of all human relationships. It appears that this inborn capacity to relate is the beginning of what we call the inner, or the spiritual aspect of life.

Another issue mentioned by Langs is his instruction to the therapist to start the therapeutic session without desire, memory and understanding.<sup>51</sup> This alone guarantees that the patient will be heard, and this will enable true communication, excluding all counter-transferences and all attempts by the therapists to place his understanding into the patient.

It is interesting to note that these three issues are mentioned similarly by Bahá’u’lláh among the preconditions for a true seeker and for listening to His Words.

*O My brother! When a true seeker determineth to take the step of search in the path leading unto the knowledge of the Ancient of Days, he must, before all else, cleanse his heart, which is the seat of the revelation of the inner mysteries of God, from the obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, and the allusions of the embodiments of satanic fancy.*

Here the heart has to be cleansed from all obscuring dust of all acquired knowledge, which is equally important if we want to understand our fellow man, as it is an absolute requirement to hear the message of the Prophet. Further it is said:

*He must so cleanse his heart that no remnant of either love or hate may linger therein, lest that love blindly incline him to error, or that hate repel him away from the truth.*<sup>52</sup>

He must therefore, refrain from all desire, from love and hate, in order to be able to see the truth. This similarity of approach is probably not a coincidence, and it seems to be inherent in the process of listening to real communications.

This interesting parallel of thought leads us directly to the next chapter on Ferdinand Ebner, in whose philosophy the meaningfully spoken word between the "I" and the "Thou," where the communication through the word plays such an important role. True, Ebner speaks from a different tradition than Langs, but he was not unfamiliar with Freud, whose thinking can be regarded as the bridge between these two thinkers.

Another difference is that neither Winnicott nor Langs is interested in the religious or spiritual aspect of the therapeutic communication, while Ebner's writings are concentrated on these issues. And Langs speaks in the American tradition of psychoanalysis, while Ebner comes from the thinking of Kierkegaard and the other dialogical thinkers.<sup>53</sup>

### *Neurocardiology*

Besides the psychological conditions of true communication there are other new aspects to be considered. This is the new field of neurocardiology. The findings of this discipline culminate in the fact that the heart has not only what can be called a brain, that 60% of the heart are nerves, but additionally the heart has memory, predilections and does make decisions. This not-well-explored field gives us, at least speculatively, the possibility to place "the capacity to unconsciously perceive interactions with others in a veridical manner" as being "an

inborn capacity” not in “the human mind,” but more likely in the human heart.

In order to give this speculation more substance it might be considered that the brain of the newborn child is in a very primitive state and needs several years to develop. Contrary to the brain, the heart starts functioning early during the fetal life and is fully developed with the first cry of the baby when replacing the maternal heart. It is not unlikely that the child’s heart develops under the influence of the mother’s heart. It may be likened to a heart transplant, where the heart functions satisfactorily long before neural connections to the brain can be established.

The function of the heart to communicate emotional states to other people close by has been proven scientifically as well, and seems to open up new horizons of unity and communication.<sup>54</sup>

### **New Findings in Physics: Quantum Mechanics and God**

Here a note about quantum mechanics seems to be appropriate. Recent developments in this branch of physics have led to astonishing results. Even a regular textbook on Quantum Mechanics, like the one written by Alastair I.M. Rae for example, ends in a chapter which indicates that Quantum Mechanics raises the question of ontology, the question: ‘what is reality.’ This book leaves the answer open and concludes “that there are still some real problems in the grey area where physics and philosophy meet.”<sup>55</sup> There are several theories about the ontological meanings of physics as it evolved. They all try to find a new philosophical basis for the findings of this new research, which has certainly put to rest the old Newtonian, mechanistic and materialistic worldview that was prevalent in science before.

Other physicists are more courageous and try to find conclusions that include not only physics but also human conscience. The most elaborate description of this point of view is the book by Evan Harris Walker, *The physics of consciousness, Quantum Minds and the Meaning of Life*.<sup>56</sup> In this book the question of God is raised, after a thorough description of Quantum Mechanics and an ongoing

discussion about the philosophical and systematical implication of the different theories of this new science. So he says: “We have examined the world, the physics of particles, the nature of mind and will, and the things that tie it all together.”<sup>57</sup> He clearly distances himself from any materialistic worldview of the old physic when he says: “But it has only been with the advent of quantum theory that we have discovered proof that we exist as something more than pieces of matter.”<sup>58</sup>

He states that he started out as a “most ardent student of objective science,” and that he was led to this new understanding in his pursuit of scientific search: “The tools of science permit us to question, test, and dispute atheistic doctrines posing as scientific principle.”<sup>59</sup> And he speaks of the consequences to religion of this scientific theory. Consequently, he speaks of the unity of all religions in an interesting development of his physical theory of Quantum Mechanics when he states:

We need a better way to seek out truth, to assimilate the jewels of all our religious teaching into one universal faith founded in knowledge that we can verify as we do the facts of science. I hope that the discoveries recorded in this book are the beginning of such a mission. No one who believes in the truth of any of the world’s great religions should fear losing any essential part of that faith by testing its truth against what we can learn with this new science.<sup>60</sup>

This statement, which sounds almost as a description of the Bahá’í principles of progressive revelation and independent investigation of truth, and of one universal faith, from a physicist? When talking about the fabric of reality he concludes: “This is the Omnipresence, the Omniscience, the Omnipotence of Abraham’s God, at once personal and supreme.”<sup>61</sup> He concludes his study of Quantum Mechanics and summarizes his study of physics with the words: “We have seen that the universe springs from every thought of God and matter from the very existence of mind. We have looked to find reality. We have seen beyond the open door.”<sup>62</sup> Again, this can be understood as a proof of the Bahá’í principle of the harmony between science and religion.

From these findings we can at least conclude, that recent scientific findings are not necessarily materialistic and atheistic. They certainly do open the philosophical basis of religion and its entire moral, ethical system of values. This is a far cry from what was thought during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be seen as a progress of human development that has not yet reached the majority of humanity, but is changing the world in which we live. Concluding this section on physics, we again will quote from the book of Walker:

We have searched back to the beginning of time and to the origin of the universe to find the first thought, the first word of God springing into existence as consciousness and physical matter.<sup>63</sup>

Nothing more needs to be said in support of the topic of this paper, following the words of Bahá'u'lláh describing God's *Word as the Master key of the whole world*.

Concluding this section, it can be stated that some recent psychological, neurological and physical developments have lead us into a better understanding of what the in-between, or the Bipersonal Field is, and how it is concentrated in the heart. Culture and communication is placed in the in-between in which the healing process of therapy is applied. These findings prepare us to see the "place where we live" in the communicative or Bipersonal Field, which findings will be expanded by Ebner, into the Word that was "in the beginning" and that constitutes the essence of man, his spirituality, as well as the real nature of the world and its physical and conscious aspects. From there is only a small step to conclude to the passage in Bahá'u'lláh's Writings that "*the Word is the master key for the whole world,*" or as Ferdinand Ebner says, that

...in the word is the key to men's spiritual life, the key not only to 'objective knowledge' but also and foremost to the "subjective" (and one could say existential) opening of his spiritual life.<sup>64</sup>

## Ferdinand Ebner, The “I – Thou” relationship and Spirituality

In this section the dialogical thinking of Ferdinand Ebner<sup>65</sup> and others will be briefly summarized, especially as it relates to the Bahá'í Revelation about the Word, *the master key for the whole world*, as commented in the first section of this paper. Obviously, to present here a comprehensive description of Ferdinand Ebner's thoughts is impossible. As much as possible in this paper, we are attempting to let Ebner speak in his own words to make the reader familiar with him. Hence the number of quotes.

In the introduction, Ferdinand Ebner's (1882-1931) basic thoughts were quoted, and he concludes that these thoughts are not original to him because they have been stated before in the Gospel, John 1:1-2.

It became clear to me that man is through the word, what he is, i.e. 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.'<sup>66</sup>

While these words and Ebner's philosophy of the word, or dialogue, are directed towards this statement of the Bible, basically ending in theology, he based his philosophy on the principle of the word, the spoken word and its meaning. This genuine philosophical origin of his thinking was stated in his basic thoughts, which will be presented here:<sup>67</sup>

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.

Without knowing of the Bahá’í Revelation, Ferdinand Ebner has developed an understanding of spirituality based on the spoken word that is genuinely related to the Bahá’í Writings, as will be shown here. And, he has connected it definitely with the statement of the Scripture in the Prologue of the Gospel of John.

It should be noted here that Ebner clearly developed his dialogical thinking from an analysis of the spoken word and of the relationship between the “I” and the “Thou.” Only after he also recognized that this relationship is expressed in the Scripture did he referred to the Gospel. This is important to note. Ebner did not start with the Scripture, he did not develop a theological thesis; to the contrary, he started from a philosophical basis, from the actually spoken word.

This is expressed in the above quoted basic thought of Ebner, where he stated that in contemplating the relationship between the “I” and the “Thou” it is evident that this relationship creates the spiritual existence of man through the word. This is the cultural realm, or the place where we live, indicated by Winnicott as mentioned above, and the Bipersonal Field as Langs has explored in every true verbal interaction, like therapy.

So said Ebner:

That is the essence of language – of the word – in its spirituality, that it is something that happens between the “I” and the “Thou,” between the first and the second person, as it is said in the grammatical analysis, it is, therefore, something that presupposes the

relationship between the “I” and the “Thou” but also creates this relationship.<sup>68</sup>

The word, while constituting the “I” and the “Thou,” creates the spirituality between them or, to speak with Winnicott, creates the place where we live. Ebner expresses the fact that the word creates spirituality, when he said:

The “word” makes life (in the human person) to spirit — spirit makes the word come alive. The secret of the word is the secret of spirit.<sup>69</sup>

In different ways Ebner has expressed his thoughts that the word opens man to the other, and in that process man becomes himself a spiritual being, as expressed in the following:

It became clear to me what the meaning of the fact is that man is a speaking being. That, in the middle of a voiceless world he is the only being that ‘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. The key not only to “objective knowledge” but foremost the key to a “subjective” (one could say existential) opening of his spiritual life. And it became clear to me that the Word is from God.

Because, as God created man through the Word by speaking to him: I AM and through me you are. Therefore, all knowledge of God is given to him through the Word. This word is the basis of man’s consciousness and enlightens it into “self-consciousness.”<sup>70</sup>

The road from the relationship between the “I” and the “Thou” to the Divine Word follows logically. Since the “I” and the “Thou” is created in their spirituality through the word, and since this spirituality is essential to man, the question arises: wherefrom does it come? Neither I nor you have it originally to give it to the other, since we are constituted by the word in our spirituality. Therefore, the origin of the word and of spirituality must come from elsewhere. This was clear even in Winnicott’s description of “the place where we live,” but he did not go further in his thinking about the relationship of the

child and the mother; he only introduced the common culture of mankind as the source and place where we live.

Ebner asks further and comes to a remarkable conclusion that the origin of the word is the Word of God. He said:

The “Word” is born from Spirit. Therefore, this is the proper origin of language, that God’s Spirit speaks to man – and so man becomes conscious of his “I” – and so man speaks to God – finding the true “Thou” to his “I.”<sup>71</sup>

Following this brief introduction into the thinking of Ferdinand Ebner about the human and the spirit, another crucial distinction must be mentioned. Ebner clearly distinguishes between the personal and the substantial understanding when he states:

Nothing else can be expressed in the sentences “I am” and “Thou (you) are” without contradiction, than the difference between the “personal” being and the spiritual realities – and the being in the sense of “substantial” existence, which expression cannot find any other grammatical form than the one in the “third person.” Personality and Substance – these are the two forms of understanding human beings and reality, between those two there can be no mediation.<sup>72</sup>

Ferdinand Ebner makes an important distinction between the personal and dialogical existence on the one hand – which is expressed in the “I” and the “Thou” relationship and in the statements of the first and second grammatical person – and the substantial existence, on the other – which is expressed in the third grammatical expression, such as “it is.” And, he explores this difference in its ultimate meaning when he said:

The being for itself of the “I” in his solitude is no original fact of the spiritual life of man ... but the result of his separation from the “Thou.” This separation is nothing else than the apostasy from God; ... the first abuse and perverted use of the ‘freedom’ of the ‘personality’ of existing, which was placed into man by God.<sup>73</sup>

This concept of the “I-solitude,” i.e., the solitude of the “I” (Icheinsamkeit) is crucial for Ebner, and it is the consequence of modern man’s “substantial” thinking. Ebner clearly accepts the fact that science must use substantial thinking for its endeavor; he only states that this thinking is different from personal and dialogical thinking, which alone can open the way to the other and to God and God’s Word. In another statement he indicates the historical source of this confusion.

That cave in Plato’s famous Example is the prison of the “I,” which is confined in itself and does not find the “Thou.”

At the Chinese Wall of our “I” the imaginations of the proper Reality of the Spiritual are floating by – as non existing shadows.<sup>74</sup>

Here he identifies this I-solitude with Plato’s cave and the shadow of the “ideas” on the cave wall and indicates that this substantial thinking is like a Chinese Wall keeping the proper Reality of the Spirit out of our thinking, delegating it to the area of shadows and fantasy, just like some materialists refer today to all spiritual talk as talk about Santa Claus.

Ebner was aware of the necessity of science to talk in the third person about things that are, and of the danger of making an ontological statement of this methodological necessity, when he explained that the word is in diametric opposition of a scientific understanding of the external world to the personal and internal world of man:

The “I” solitude of all scientific-mathematical thinking results in the fact that the word is in diametrical opposition to mathematical formulas. As is well-known, the goal of all natural science and all knowledge about the external world is to become mathematics....

The knowledge about the ‘happenings of the inner world’ must become word, must prove itself in the word and it is impossible to express it in a mathematical formula....

Substance, consequently thought to the end, is the absolute “I-less” reality, which subjective expression

would be the madness of the final mathematical theory.<sup>75</sup>

In order to demonstrate how new and original this kind of thinking is, some statements of Descartes are quoted here, which will indicate the traditional way of thinking in Western Philosophy. Descartes has stated the following principles of his thinking, which then became the basis of all scientific development.

My intention did never go farther than to attempt reforming my own thoughts and building a foundation that is totally my own.

The thinking I (cogito) is an immaterial substance which has nothing corporeal.<sup>76</sup>

These statements can be seen as a clear way of substantial thinking in the sense of Ebner, excluding any relation of the "I" to something spiritual outside of itself, any relation to the human or Divine "Thou," which relation constitutes the spirituality of man according to Ebner. From the point of view of developmental psychology, Descartes misses the crucial question, how did he learn to think, how does this cogito start in the human being? The fundament that Descartes laid for all future philosophy is therefore the basis of modern substantial and materialistic thinking; does not Descartes himself call his thinking, (cogito) an immaterial substance, which could best be described as spiritual materialism?<sup>77</sup>

The distinction between substantial thinking and dialogical thinking is crucial, when it comes to the knowledge of God. God cannot be known, so declares Ebner, in the way of substantial thinking, in the third person, as someone who is, who can be described and objectively known. The only way to know God is to answer Him, to respond to Him, to speak and pray to Him.

We have to clearly distinguish the way of knowing, of understanding. What is personal cannot be known substantially. Furthermore, it is essential to this understanding that the personal knowing is primary; it constitutes man in his spirituality through the word spoken between persons. This idea is expressed in the following statement of Ebner.

What exists as personality, can never and in no way be really understood as existing in the sense of a substance.

If we make the concept of substance the only basis of our understanding of reality, then the access to understand what exists in the sense of personality, is totally closed.

Towards the existence of a personality there can be no other relation than a “personal” relation, in the final analysis there can be no other relation than the relation from the “I” to the “Thou.”

To a substance we can in no way have a personal relation — and consequently in his relation to a substance the “I” disappears.<sup>78</sup>

The personality is expressed through the word, which is spoken from the “I” to the “Thou.” This dialogue creates personality, creates a person with an inner being, which can only be understood in dialogue. In other words, if you speak to me you can open your inner being to me, and I can know you and speak back to you. What is crucial in this relationship is the fact that this dialogue is neither controlled by me, as it is between you and me, and it is not controlled by you either, as you need me to speak. And in this dialogue the inner reality of you and me is established, which is the reality of the person, the reality of the spirit.

Western traditional thinking, as with Descartes, is based on the ability to totally control one’s own thoughts, but these thoughts are only, in the words of Ebner, a dream of the spirit, because they do not become real in the sense of one person really establishing herself to the other person through the word. This way of thinking is the thinking of the I-solitude, which is an attempt to take the power in one’s own hand, leaving out the other, the “Thou.” Ebner calls this thinking the “apostasy from God” and the origin of all sin. Consequently this way of thinking about God leads to the declamation of the death of God by Nietzsche.

When Ebner says, “If we make the concept of substance the only basis of our understanding, then the access to understand

what exists in the sense of personality, is totally closed,” he indicates the situation of modern materialistic and atheistic science, which not only has no access, but furthermore denies any possibility of access to the spiritual realm, to what makes man a human being, i.e., the spirituality that is in the word from the “I” and the “Thou.”

Ferdinand Ebner’s new understanding of spirituality, which has the inner being of the person established through the word spoken from the “I” to the “Thou,” seems to correspond with the Bahá’í concept of the inner, the hidden or the unseen aspect of the human personality. In the Bahá’í Writings these concepts are based on the Qur’án where it is said about God: “*He is the first and the last, the Seen and the Hidden.*” In the *Seven Valleys* Bahá’u’lláh made the following statement which became the center of an article of this writer:<sup>79</sup>

*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...”* (Qur’án 57:3)<sup>80</sup>

Note that in this passage the human condition is described as *true of thyself* and those four states are *conferred upon thee* in order to comprehend the four divine states as expressed in the Qur’án. This understanding of the human condition by Bahá’u’lláh has been expressed later by Ebner, who similarly made the word the key to spirituality, which is the hidden or inner state of man.

Another thought comes to mind here. The understanding of the two ways of being and of perceiving the spirituality of the world, presented by Ebner as the substantial and the personal way of knowing, explains an apparent contradiction in the Bahá’í Writings. In many places the following statement is affirmed in the Writings:

*God in His Essence and in His own Self hath ever been unseen, inaccessible, and unknowable.*<sup>81</sup>

And yet we are not only encouraged, but it is also made a central obligation, for all human persons to know God and to worship Him. So it is stated in the Short Obligatory Prayer:

*I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee.*<sup>82</sup>

And in another place it is said that knowing God is the purpose of the creation of man:

*The purpose of God in creating man hath been, and will ever be, to enable him to know his Creator and to attain His Presence.*<sup>83</sup>

The fact that we cannot know and we have to know can only be explained if there are different ways of knowing. The distinction Ebner makes between the substantial knowing, which combines an understanding of the essence as well as of the existence of something, and the personal knowing, which is the knowing mediated by the word from the "I" to the "Thou," helps to explain these contradictory statements about the knowing of God.

And it is clear that we do not know God in the way we know things in this world. We know God, Who speaks to us and Who allows us to respond in prayer. Consequently, all metaphysical speculation about the difference of being as applied to God and to creation is an illusive problem, because we cannot know God as we know things. Consequently, our attribute of existence and being to things can in no way be attributed to God. In this sense God is not existent, or as the Buddhist say, He is nothing, not-a-thing. God can be mentioned as existing only in an emphatic way, as Bahá'í prayers say, "He is God," which again is personal and emphatic speech, not a factual statement.

The conclusion of modern philosophy, that God does not exist, is therefore, from this perspective, not totally wrong. A God we could know does not exist in the Bahá'í Writings either, as He is unknowable in this sense. God Who speaks to me and you, God to Whom we can speak in prayer, does exist, and He is present in every word that is spoken from the "I" to the "Thou." He is remembered and He is the remembrance in every truly human word spoken to the other.

That's why almost all Bahá'í prayers start with praise and are spoken directly to God, Who is addressed with "Thou." Ebner has expressed this situation in the following words.

Properly man cannot speak of God in the third person.

The one who prays does not speak about God, but to God.

As long as humans speak "to God," they still are seeking "God."

In speaking the "Word" the "I" is always on the way to "his Thou" –

Man only has found "God," whenever "God" speaks to him

Then man speaks not any more to God, but his "I," his self, becomes speechless and dissolves in its relationship to the eternal Thou, to God.<sup>84</sup>

Ebner explains why this is so when he wrote:

In the word man has his knowledge of God: that means in the "Thou-ness" (Duhaftigkeit) of his consciousness, which makes "I-ness" (Ichhaftigkeit) possible – because the "I" exists only in the relation to the Thou" – ... especially because the relation to God is something fundamental and essential to man – which relation connects man personally with God.

Nothing else than the first and last meaning of the sentence "Thou art" in the "inwardness" of this statement, which is the fundament of all Internality and Inwardness of the human existence – all inwardness is the inner meaning of the word – in no other way can man have knowledge of God.<sup>85</sup>

The Báb has expressed this situation, of not knowing and knowing God, when He wrote:

*I have known Thee by Thy making known unto me that Thou art unknowable to anyone save Thyself.*<sup>86</sup>

Interestingly enough, a very similar statement was made by another dialogical thinker, Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929), whom we have not mentioned in this paper, but who has many thoughts similar to Ebner.

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.<sup>87</sup>

In this section, the work of Ferdinand Ebner was briefly presented, and some striking similarities between these thoughts and the Bahá'í Writings were pointed out. It is not possible to further explore this fact, because it would go beyond the topic of this paper. On the other hand, after having seen the emphasis the Bahá'í Writings give the word of man and the Word of God, it should have become clear why this writer has made the personal assumption that the statement written on behalf of the Guardian can be applied to thinkers like Ferdinand Ebner, who seems to have been led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause, as was demonstrated above. There are thinkers and believers, even in other religions, to whom these words on behalf of the Guardian can be applied.

The world has developed and been enlightened enough through the unseen Powers of the Almighty, to be led to the teachings and spirit of the Cause.<sup>88</sup>

And when this statement is continued:

...it will be our shameful task to go round proclaiming such principles as we were taught so many years before and none of which we had lived up to.<sup>89</sup>

Must we not conclude that not seeing the spirit of the Cause in these other writers and philosophers, would be a shameful omission of our understanding of the principles of the Bahá'í Revelation? In other words, it is quite possible that non-Bahá'ís have better understood the Writings and principles of Bahá'u'lláh, even though they did not hear of Him, through the *unseen Powers of the Almighty*, as the Guardian said. Must this thought not fill us with the fear of God, and make us more dedicated to study the Writings and teach the Cause?

Concluding, we can state for this section that the following has been found:

1. There are concepts in modern psychology that can assist in the understanding of the ontological question about spirituality.
2. The central position of the heart, as explored in the new science of neurocardiology in regards to positive emotion, to remembrance and decision making, allows us to take the Bahá'í statements about the centrality of the heart more seriously and understand them better.
3. Modern physics, especially quantum mechanics, allows us to better understand the possibility of how the word and the spirit can be the primary aspect of this world.
4. Ferdinand Ebner developed a philosophy of dialogical and personal thinking that fits, in most parts, into the Bahá'í Revelation.
5. The differentiation of Ebner between substantial and personal-dialogical knowing can assist in better understanding the question of Bahá'í Revelation about the knowing or not knowing of God.
6. The connection between the word and the understanding of the spiritual is facilitated, if we use Ebner's understanding of what constitutes man as a spiritual being, and it is related to the Biblical understanding of the "*Word in the Beginning*" and the Bahá'í Revelation about the Word as *Master key*.

### **Ontology of the Person and the Word**

In this section the ontological question will be raised, what is being, what is existence. The expression "is" – "something is" or "is not" – is the widest category possible in metaphysics. Consequently, it is assumed that all that exists can be subsumed under this concept. The question of the existence, the being of God, will not be investigated here, even though the difference between created being, therefore dependent being, and the being of God as self-subsistent, has moved theology and philosophical debate since the classical Greek times and has

found its presentation in Islamic and Christian philosophy alike.

What interests us here is the being of this world and how the Word can be the master key to all worldly existence. Generally, being is understood substantially, what exists must have substance, must have something that makes it what it is. In the Aristotelian and Scholastic philosophy this substance is the coming together of matter and form. Ferdinand Ebner has called this approach substantial thinking, which is especially prevalent since Descartes' famous "Cogito ergo sum," in which the thinking subject becomes the substance on which the existence of man is based.

As a psychologist, I am inclined to see statements like that developmentally, i.e., how does the child come to the cogito, to think, and consequently to his "being," according to Descartes. At best, the child is born with the "Anlage," the potentiality to think, but not with thinking. And as it can be shown, thinking develops with speaking, with learning to speak, and much more so with being spoken to. Quite clearly, without being spoken to, a child does not start to speak or to think in the human way. It cannot participate in the verbal culture of his surroundings, and it takes a lot of teaching and learning, if this ability needs to be developed later, as the case of Helen Keller has shown.

To claim that there is another approach to the ontological question, other than the traditional about substance and thinking, seems to be audacious; nevertheless, it appears that the Writings of the Faith do require this new and unusual reasoning. Bahá'u'lláh did state in the above mentioned word "*The Word is the master key for the whole world.*" He did not talk about ideas, principles such as form and matter, archetypes, or any other philosophical concepts. He mentions the Word, and it is clearly the spoken Word. It is the same Word that is mentioned in the Prolog of the Gospel of John, 1:1-3:

*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.*

It is the “word” of the Qur’án 6:73, expressing the same truth in the following statement:

*It was He who created the heavens and the earth in all truth.*

*On the day when He says: ‘Be’ it shall be.*

*His word is the truth. All sovereignty shall be His on the day when the trumpet is sounded. He has knowledge of the seen and the unseen. He alone is wise and all-knowing.*

And it is the Word of Genesis, where this truth about God creating the world through the spoken Word was first expressed in the Judeo-Christian tradition,

*And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.*

There is undoubtedly, a scriptural tradition in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions of the Word being the origin of all that is, which is a theological as well as an ontological statement if it is taken seriously. One could say that the Word is the substance of all that is and nothing else, and it is the Word of God that has created and continues to create and sustain the existence of this world.

Unfortunately, the interpretation of the word *logos* in John’s Gospel was made according to the Greek understanding, and it became everything else than the spoken Word as it is stated in the Scriptures. This philosophical tradition of the Neo-Platonic school of thinking has influenced Christian and Islamic theology until this day, which can be described as an error, which was explained in a letter written by or on behalf of the Universal House of Justice:

...the believers must recognize the importance of intellectual honesty and humility. In past dispensations many errors arose because the believers in God’s Revelation were overanxious to encompass the Divine Message within the framework of their limited understanding, to define doctrines where

definition was beyond their power, to explain mysteries which only the wisdom and experience of a later age would make comprehensible, to argue that something was true because it appeared desirable and necessary.<sup>90</sup>

In another letter the Universal House of Justice indicates the process by which this better understanding of the Scriptures of the past can be achieved over time, hopefully encouraging studies like the one presented in this paper.

It has become customary in the West to think of science and religion as occupying two distinct – and even opposed – areas of human thought and activity. This dichotomy can be characterized in the pairs of antitheses: faith and reason; value and fact. It is a dichotomy which is foreign to Bahá'í thought and should, we feel, be regarded with suspicion by Bahá'í scholars in every field. The principle of the harmony of science and religion means not only that religious teachings should be studied with the light of reason and evidence as well as of faith and inspiration, but also that everything in this creation, all aspects of human life and knowledge, should be studied in the light of revelation as well as in that of purely rational investigation. In other words, a Bahá'í scholar, when studying a subject, should not lock out of his mind any aspect of truth that is known to him.<sup>91</sup>

In our quest to study the underlying ontology to the biblical and Bahá'í Scriptures, we need to consider the original text of the Gospel and not its later philosophical interpretation. It is difficult, therefore, to present the vision of the Scriptures about the Word; the Logos, in the Prologue to the Gospel of John, as the meaning of this word was mostly lost or changed in interpretation and translation.

The Greek original text reads (without diacritical signs):

παντα δῑαυτου εγενετο, και χωρις  
αυτου εγενετο ουδε εν ο γεγονεν..

This can be translated word for word in the following way:

*All, through Him, was created, and without Him was created nothing that was created. (John 1:3)*

It has to be considered that the Logos, the Word, is of masculine gender in Greek, and therefore the personalization of the Word, the Logos, describing the Word as Him, is made easier than in the English Language.

The text clearly states that all that was made was made by the Word, which is personalized in the expression “made by Him” who is the Word. As it is said later in the prologue, the Word of God is Christ, “*who was made flesh and dwelt among us.*” (John 1:14)

Here it is clearly stated that the Christ, the Manifestation of God, is the Word of God, and through this Word, through Christ, all was created, i.e., the whole world was created through the Word, and nothing exists that was not created through the Word.

And as Bahá’ís, we would say, through Christ and through all other Manifestations of God, all that is was created, since we see all Manifestations of God as one soul and the same person, as was clearly stated by Bahá’u’lláh:

*Inasmuch as these Birds of the Celestial Throne [these Manifestations] are all sent down from the heaven of the Will of God, and as they all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith, they therefore are regarded as one soul and the same person.<sup>92</sup>*

While in this passage Bahá’u’lláh states that these Manifestations are *sent down from the heaven of the Will of God*, this is the same as stating they are the Word of God, as was previously demonstrated.<sup>93</sup> This Word of God, out of the Primal Will of God, is the first creation, the Manifestation of God in this world, which is created through this Word, which is all the historical Manifestations as one soul and one person, in perfect unity.

The human differences and the historical tasks they fulfilled should never distract us from their unity, which is, as can be said, a Unity in Diversity, a Divine Oneness in an historical, human plurality. That this is difficult to understand is an

understatement, and it is demonstrated in the two thousand year old speculation about the Trinity in Christian theology and its absolute rejection in Islamic thinking. It was impossible to be understood in the past, as Bahá'u'lláh has stated in a prayer.

*The contemplation of the highest minds that have recognized Thy unity failed to attain unto the comprehension of the One Thou hast created through the word of Thy commandment, how much more must it be powerless to soar into the atmosphere of the knowledge of Thine own Being.*<sup>94</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh, in this prayer, affirms that even the highest human minds failed to comprehend the Manifestations (*the One Thou hast created through the word*), which are created through a Word of God. To conclude this line of thinking it needs to be stated that it is nearly impossible to understand the Manifestation through the human mind, or through human speculation about the essence of God, His Unity, His Trinity or Plurality etc.

Only the Manifestations Themselves can give us an understanding of these Divine Creations, these unique and united Beings, who are as one in their historical and multiple expressions, who are the creation of God and the origin of all creation of the world of being, the origin of all there is, from the last particle or element of the atom to the highest development of nature in the human being.

This again projects a different ontological picture of this world than the traditional one, which is based on the concept of being and has historically created a number of problems in regard to the concept of the world as created by God. The elimination of God and of creation in the last centuries was only logical and made it easier to cling to this concept of substantial thinking, as Ebner would say, but does ignore the reality of the personal and dialogical aspect of the human being and of the whole world of being.

The traditional ontological picture has no place for the existence of the spirit, and with this point of view, it denies or reduces spirit to substance or matter and then makes the

human life meaningless, and reduces the word of man to simply a means of communication of facts. The inner being of man, the internality of world, is ignored, and the very thinking has renounced itself and performed this magic trick to eliminate itself at the point where it created the greatest successes of its ability in modern science and technology. The same has been expressed by a reviewer of a book on quantum mechanics: *Physics of Consciousness, The Quantum Mind and the Meaning of Life* by Evan Harris Walker:<sup>95</sup>

Although philosophically laughable, the notion that the deepest aspects of physical reality can be described without ever speaking about the entity doing the description has dominated science and acted as a straitjacket that confined scientific thought for far too long. Instead, the book shows that reality cannot be understood without consciousness, or indeed, that reality and consciousness are ultimately the same thing.

Ferdinand Ebner has clearly connected the consciousness with the word, when he said:

What is a thought? Reflected being; not consciousness as such, but being in consciousness, being, in the reflection of consciousness, in other words, conscious being. But is not the 'word' the inner and spiritual condition of the 'cogito' ('I think') in general?<sup>96</sup>

Human consciousness, the human mind, has declared itself in these representatives of materialistic science as non-existing or as being only a superstructure to be reduced to matter, nothing more than a thing among other things of this world and the sociological consequences of this worldview has devastated the last century.

If the Word is the beginning and the cause of the world, if it is the *master key for the whole world*, what does that really mean? What worldview would this ontological principle create?

We are accustomed to seeing the world through our senses, seeing the materiality of all beings, and we generally have this kind of approach to the world. The spiritual is usually ignored or neglected. Often it is seen as if it was something material. Think about a simple thing that is not material, for example,

your nationality. There is no thing in your body that would give you citizenship, it is a piece of paper, it might be an accident of your birth to your parents, or the resolution of a government contract that makes you a citizen. It is a spiritual quality that rests in the agreement of the society in which you live. And yet, it can crucially influence your life.

And this is only a very superficial spiritual quality. What about concepts of love, friendship, understanding between people, etc.; what about the spiritual ties that bind people together; what about the many groups and communities to which we belong? All of this is spiritual, but usually regarded as something sensual or material. We are used to seeing the spiritual properties as material ones and do not need to make this distinction most of the time.

In the proposed new worldview we need to categorically change our thinking and give spiritual reality the primate over all material and sensual phenomena of this world. This view requires a total new understanding of the world, as the book of Revelation says, of a “*new heaven and a new earth.*” It is not necessary to prove that this was the message of all previous religions as well. Nevertheless, it is no longer a thought that is even considered today.

Even the material life of the senses is not more important than the spiritual truth of our existence, as Bahá'u'lláh has expressed in the above quoted prayer when He said:

*Mine eyes are cheered, O my God, when I contemplate the tribulations that descend upon me from the heaven of Thy decree, and which have encompassed me on every side according to what Thy pen hath irrevocably established. I swear by Thy Self! Whatsoever is of Thee is well pleasing unto me, though it involve the bitterness of mine own death.*<sup>97</sup>

Nothing else than a wholly different view of this world could have made Bahá'u'lláh say these astonishing words. Whatever is of God, whatever is spiritual, makes His eyes cheered, and He calls it pleasing even if it means death of the material body. As we have seen before, this worldview was given to the followers of Bahá'u'lláh in His word when He said:

*Thou art He Who, through a word of Thy mouth, hath so enravished the hearts of Thy chosen ones that they have, in their love for Thee, detached themselves from all except Thyself, and laid down their lives and sacrificed their souls in Thy path, and borne, for Thy sake, what none of Thy creatures hath borne.<sup>98</sup>*

It is again the Word of the Manifestation, the Word of God, that enravishes the heart of the believers; in other words, they love God, Who is identified with the world of the spirit, so they sacrifice their material life in this new view. So every martyr becomes a witness to this new reality, this new spiritual worldview.

The change of this worldview in the spirit of man who has recognized this new vision cannot be easily anticipated in its universality. Bahá'u'lláh gives us a glimpse what it would mean to take the spiritual reality of this world seriously and to be truly detached from the material world.

*Say: He is not to be numbered with the people of Bahá who followeth his mundane desires, or fixeth his heart on things of the earth. He is My true follower who, if he come to a valley of pure gold, will pass straight through it aloof as a cloud, and will neither turn back, nor pause. Such a man is, assuredly, of Me. From his garment the Concurrence on high can inhale the fragrance of sanctity...*

*And if he met the fairest and most comely of women, he would not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty. Such an one, indeed, is the creation of spotless chastity. Thus instructeth you the Pen of the Ancient of Days, as bidden by your Lord, the Almighty, the All-Bountiful.<sup>99</sup>*

Christ already has made a similar statement (Matthew 5:27-28), and we see the progression in the formulation.

*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

Jesus goes from the Mosaic law “thou shalt not” to the inner, spiritual aspect of man, to his heart. Bahá'u'lláh goes even farther, describing a spiritual attitude, which is not even to be tempted to break the law.

Let's be honest; after 2,000 years of Christianity, how many people come even close to this change of heart? And how many Christians, Muslims and Bahá'ís can state fully that they have not only understood this sentence, that they follow the moral rule of chastity implied in this statement, but that their heart and their thinking has fully achieved this pinnacle of detachment; and how many of them would be so detached and have no difficulty to “*not feel his heart seduced by the least shadow of desire for her beauty?*”

There are in the Bahá'í Faith some unique souls who have come close to this state of a *true follower* according to Bahá'u'lláh: it is the Master and Example, Bahá'u'lláh's son 'Abdu'l-Bahá and, in a somewhat lesser degree among others, several women whose exemplarity for the Faith was described by Bahíyyih Nakhjavání.<sup>100</sup>

From this consideration the admonition of the Guardian needs to be understood, that the high moral life and example of the faithful is the precondition to the final victory of the Faith, and true chastity and detachment from all worldly goods are the criteria of this belief. Shoghi Effendi clearly states that moral rectitude is a prerequisite of success for all activities of Bahá'ís and describes these requirements in many places with the following words:

*These requirements are none other than a high sense of moral rectitude in their social and administrative activities, absolute chastity in their individual lives, and complete freedom from prejudice in their dealings with peoples of a different race, class, creed, or color.*<sup>101</sup>

It is clear that Bahá'u'lláh speaks of a state of the human heart and mind that will take time to be fully achieved, especially when it comes to the most powerful drives in human nature, i.e., gold and sex. On the other hand, Bahá'u'lláh has promised that this time will come, and He has given us the

power to reach this state through His Word. It is the Word of God alone that can achieve such a change in the world, that can create this New World Order through a change of heart.

In the following section we will demonstrate that this new worldview is expressed in all the principles of the Bahá'í Faith, and some of these principles will be explained in this light.

## **Bahá'í Principles and the Word**

In the following section some of the Bahá'í principles will be presented in this Unity of Revelation.

Having made the ontological change from idea and substance to the word as the origin and essence of being, we will here in this section try to explore Bahá'í principles and understand them on the basis of this new ontological principle of the word. This could shed some new light on these principles, and if it does, it will verify the assumption under which these principles are understood.

The final criteria of this process are the Bahá'í Writings, and if the new understanding of these principles are better suited to understand the Writings, then the circle is closed and the thesis of this investigation could be regarded as being proven, at least in the sense that they give more meaning to the Revelation and harmonize with them. Thus the harmony between religion and science could be established as well.

There are several principles that have been mentioned before, such as progressive revelation, harmony between science and religion, and the importance and meaning of remembrance of the Word.

### **The principle of Consultation**

What seems to be another application of the importance of the Word is to be found in the principle of consultation. The importance of this principle is accentuated by Bahá'u'lláh:

*The heaven of divine wisdom is illumined with the two luminaries of consultation and compassion. Take ye counsel together in all matters, inasmuch as*

*consultation is the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way, and is the bestower of understanding.*<sup>102</sup>

And is further explained in the commentary to the Most Holy Book:

Bahá'u'lláh has established consultation as one of the fundamental principles of His Faith and has exhorted the believers to “take counsel together in all matters.” He describes consultation as “the lamp of guidance which leadeth the way” and as “the bestower of understanding.” Shoghi Effendi states that the “principle of consultation ... constitutes one of the basic laws” of the Bahá'í Administrative Order.<sup>103</sup>

In order to understand why this principle of consultation is congenial to the ontology of the Word as presented in this paper, we need to briefly describe what happens in consultation. First, the facts need to be researched and presented to the administrative or any other group dedicated to consult about them. This first section or preparation will certainly be executed in a factual and substantial manner, so consultation does include substantial thinking in its preparation.

The proper consulting process starts with every member of the group presenting his personal opinion and leaving this opinion open to all in the group. This is real group dialogue, as all of the members are not only allowed to state their opinion, but they are encouraged and have the duty to do so. In this dialogue then truth is revealed and accepted by the whole group.

On the assumption that the word is the ontological basis of being, we must also conclude that it is the ontological basis of truth. That's where consultation gets its ontological grounding, in the sentence of Bahá'u'lláh where He stated;

*The Word of God ... is an ocean inexhaustible in riches, comprehending all things. Every thing which can be perceived is but an emanation therefrom.*<sup>104</sup>

Consequently, when attempting to find the truth we have to rely on the Word of God, but we also have to make the spiritual

leap into the words of all those that are present, and try to find the truth in the here and now. As much as the members are imbued with the Word of God and the Love of God, this will result in an ontological effort towards the truth of the situation at hand.

This is a dimension of truth and consultation that has not been much explored, and it needs further consideration. It is mentioned here as one of the conclusions of our endeavor to find the truth of the revelation of Bahá'u'lláh Who has brought us the Word of God in the Ocean of His *Most Great Announcement*.<sup>105</sup>

## **Conclusion: Revelation of Unity and Unity of Revelation**

There are two considerations that are mutually inclusive and describe the Bahá'í Revelation as a new and comprehensive vision of this world: the Bahá'í Faith is (1) Revelation of Unity and (2) Unity of Revelation. The Bahá'í Faith can be described in both ways, which are intertwined and mutually supportive. In other words, one is the cause of the other, one explains the other, and one could not truly exist without the other.

This statement needs some explanation. The first statement is clear and a common topic of teaching the Faith. The Unity of God, the Unity of the world of mankind, and the Unity of all religions is rightfully presented as the core principle of the Faith.

The second statement is not as obvious and is experienced only through deepening in the Writings and through meditation. It is the recognition that the Bahá'í Revelation, in its whole and in all its parts, is of a surprising and unexpected unity. This Unity of the Revelation is the most convincing element and is best expressed in the way Bahá'u'lláh has revealed His Verses.

They were not compiled and slowly elaborated; they were dictated and written as one, probably with a certain style and with the signature of perfect unity from one period to the other, from one dictation to the other. Bahá'u'lláh frequently

compares His Revelation with an Ocean, which is a good example of this unity in diversity, of abundance and fullness.

Much is said about this style of Revelation, but the most important aspect of this unity is not only its presentation, but also its content and the development of this unique Temple of God's Word. Bahá'u'lláh said:

*Thus have We built the Temple with the hands of power and might, could ye but know it. This is the Temple promised unto you in the Book. Draw ye nigh unto it. This is that which profiteth you, could ye but comprehend it.*<sup>106</sup>

In the Persian Hidden Word 61 He describes His Revelation: "A dewdrop out of the fathomless ocean of My mercy I have shed upon the peoples of the world." This unity is really a mystical concept, and it is described in the *Seven Valleys* in two beautiful pictures, short and in-depth, where Bahá'u'lláh said in the Valley of Knowledge:

*In the ocean he findeth a drop, in a drop he beholdeth the secrets of the sea.*

*Split the atom's heart, and lo! Within it thou wilt find a sun.*<sup>107</sup>

Both the revelation of unity and the unity of this revelation are pervading this world, and we can find vestiges of them everywhere. The unity of this world is increasing in many ways; politically, economically, in communication and cooperation. The unity of this revelation is not only present in the Holy Writings of the Faith but also in the thinking and philosophizing throughout this world, and it goes back into a better understanding of previous Revelations, explaining how all Revelations are presenting a unity that can be understood better as the Revelation of God progresses throughout time.

This unity also emerges everywhere in this world, according to the Guardian, demonstrating

*such simultaneous processes of rise and of fall, of integration and of disintegration, of order and chaos,*

*with their continuous and reciprocal reactions on each other.*<sup>108</sup>

This paper attempted, admittedly in a very tentative and subjective fashion, to follow the development of *integration*, of *rise* and of *order* and many structures, visions and thoughts have been found in this process to prove the verse of Bahá'u'lláh: *“The Word is the Master Key for the Whole World.”*

Therefore, the new world order is primarily and fundamentally a spiritual order. That this spirituality is the ‘actual and real’ reality of this world is only understandable in the context of the ontological meaning of the Word.<sup>109</sup> Consequently, it could be said, if the Word was in the beginning, then the Word and the Spirit was in the beginning, and the spiritual reality is the quintessential reality of being.

Ferdinand Ebner understood this truth, when he said “Man thinks, because he has the word.” Reason (or intellect, we could say) is equally related to the word, so Ebner says, reason “is essentially formed from the word and through the word and given to humanity as a ‘sense for the word.’” And further:

The word is the primary spiritual reality, it is the ‘establishment’ of spiritual being — it is the establishment ‘of the relation between the “I” and the “Thou” — that is the establishment of being itself.<sup>110</sup>

Long before that, Bahá'u'lláh has clearly and fundamentally said the same, and much more:

*It is clear and evident, therefore, that the first bestowal of God is the Word, and its discoverer and recipient is the power of understanding. This Word is the foremost instructor in the school of existence and the revealer of Him Who is the Almighty.*<sup>111</sup>

Bahá'u'lláh even gives us a clear understanding of how the Word created man. In a new interpretation of the story of Genesis, of the creation of man, He combines again in this sentence the Islamic idea of the Primal Will of God with the Biblical understanding of the Word in the Beginning:

*The entire creation hath been called into being through the Will of God, magnified be His glory, and peerless Adam hath been fashioned through the agency of His all-compelling Word, a Word which is the source, the wellspring, the repository, and the dawning-place of the intellect. From it all creation hath proceeded, and it is the channel of God's primal grace.*<sup>112</sup>

In interpreting the Bible, Bahá'u'lláh introduces a new thought, stating that the Biblical Adam became the first human being and was a Manifestation of God<sup>113</sup>, by being created through the Word and given the word which made him a 'living soul' as Genesis describes:

*And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.*<sup>114</sup>

To conclude this essay, it can be understood that the meaning of the Word of God, and consequently of all words spoken by man in remembrance of God, is "*the source, the wellspring, the repository, and the dawning-place of the intellect,*" of the human capacity of 'having the word' and being an intellectual and reasonable being. It is further the cause of all creation, as it is said about the Word that "*from it all creation hath proceeded, and it is the channel of God's primal grace.*"

The Word of God was and always is the unifying cause of this multiple word, and it is creating the human intellect and his soul, which is the channel of God speaking to man, of the ability of man speaking to man<sup>115</sup> and answering God in speech, in prayer. Additionally, it is the source of all understanding of this world in science and reason and of knowing God in love and praise.

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#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Special thanks needs to be expressed to Gwyn Magaditsch, for her corrections and suggestions.

<sup>2</sup> Kluge has made similar connections with the philosophies of Heidegger, Gabriel Marcel, Teilhard De Chardin, and Whitehead in several of his papers published in "*Lights of 'Irfán*" volume 4, 2003: *The Aristotelian*

*Substratum of the Bahá'í Writings*, vol. 5, 2004: *Process Philosophy and the Bahá'í Writings, An Initial Exploration*, vol. 6, 2005: *Bahá'í Ontology, An Initial Reconnaissance*, vol. 7, 2006: *Further Exploration in Bahá'í Ontology*. Another seminal work is *The Call into Being: An Introduction to a Bahá'í Existentialism*, available by request: iankluge@netbistro.com

This writer has attempted similar comparisons in his papers published in the “*Lights of ‘Irfán*” Wolfgang Klebel: book 5, 2004: *Unity and Progress Revelation: Comparing Bahá'í Principles with the Basic Concepts of Teilhard de Chardin*; Book 6, 2005: *True to Thyself: the Mystical Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and Ken Wilber's System of Integral Psychology*; Book 7, 2006 *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom: Towards a Progressive Bahá'í Theology*.

- <sup>3</sup> Terry Culhane, *I Beheld a Maiden, The Bahá'í Faith and the Life of the Spirit*; Kalimat Press, Los Angeles, 2001, especially in his last chapter, (pp. 111-138) *Redeeming Modernity: Bahá'u'lláh and the Integral Philosophy of Ken Wilber*.
- <sup>4</sup> Wolfgang Klebel, in “*Lights of ‘Irfán*,” book 7, 2006, *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom*. pages where the concept of “Spiritual Materialism” is closer described.
- <sup>5</sup> Ken Wilber; *Sex, Ecology, Spirituality, The Spirit of Evolution*, Shambhala, Boston & London, 2000, “The Unpacking of God,” p. 550.
- <sup>6</sup> Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig are from Jewish background and present similar ideas.
- <sup>7</sup> The quotes of Ferdinand Ebner are, if not otherwise noted, taken from the Book of Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld *Ursprüngliche Erfahrung und personales Sein* (Original Experience and Personal Existence) Böhlau Verlag, Wien, Köln, Weimar, 1997, quoted henceforth as Wucherer/Ebner and Page. The quote here is Wucherer/Ebner, p. 31.
- <sup>8</sup> Ebner, Ferdinand, *Schriften*, (Writings) 3 Volumes, published by F. Seyer, Munic, 1963-1965. Only at the closure of this paper, this writer has been able to get access to a small book with selected essays of Ferdinand Ebner: *Das Wunder des Wortes* (the miracle of the word), Stiasney Verlag, Munic 1965
- <sup>9</sup> The authors mentioned here are Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld (see reference 15) and in “Zur neuern Geschichte des integralen Gegensatzes von Einheit und Vielheit” (About the new history of the integral Opposition of Unity and Plurality) in and 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, Germany, 1967

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- <sup>10</sup> It is interesting to note that the usage of the word 'Logos' in English is today restricted to the idealized concept and the original meaning of 'word' is not even mentioned in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, where only three meanings are reported: 1. reason, 2. principle of the universe and 3. the creative thought (sic!) and will of God, according to John 1. The original meaning of 'word' is only mentioned in the etymological explanation of the origin of this word, but not in the present definition of this word as used in today's English. This is a good example of philosophical preconception that is pervasive but usually not even conscious to the writer.
- <sup>11</sup> Compare this statement of Bahá'u'lláh, (*Gleanings*, p. 141: LXXIV) "*Every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God is endowed with such potency as can instill new life into every human frame, if ye be of them that comprehend this truth.*" Here and in many similar statements about the Word of God reference is clearly made to an actually spoken word and not to the mind, reason or ideas of God.
- <sup>12</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 173
- <sup>13</sup> In short, the thought could be ventured that the Judeo-Christian monotheism in a Platonic understanding of God as the origin of all Emanations separated the spiritual realm of God from the now secularized and demystified world, and therefore became the condition of the possibility of the development of modern sciences. Before, the pagan world itself was populated by spirits and gods, preventing this development.
- <sup>14</sup> Bahá'u'lláh explains that the Maid of Heaven is revealed to speak the Words of God: "*I have summoned the Maids of Heaven to emerge from behind the veil of concealment, and have clothed them with these words of Mine — words of consummate power and wisdom.*" (GWB 327)
- <sup>15</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 17
- <sup>16</sup> The differences of the description indicate that what is spoken to the inner ear cannot be translated straightforward to the outer ear, a fact that would be interesting to explore in another study. For example, Shoghi Effendi quotes Bahá'u'lláh describing the same event: He dreamed His dream and heard, "on every side," "exalted words," and His "tongue recited" words that "no man could bear to hear." (CF 101)
- <sup>17</sup> *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 61
- <sup>18</sup> *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 126
- <sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Klebel, *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, towards a progressive Bahá'í Theology*, presented at the 'Irfán Colloquium at Bosch, May 2005, to be printed in the *Lights of 'Irfán*
- <sup>20</sup> Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man*, 1871, last paragraph:  
 "But we are not here concerned with hopes or fears, only with the truth as far as our reason permits us to discover it; and I have given the evidence to the best of my ability. We must, however, acknowledge, as it seems to me, that man with all his noble qualities, with sympathy

which feels for the most debased, with benevolence extends not only to other men but to the humblest living creature, with his god-like intellect which has penetrated into the movements and constitution of the solar system — with all these exalted powers — Man still bears in his bodily frame the indelible stamp of his lowly origin.”

<sup>21</sup> Teilhard de Chardin, *Christianity and Evolution*, Harcourt Brace & Company, New York, 1969, p. 105

<sup>22</sup> Teilhard de Cardin, *The Phenomenon of Man*, Harper & Row, NY, 1975

<sup>23</sup> To call the scientific worldview an abstraction follows strictly the definition of the word abstraction in Webster's Third New International Dictionary, where it is defined as “the act or process of leaving out one or more qualities of a complex object so as to attend to others.” Any worldview that not only abstracts of these qualities of being methodologically, but denies their existence must be called scientific, rather than scientific, and is based on improvable assumption.

<sup>24</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 204

<sup>25</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 164: “Among these ‘veils of glory’ are the divines and doctors living in the days of the Manifestation of God, who, because of their want of discernment and their love and eagerness for leadership, have failed to submit to the Cause of God, nay, have even refused to incline their ears unto the divine Melody. “They have thrust their fingers into their ears.” [Qur’án 2:19.]

<sup>26</sup> Ian Kluge, *Bahá'í Ontology: An Initial Reconnaissance*, 2004, p. 29

<sup>27</sup> ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, p. 238

<sup>28</sup> Published in “*Lights of ‘Irfán*,” book 5.

<sup>29</sup> David H. Lane: *The Phenomenon of Teilhard, Prophet for a New Age*, Mercer, University Press, Macon Georgia. 1996

<sup>30</sup> “How I believe,” in *Christianity and Evolution*, Harcourt, Brace & Company, San Diego, 1996, pp. 107-108

<sup>31</sup> *Selections from the Writings of ‘Abdu'l-Bahá*, p. 119

<sup>32</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 160

<sup>33</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 160

<sup>34</sup> *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 163

<sup>35</sup> *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 188

<sup>36</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 56

<sup>37</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 72

<sup>38</sup> See above page 3-4; *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 150

<sup>39</sup> D. W. Winnicott, *Playing and Reality*, Basic Books, Inc, New York, 1971

<sup>40</sup> Robert Langs, *The Bipersonal Field*, Jason Aronson, Inc. New York 1976

<sup>41</sup> Wolfgang Klebel; *Transference and Culture, Towards a New Understanding of this Concept of Depth-Psychology*; A Dissertation Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of Psychology, Fuller

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- Theological Seminary; Pasadena California, 1976; especially the Chapter Corollary on Therapy and Religion, Pages 205-224
- <sup>42</sup> D. W. Winnicott: *ibid.*, especially in ch. 7, "The Location of Cultural Experience," pp. 95-103, and ch. 8, "The Place where we Live," pp. 104-110
- <sup>43</sup> Darwin himself clearly distinguished between the material development of "men's bones" and man's spiritual abilities. See footnote 31
- <sup>44</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 145
- <sup>45</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 375
- <sup>46</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 42
- <sup>47</sup> 'Abdu'l-Bahá in London, p. 69
- <sup>48</sup> Robert Langs, *The Bipersonal Field* (and throughout his other books); Jason Aronson, Inc, New York.
- <sup>49</sup> This writer has applied the approach of Robert Langs in therapy and was teaching this approach to interns. This personal experience has certainly reinforced what was learned from books and the few seminars of Langs he could attend.
- <sup>50</sup> Communicative Psychoanalytic Theory of Human Development – Part One: Introduction, Methodology and Theorems By V. A. Bonac (*Reprinted from IJCPP, 1994, Vol. 9, No.4*)
- <sup>51</sup> Robert Langs, *The Listening Process*, Jason Aronson, New York, London 1978 page 4, 59 and *passim* in this and most of his other books about therapy, where he refers this insight to W. Bion, an English Psychoanalyst.
- <sup>52</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 264
- <sup>53</sup> It may be noted here as an aside that this writer has the same background in the Vienna school of integral philosophy and Freudian psychoanalysis.
- <sup>54</sup> Rollin McCraty, HeartMath Research Center, *Science of the Heart, Part I, Institute of HeartMath*. <http://www.heartmath.org>, Institute of HeartMath 14700 West Park Avenue, Bolder Creek, California 95006 especially the sections "The Electricity of Touch: Detection and Measurement of Cardiac Energy Exchange between People" p. 24 and "The role of Physiological Coherence in the Detection and Measurement of Cardiac Energy Exchange between People" pp. 24-25.
- <sup>55</sup> Alastair I.M. Rae, *Quantum Mechanics*, 4<sup>th</sup> Edition, Taylor & Francis, New York, London, 2002, P. 288
- <sup>56</sup> Evan Harris Walker, Ph.D.; *The physics of consciousness, Quantum Minds and the Meaning of Life*; Basic Books, Perseus Books, NY, 2000
- <sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329
- <sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 330
- <sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 332
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 335

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<sup>61</sup> Ibid., p. 336

<sup>62</sup> Ibid., p. 337

<sup>63</sup> Ibid., p. 329

<sup>64</sup> Wucherer/Ebner, p. 31

<sup>65</sup> Ferdinand Ebner, a teacher, lived in Austria 1882-1931, and was marked by his experiences in the ditches of World I and is one of the most outstanding representatives of the dialogical thinking.

<sup>66</sup> Wucherer/Ebner 31 (see footnote 15). It has to be noted here again, that all the translations of Ebner's texts are translated by this writer, since no other translation is available.

<sup>67</sup> The brief explanation follows the introductory work to Ferdinand Ebner's thinking by Augustinus Karl Wucherer-Huldenfeld: *Personales Sein und Word, Einführung in den Grundgedanken Ferdinand Ebners* (Personal Being and Word, Introduction into the basic principle of the thinking of Ferdinand Ebner); Böhlau, Vienna, Graz 1985; pp. 23-32.

This principle of Ebner's thinking was previously developed by this writer in the paper *Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, Towards a Progressive Bahá'í Theology*, presented at the 'Irfán Colloquia in Bosch, 2005, and to be published in the upcoming "*Lights of 'Irfán.*"

<sup>68</sup> Wucherer/Ebner, p. 57

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., p. 78

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., p. 31

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p. 79. According to Ebner, God is the true "Thou" to the human "I." In similar fashion Bahá'u'lláh uses the concept of the True One in relation to the creatures, in the Seven Valleys (p. 25): "*The journeys in the pathway of love are reckoned as four: From the creatures to the True One; from the True One to the creatures; from the creatures to the creatures; from the True One to the True One.*"

<sup>72</sup> Ibid., p. 223

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 87

<sup>74</sup> Ibid., p. 86

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., p. 223

<sup>76</sup> "réformer mes propres pensées et bâtir dans un fonds qui est tout à moi" quoted and translated from Herman Glockner, *Die Europäische Philosophie von den Anfängen bis zur Gegenwart* (the European philosophy from its beginning to the present) p, 412. Herman Glockner noted further that the "pure objectivity of Descartes philosophy satisfies the pre-Christian ideal of classical Platonism."

<sup>77</sup> This concept of spiritual materialism was coined by Johannes Toegel, *Eine Theologie des Zeitgeistes, Darstellung und Kritik am Beispiel der Transzendenten Psychologie* (A theology of the spirit of the time, a presentation and critique using the example of transcendental

- psychology), Dissertation (#28,684) University of Vienna, 1991, p. 170, and is described by this writer in his paper presented in Bosch, California, 'Irfán Colloquium, in the year 2005 under the title: "Lawḥ-i-Hikmat, Bahá'u'lláh's Tablet of Wisdom, Towards a Progressive Bahá'í Theology," which will be printed in *Lights of 'Irfán*, Book Seven.
- <sup>78</sup> Wucherer/Ebner, p. 233
- <sup>79</sup> Wolfgang A. Klebel, True of Thyself, The Mystical Writings of Bahá'u'lláh and Ken Wilber's system of integral philosophy, *Lights of 'Irfán*, Bahá'í National Center 1233 Central Street, Evanston IL 60201, book six, pp. 87-120
- <sup>80</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, SVFV p. 27. While we here are mostly interested in the inwardness and outwardness of the human condition, i.e., the body and the spirit, in the section about the Word by Bahá'u'lláh the other aspect, the first and last, has to do with the historicity of the human condition in the ontological cycle as pointed out by Nader Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization*, University Press of Maryland, 2000, page 65 and passim, while not referring to this passage but quoting many others.
- <sup>81</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Epistle to the Son of the Wolf*, p. 118
- <sup>82</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 313
- <sup>83</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, XXIX., p. 70
- <sup>84</sup> Wucherer/Ebner, p. 267
- <sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 265
- <sup>86</sup> *Selections from the Writings of the Báb*, p. 196
- <sup>87</sup> Franz Rosenzweig, quoted in the book of Bernhard Casper, p. 92 note 17
- <sup>88</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 56
- <sup>89</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *Messages to the Indian Subcontinent*, p. 56
- <sup>90</sup> *Wellspring of Guidance: Messages 1963-1968*, pp. 87-88
- <sup>91</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *Messages 1963 to 1986*, pp. 388-389
- <sup>92</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Kitáb-i-Íqán*, p. 152
- <sup>93</sup> *The Kitáb-i-Íqán* was addressed to a believer in Muḥammad, consequently in this book Bahá'u'lláh uses the Islamic expression the Will of God, which is equivalent to the Word of God as demonstrated above through this statement of Bahá'u'lláh from the same book, the Kitáb-i-Íqán p 98: "inasmuch as by a **word of His command** all that are in heaven and on earth have come to exist, and by His wish, **which is the Primal Will itself**, all have stepped out of utter nothingness into the realm of being, the world of the visible."
- <sup>94</sup> *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 193
- <sup>95</sup> ISBN: 0738204366, Pub. Date: January 2001
- <sup>96</sup> Wucherer/Ebner, p. 205
- <sup>97</sup> *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 192
- <sup>98</sup> *Prayers and Meditations by Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 163

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- <sup>99</sup> *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 118
- <sup>100</sup> *Response*; George Ronald, Oxford, 1981
- <sup>101</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 22
- <sup>102</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 168
- <sup>103</sup> The Universal House of Justice, *The Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, Note #52 in re paragraph #30, p. 190
- <sup>104</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 173
- <sup>105</sup> *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh*, p. 25
- <sup>106</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Summons of the Lord of Hosts*, p. 141
- <sup>107</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Seven Valleys*, p. 12
- <sup>108</sup> Shoghi Effendi, *The Advent of Divine Justice*, p. 72
- <sup>109</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, (*Gleanings*, XCVI, p. 196) calls this “*A new life is, in this age, stirring within all the peoples of the earth; and yet none hath discovered its cause or perceived its motive.*”
- <sup>110</sup> All these quotes can be found in Wucherer/Ebner, p. 208
- <sup>111</sup> Bahá'u'lláh, *The Tabernacle of Unity*, #1.2, p. 3
- <sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, #2.48, p. 47
- <sup>113</sup> This fact is well established in the Writings based on the verse from the Qur'án: “Thus hath Muḥammad, the Point of the Qur'án, revealed: ‘I am all the Prophets.’ Likewise, He saith: ‘I am the first Adam, Noah, Moses, and Jesus.’ (KI 152) This issue raises some questions that cannot be dealt with in this paper. The Adamic Cycle of Manifestations started with Adam and ended with Bahá'u'lláh, who speaks about Manifestations before Adam as well, but they are unknown to us. One explanation to be mentioned in this context could be the fact that the book of Genesis, to be understood by their original readers, had to condense and compress the Adamic and Pre-Adamic history into one story of the beginning of the world, which story needs to be unfolded in the future.
- <sup>114</sup> Genesis 2:7
- <sup>115</sup> This fact of man speaking to man was expounded by Martin Buber, another personal-dialogical thinker in his book *Between Man and Man*, Routledge Classics, London and New York, 2002. Martin Buber is the only thinker of this group translated at least partially into English.