

Creation

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Abstract

Divine creation moves from implicit and transcendent oneness to explicit and manifest multiplicity. To contribute to the creation of a new civilization as a researcher or as an artist means to make oneself available for participation in this process of neverending unfolding. The divine Names are the eternal archetypes organizing the material world. Divine Names are not concepts; they are tools for invoking the animated presence of a particular aspect of the creative force, thus enabling dialogue between thinking processes and reality. Such a dialogue favors a presuppositionless, susceptible attitude to reality as more adequate than the imposition of preconceived methodological assumptions.

Résumé

La création divine se meut continuellement de l'unicité implicite et transcendante à la multiplicité explicite et manifeste. Participer à la création d'une nouvelle civilisation en tant que chercheur ou en tant qu'artiste implique une ouverture totale à ce processus sans fin. Les Noms de Dieu sont les archétypes éternels par lesquels s'organise l'univers matériel. Les Noms de Dieu ne sont pas des concepts, mais plutôt des moyens d'évoquer la présence vivante d'un aspect particulier de la force créatrice, permettant ainsi que s'établisse un échange entre le processus de la pensée et la réalité. Un tel échange préfère une attitude sans à priori, une perception spontanée de la réalité comme plus adéquate que l'imposition d'hypothèses méthodologiques préétablies.

Resumen

La creación divina pasa de la unidad implícita y transcendente a la multiplicidad explícita y manifiesta. Contribuir a la creación de una civilización nueva en carácter de investigador o artista significa hacerse disponible para la participación en este proceso de desenvolvimiento inacabable. Los Nombres divinos son los arquetipos eternos que organizan el mundo material. Lejos de ser conceptos, son herramientas que sirven para invocar la presencia animada de un aspecto específico de la fuerza creadora, entablando así diálogo entre los procesos de reflexión y de la realidad. Tal diálogo favorece una actitud susceptible a la realidad y carecente de presuposiciones como más adecuada que la imposición de las suposiciones preconcebidas metodológicas.

I

It is a fundamental belief of the Bahá'ís that creation as we witness it through our senses is a reality rooted in a still deeper reality, hidden to our senses but accessible to our souls, spirits, and hearts. The Bahá'í view of the world beyond emphasizes *becoming overbeing*. Eternality and historicity are mutually interactive.¹ The world was not created once and for all; it is under continual creation as the energies of the transcendent world flow into the world of matter and the world of human minds, manifesting themselves in the creation of living beings, in the revelation of God through His manifestations, and in the rise and flourishing of human civilizations throughout history. The same creative force that produced the dinosaurs and caused their extinction so that the era of the mammals could begin is still at work through human history. Humanity is presently in a stage of transition in which crises after crises challenge human creativity to find solutions to man's craving for spiritual and physical sustenance. The mammals of the new era may still be small in size and number, but they are here and are gradually accumulating strength.

The creative energy of the universe works itself from the point of unity into diversified forms and beings that exist on different levels of the cosmos. While creation diversifies itself, at the same time it gathers together again its diversified elements and species so as to bring itself into harmony with the original oneness from which it is always emerging. All the planets of our solar system supposedly came into individual existence through a centrifugal explosion that was counterbalanced by forces of gravity. Thus the initial centrifugal diversification was held in check by the centripetal force of gravity. We could see this as the "love" of the sun for its planets, as gravity is the expression of love on the lower level of material reality. "The power of cohesion expressed in the mineral kingdom is in reality love or affinity manifested in a low degree according to the exigencies of the mineral world" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 257).

In the animal kingdom we find groups of species that collaborate to survive or perform complementary, mutually beneficent tasks one for the other, without the self-awareness that they are doing so. In the organic world, symbiosis and interdependency are now gradually being recognized as constituting a more fundamental feature in the evolution of species than competition and the survival of the fittest.² In the world of humanity, religion is the force which most powerfully can reunite a diversified humanity conscious of its own existence and capable of making individual choices. All the great religions have contributed in this regard by giving man the means of reuniting with the primordial Unity from which all creation is constantly emanating, and in addition, in this particular day and age, the Bahá'í Revelation has been sent down to promote the unification of the entire planet in the form of a global civilization.

The Bahá'í Faith teaches that the ultimate source of all being, the unknowable God, created the universe out of love. "I loved thy creation, hence I created thee" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words* Arabic no. 4). From this we learn that divine, cosmic love is the one and ultimate origin of all existence. Being with a capital *B* is thus essentially nothing but love. To exist is to arise out of love. To be conscious that we simply exist, and to testify to this naked fact, brings to us the awareness of this universal, all-pervasive love. Meditation and the arts can change man's frame of mind to reach this awareness of Universal Being. Daily, Bahá'ís testify before God that we are created to know Him and worship Him through obedience to His Will.

In another passage, Bahá'u'lláh, God's supreme Manifestation for our time, tells us: "Thou didst wish to make thyself known unto men; therefore, Thou didst, through a word of Thy mouth, bring creation into being and fashion the universe (*Prayers and Meditations* 6). Thus we learn that the diversified creation is created with the purpose that the Supreme Creator *be known* through the revelation of His attributes. Creation *ec-sists*, which literally means stands out, that is, stands out from primordial, undifferentiated oneness, *in order to be known*. This gives us an important perspective on the nature of the relationship between the material world and human consciousness: In the final analysis it is impossible to divorce the very existence of concrete things from the existence of a consciousness capable of observing and knowing these things, since one is created for the other, the other for the one.

If creation were not to be known, not to be observed and acknowledged, if it were not to be investigated, described, depicted, then the very purpose of God to make Himself known would indeed be frustrated. Thus the development of science and arts, both interactive agents in the civilization process, has a meaning beyond providing us means for physical survival and sensual pleasure: through these complementary disciplines we testify before God, before man, and to ourselves about our consciousness—or even our amazement—that we exist, that the created world contains innumerable wonders and mysteries, that we are all connected with our Creator, that we are the recipients of His riches and bountiful gifts, and that we are participants in the creative unfoldment of His Will through human history, engaged in spiritualizing our lives and those of our fellow citizens, eagerly contributing to the creation of a spiritual world civilization.

II

Let us now take one step further behind the curtain of physical reality, to delve deeper into the operation of the spiritual forces that create existence as we know it, using the Sacred Scriptures of the Bahá'í Faith as our guide. My reason for doing so is not only to present a doctrine of the metaphysical nature of the universe, but also to derive models of the creative powers at work that could enhance our own limited creative endeavors.

The Bahá'í Sacred Scripture teaches us that God in His absolute transcendent essence did not create the world directly but through the *mediation of the creative Word*; the original creative act of God did *not* imply causation. Let me quote from the writings of His Holiness the Báb:3 "God created all things by His Primal Will, and this Primal Will by itself" (Bayán 3:6); "He has created Will from nothingness, It is a cause unto itself. This Will cannot be explained or qualified. Subsequently, He created all things as an effect of this Will" (qtd. in Mázandarání 1:99); "The Cause of the Will, in truth, is not the eternal Essence. . . . He created the Unity (the Primal Will) from itself, by itself and made it to be the cause of the existence of all existences" (Súriy-i-Tawhíd).

The world is not directly *caused* by God, as far as I can understand the Writings. The Primal Will was *called forth* from nothingness by the creative Word to establish Its own existence, and to generate the particular essences of beings from Itself, and to bring them to appear in the perceptible realm so as to be known in their full, concrete, and complex creation. This primal, generating Will (*Mashíyyat*) is identified with the essential nature of the Manifestation of God. Thus Moses, Buddha, Jesus, and Bahá'u'lláh, in terms of physical, historical beings, were the concrete expressions of this Primal Will, created so that ordinary man through establishing a relationship with these figures could be connected to their inner, essential reality, the Primal Will, and thus become

reunited with the origin of creation. Each of these has in turn initiated an entire civilization; and for each new one, God has signified a change of His Will, pointed out a new direction and cancelled (*badá'*) features of the previous Dispensation.

Now, the idea of creation without direct causation challenges us to thoroughly reexamine our conceptions of causation with regard to the creative process. The modern conceptions of the nature of causation in the creation of an object were generally shaped by Aristotle. He taught that there are four types of causation: taking the example of the production of a silver goblet to be used for giving sacrifice to the gods, he describes the *material cause*, that is, the material out of which it is produced; the *formal cause*, that is, the form the material should be given; the *final cause*, which is all the necessary constraints and principles defined by the purpose for which the object is produced, in this case the production of a goblet to be used for sacrificial rites; and then the *efficient cause*, that is, the work of the craftsman who actually makes the goblet, combining all the previous elements. God is traditionally described as the efficient cause of the universe. However, the Bahá'í writings challenge this idea, emphasizing that pristine creation is something different from causation, and so they definitely prevent us from degrading God to a demiurge who puts together disjointed entities from a static, ideal world in order to construct our physical reality.

In his analysis of the pre-Socratic conceptual world of the ancient Greeks, the philosopher Martin Heidegger brings our attention to a concept of creation that comes much closer to the one suggested by the Báb.⁴ First, Heidegger contends that the modern understanding of *cause* is implicit in the very etymology of the Latin word *causa*, being derived from *cadere*, meaning “to fall.” Thus a cause is a something that brings about the *effect* that a certain something *falls out*, or *turns out in such and such a specific way*; it becomes a *case*, so to speak. Heidegger then proceeds to analyze the etymology of Aristotle’s word for cause, *aitia*, a word coined by a consciousness that was not yet affected by rationalist categories of thought. It turns out that this word also has meanings like *occasion* and *accusation*. The related verb *aiteo* means to demand, to ask, to beg.

Going beyond Heidegger’s deliberately areligious philosophy, and using his ideas about creation as a tool to explore the possible signification of the Báb’s statement, I would suggest the following: To create something without causation might imply to demand (pray, ask for) the appearance of a transcendental reality in a particular context and to prepare conditions for this to happen. This transcendental reality is not itself intrinsic in what is actually made; it just appears in the context created. The appearing reality is not at all something made up, invented, or put together; rather it is un-covered, disclosed. What is made up owes its existence, its *raison d’être*, to the higher reality without actually being made by it; the production as such takes place on a lower level. The hidden meaning calls for its own appearance, and it eventually appears when a mirroring condition is present, that is, when a susceptible state (a “locus”) on a lower level has been brought into existence. Accordingly, the created world owes its existence to its being an occasion for divine attributes to appear in it; this does not mean God Himself made it, but He evidently created conditions in which it could constitute itself and thus become the locus of the appearance of God’s attributes within it. It was brought forth through the *challenge* of God’s creative word, through His *evocation*. Creation, after being evoked by God’s decree (*amr*), or by his mention (*dhikr*), then is self-generating in developing its intrinsic formal and material distinctions, which eventually fulfill the original demand: to mirror, to make God’s hidden nature appear; to uncover His hidden nature. This appearance of the transcendent in the manifest remains the purpose of all existence, of human life, therefore also the aspiration of all true science, of all worthy art.

The creation of a work of art can be seen in a similar perspective. Returning to Heidegger, a true masterwork of art is “the Truth of existing things setting itself into [the] work” (“*Das sich-ins-Werk-setzen der Wahrheit des Seienden*”) (*Der Ursprung des Kunstwerkes* 33). Heidegger goes on to point out that the Greek word for truth, *aletheia*, has the etymological meaning of un-hiddenness. Thus truth becomes the appearance of the transcendent, deeper aspect of reality (Being) appearing in a finite context (the work of art), among other existing things, but the work of art has the function of heightening this awareness and realization connected to the unveiling of transcendental reality. Its effect upon us becomes to marvel, to experience intensively that we are present, to find ourselves alive and existing and to rejoice in this realization.

The Bahá'í Shrine, Terraces, monumental buildings, and gardens on the slope of Mount Carmel that recently were officially opened, fulfill all these properties of the work of art in a most exceptional and exquisite way. Their existence is due to a few words of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh—by their decree (*qadá'*), but they had to be physically conceived and built by material and practical means, after the House of Justice found the time was right and gave permission. Despite all the Terraces’ beauty, their ultimate fascination is of course the transcendent spirit that is found in them. Bahá'u'lláh’s Tablet of Carmel abounds with allusions to the appearance of the hidden in the manifest: “God hath . . . made thee [Carmel] the dawning-place of His signs. . . .”; “He that was hidden from mortal eyes is come!” (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 4). The Tablet contains a recurrent metaphor describing the movement from the transcendent realm into manifestation in the earthly dimension: The Name of God, or Heavenly element is first invoked, the Earth shakes in response, and a new creation, until now hidden in the unseen world, is made to appear.

“Sanctified be the Lord . . . , at the mention of Whose name all the atoms of the earth have been made to vibrate, and the Tongue of Grandeur hath been moved to disclose that which had been wrapt in His knowledge and lay concealed within the treasury of His might” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 5). In the oratorio *Terraces of Light* I wrote for the opening of the Terraces on Mount Carmel, I extracted from the above quotation a formula for introducing changes or new elements in the piece: first a signal, like a fanfare, symbolizes the mention of the Name of God, then a tremulating sound, sometimes a kettledrum roll, in the orchestra, before the new musical element appears.

III

Having now discussed the relationship between God’s absolutely Transcendent Essence and the Primal Will, and deduced from this the principle of creation through emanation, let us now consider the self-generation of the Primal Will, through the Primal Point. In the Lawh-i-Hikmat Bahá’u’lláh states: “The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different” (*Tablets of Bahá’u’lláh* 140). This statement about the creation of the spiritual universe may seem nebulous, but it becomes quite clear when seen in the light of the Báb’s discourse on the creative word, “Be!,” the Arabic word *kun*. The word is first of all used in the Qur’án: “His command when He willeth aught, is but to say to it, BE [*kun*], and IT IS” (36:80). We know the reference to this word from the long obligatory prayer in the passage in which we testify that “Thou art God, that there is no God but Thee, and that He Who hath been manifested is the Hidden Mystery, the Treasured Symbol, through Whom the letters B and E (Be) have been joined and knit together” (*Prayers and Meditations* 321).

The Arabic word consists of an initial burst of energy: “*k*,” which immediately has its resonance in the softer vowel, *n*: “*Káf* [the letter *k*] represents the station of *Mashíyyat* (Primal Will) and *Nún* [the letter *n*] represents the station of *Irádih* (Purpose); *Mashíyyat* is the Father of things and *Irádih* the Mother. . . . Through *Káf* God created the substance [*Máddíyyih*] of all things and through *Nún* God created the form [*Súrat*] of all things” (The Báb, Tafsír-i-Bismi’lláh; provisional translation). We understand that within this unitary sound *kun* there is an inherent polarity between an active component and a passive one: the active one ordains being; the passive one is the matrix containing all possibilities of form. Being has been endowed with the endless potentiality to form essences of particular beings. Perhaps creation so far is timeless, perpetual; all possible creations for all times are there, yet nothing is materialized, selected for actual existence.

If we are to understand further the implications of the active and passive forces with regard to the emergence of the physical world from the Will of God, the following quotation from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá is interesting:

[T]he substance and primary matter of contingent beings is the ethereal power, which is invisible and only known through its effects, such as electricity, heat, and light—these are vibrations of that power, and this is established and proven in natural philosophy and is known as the ethereal substance [*máddiy-i-athíríyyih*]. This ethereal substance is itself both the active force and the recipient; in other words, it is the sign of the Primal Will in the phenomenal world. . . .” (Qtd. in Brown 28)

The next step in the divine creative process now casts a dynamic element into creation; the first active point determines to activate a latent possibility of form, so that a certain thing will appear in the world of creation. This third step of creation, the actualization of a particular preexisting potential, is called *Qadar* in the Writings. The following quotation by the Báb may serve to elucidate the meaning of this concept:

Subsequently, He created all things as an effect of this Will. This is impossible save through seven degrees of contingency. Without these seven degrees nothing is possible in the contingent world. These seven are Will [*Mashíyyat*], Purpose [*Irádih*], Predestination/decreed fate [*Qadar*]; Decreed Fate/Predestination [*Qadá*], Permission [*Idhní*], Fixed Time [*Ajal*], and the Book [*Kitáb*]. (Qtd. in Mázandarání 1:99; provisional translation)

With *Qadar*, a process of diversification begins, which means an initial, although perhaps not yet manifest, entry into the categories of time and space. Now *Qadar* would probably correspond to the element of heat referred to in the above quotation from the Lawh-i-Hikmat, the element of heat being certainly the Fire element, which is more or less the same as Light. Thus *Qadar* would probably correspond to that moment in Genesis when God says: “Let there be light.” Before that, the heaven and the earth, probably symbolic of the active and the recipient agents (or *Mashíyyat* and *Irádih*), had already been created: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep; and the Spirit of God was moving over the

face of the waters. And God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. And God saw that the light was good; and God separated the light from the darkness" (Gen. 1:1–4).

According to Genesis, God proceeds to create all things. It seems, however, that the first chapter of Genesis does not deal with physical creation. It is the creation of eternal archetypes in what is called the Kingdom (*Malakút*) in the Bahá'í writings. In this realm man as a species always preexisted ideally, regardless of the historic processes of this world. Only in Genesis 2 does the reality ideally created begin to manifest itself in the historic dimension, a dimension where the right time (or Term, *Ajal*) will have to be there before that reality can become manifest:

These are the generations of the heavens and the earth when they were created. In the day that the LORD God made the earth and the heavens when no plant of the field was yet in the earth and no herb of the field had yet sprung up—for the LORD God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was no man to till the ground; but a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole face of the ground—then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being. (Gen. 2:4–7)

IV

Let me now present some musical thoughts that the contact with these ideas released in my mind. When I began writing the piece for the opening of the Terraces on Mount Carmel, I was allowed by the Universal House of Justice to stay at the World Centre for three weeks. Daily visits in the gardens, in the Shrine of the Báb, and search in the Báb's Texts released a strange ecstasy within me, and while conceiving the main piece for the Terraces, I also had the idea of another piece. I accepted a request from my school, the Norwegian State Academy of Music, to write a piece to celebrate the change of the millennium, and I found a way to include 230 performers from the school, and ended up with a work of one hour's duration. I called it "As the Waves of One Sea." In my mind, and in its interior construction, the piece was actually a contemplation of a number of the Báb's metaphysical and numerological categories. The piece begins with a forceful stroke on a tam-tam (a huge, flat gong), placed on an elevated spot above the orchestra. This sound symbolizes the *kun*. It is a stroke that provides the active force, the existence of the sound, and then there is an enormously complex, rich resonance, a sound so rich that one could imagine that all other sounds could come from this one, if it were to be filtered in different ways. Now, the whole piece is organized into eighteen sections by the nineteen strokes of this huge, elevated tam-tam.

The Báb divides nineteen, the number of *wáhid*, meaning unity, into 3+4+6+6. From these numbers, a number of musical rhythms are generated. The pitches used are generated using the first nineteen partials of nineteen subharmonically transposed fundamentals. These, of course, are things you cannot hear as such; they are parts of the internal construction of the pieces. The first stroke on the huge tam-tam placed on an elevated spot in the hall is an equivalent to *kun*, and it is echoed (mirrored) by nineteen strokes on minor tamtams spaced around the audience. Each of these is placed in front of a door in the concert house. The next stroke of the big tam-tam gets a resonance in the big choir: a hundred voices sounding with no internal order, as if heaven and earth had not yet been separated. The third stroke, and the orchestra enters in the same way, playing simultaneously all the twenty-one pitch classes used in the piece. Now the ocean is starting to have waves, and the waves uncover vaguely some of its own interior, so we start to discern different groups of instruments. A new stroke, and now the doors behind the smaller tam-tams are opened halfway; in the distance one can hear, but not see, different kinds of music, as if preexisting in the ideal world, but not yet manifest. Now back to the beginning; eventually the human voice in harmony is heard, and with a tam-tam stroke, you hear a harp solo that represents the dawning of the first light, followed by a rejoicing flute quartet. The musical material of the flute quartet and harp solo is constructed by forms I deduced from *Subhána'lláh*, the particular invocation (*tasbîh*) that the Báb in the Persian Bayán assigns to the first element, that of light/fire. The tonality of the section combines subharmonic layers 1 and 19, and the section ends with a ritornello playing with rhythmical groupings based on the numbers 3, 4, 6, and 6.

Successively the piece descends through the air element, the water element, and the earth element, each section using its proper invocation as its hidden constructive element. It eventually arrives at a consummation in the ninth section, whose fundamental is the nineteenth subharmonic and which again presents the human voice. The remaining section forms some kind of a reascension to the beginning point. The forces of diversification attain their consummation during the fourteenth section, where the music played by various mobile ensembles emerges and takes the floor of the concert hall while the choir is transformed into a cheering crowd; there is a jazz ensemble, a Norwegian folk music ensemble, a Renaissance ensemble, a military band, and also a fantasy ensemble playing on hoses and tubes. In the next section four fanfare ensembles, each placed in a different corner of the concert house, are accompanying an invisible fireworks while the choir is jubilating and pointing to invisible rockets; the fireworks

and climactic sounds bring the entire world back again to the first point, from which the world again is ready to reemerge at the nineteenth stroke of the big tam-tam.

V

We will now proceed one step more into the creative processes that determine physical existence. The Bahá'í Faith teaches us that all the Names and Attributes of the one God form the basis of the creation of all existing phenomena. This is evident from passages such as this one:

Upon the inmost reality of each and every created thing He hath shed the light of one of His names, and made it a recipient of the glory of one of His attributes. Upon the reality of man, however, He hath focused the radiance of all of His names and attributes, and made it a mirror of His own Self. Alone of all created things man hath been singled out for so great a favour, so enduring a bounty. (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 65)

The acceptance of this statement will naturally form the basis of a Bahá'í epistemology. Evidently, this is how we, mankind, are created so that we would have the “capacity to know Him [God] and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation. . . .” (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 65).

It is of paramount importance, if we are to grasp the distinctive nature of the creative relationship between transcendence and physical reality, to understand the difference between a *concept* and a *name*. A *concept* (from Latin, *con capere*) means to seize hold of a certain something by the aid of something. The etymology of the Germanic word *begreifen* reveals a similar meaning. To grasp is of course a very useful act, because you can appropriate what you grasp and handle that which you have seized. A word that is a concept gives us a mental tool with which we can grasp or seize something. To form or define a concept is mostly the end result of a process of research, of observation, and of contemplation of a certain aspect of reality. The forming of a concept will crystallize or freeze a number of more fluid or vaguer phenomena, define—that is, literally put a border around—that phenomenon and delimit it from other phenomena. By itself, a concept is, however, merely an arbitrary tagging or labeling of a mental construct, useful among other things to retrieve the associations to which it is fixed, from our own memory or that of others. By themselves, concepts are empty if not filled with the experiences that define their meaning. Heidegger puts it very clearly when he says: “Philosophische Begriffe bleiben leer, wenn wir nicht zuvor ergriffen sind von dem, was sie begreifen sollen” (“Philosophical concepts remain empty as long as we are not captured by that which they are supposed to conceive”) (*Gesamtausgabe* 29/30:9; my translation; italics added to indicate etymologically related roots equivalent to the German original's *greifen*, “to seize”).

The Names of God are intrinsically something entirely different from concepts. They are *agents of creation* in the world beyond, with their representations in this world. Perhaps they can be conceived as different rivers, each containing an amount of onrushing energy—that is, a fluid quality—and a static, resistant quality, that provokes or filters the formal potential of this energy. This would be more or less like boulders in a river bed that cause the rise of whirls and vortices, which would be the equivalent of the appearance of wonderful forms in the contingent world. The static elements that cause the onrushing energies or generate phenomena in this world are the *archetypes* (*a'yan thábita*) that provide us with the organizing structure of the world, and of our minds: 'Abdu'l-Bahá exemplifies them as directions like North and South, that is, immaterial but relational matrices.

As to the “fixed archetypes” [*a'yan thábita*] spoken of by the mystics, the argument is this: Numbers, although fixed, have no definite existence and are a mere convention. As they say: “East and west, north and south, possess a fixed character, yet they have no objective existence. Likewise, the fixed archetypes are the forms of God's knowledge: they have a fixed character, but have not inhaled even a breath of real existence.” (“'Abdu'l-Bahá's Tablet” 27)

The Names are not just agents in the process of creation that proceed from God to the physical world. A Name is a tool for us as well, but another kind of a tool than a concept whose function it merely is to *designate*. It lies in the nature of a Name that it is designed for *invocation*. Through a Name one calls upon the bearer of the Name, in order to bring that other reality into the presence of the one who is calling. Once the spirit of faith is activated in man, through man's belief in the Manifestation of God, Who represents the unifying and mediating central agency of the created world, we are potentially connected to all of reality. To the extent that it is God's will, and we are receptive in the right way, the reality of any existing thing is spiritually present with us. The evocation of the inner reality of things brings us into a communication or—more appropriately expressed—*communion* with the world around us so that by resonating with it we may come to understand it more deeply.

Calling upon someone is only meaningful if that one upon whom we call is another sentient being. The Bahá'í Scripture states explicitly that reality is not dead, mechanical, inherently devoid of signification and intelligence. There is no such thing as an entirely inanimate object; the world around us is alive. In His letter to Dr. Forel, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains this fact clearly and without any shadow of a doubt to this sympathetic but materialistically oriented scientist: "As to the existence of spirit in the mineral: it is indubitable that minerals are endowed with a spirit and life according to the requirements of that stage. This unknown secret, too, hath become known unto the materialists who now maintain that all beings are endowed with life, even as He saith in the Qur'án, 'All things are living'" ("Tablet to Dr. Forel" 9). Accordingly, the evocation of the inner reality of things should be possible. It provides the practicing natural scientist with the idea that a merely objective approach (in which man, so to speak, challenges nature through his devices, his measurements, his apparatuses, his mental fixations or reformed concepts) could be complemented by a sensitive approach to observation, one more like someone who enjoys the company of nature in a dialogue, than someone who wants to conquer it and appropriate it for his own purposes.

Although ordinary people can never match the Manifestations of God, we know we should also emulate Their example. And we know that Bahá'u'lláh on several occasions addressed or held conversations with a number of objects, such as water drops, grasshoppers, mountains (Carmel), with limbs and parts of the human body, and even with cultural objects (cities, houses) and ideal objects (trustworthiness, the Maid of Heaven).

If we wish to contribute to the unending process of creating a new civilization, be it as artists or scientists or in whatever capacity, I suggest we should exploit to the full the belief that the Names of God are being coequally revealed in material reality and in the human soul. The implication is that research is not simply concerned with "something that is going on out there." Research is also going on through our contemplation of reality as it appears to us in our own mind and spirit. Reality has a resonance in our soul. An echo of The creative Word that created the reality of the world can, we may suppose, be heard in the thinking that streams from our own higher Self.

VI

This approach to the investigation of the world around us depends, however, on a certain culture of the mind. It may briefly be summed up as the principle of an unprejudiced approach to the search for truth. We may also call it *the principle of the pure heart*.⁵ This culture of the mind, or mindset, has another interesting relationship to God's Names through the use we make of them by the activity of *remembrance* (*dhikr*). "True remembrance is to make mention of the Lord, the All-Praised, and forget aught else beside Him" (*Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh* 155). The term *remembrance* both denotes a human, individual process of forgetting everything but God through the repetition of one of His Names, and is at the same time used as a name of that reality which is the intended goal of such an exercise, namely the Primal Point, the Primal Will, the Manifestation of God in His transcendent aspect. "Unlock, O people, the gates of the hearts of men with the keys of the remembrance of Him Who is the Remembrance of God. . . ." (*Gleanings* 296), Bahá'u'lláh says, thus ingeniously connecting both usages of the term into a compact, memorable statement.⁶

The term *heart*, so frequently used in Bahá'í Scriptures, seems often to indicate a state of human consciousness that lies beyond feelings, beyond thought. The meaning of the Bahá'í term *heart*, as the term is described in some passages, is not adequately explained by using the meaning of the word in everyday language, where one generally aims at a sincere and courageous expression of human feelings. As I understand, by the heart is meant, in a number of cases anyway, that faculty of God, that, when purified, is capable of reflecting the Primal Will. The Primal Will is completely free, has no describable quality, but is the originator of all qualities. The heart is that faculty in man that can reflect this reality from which all thinking, all imagining, all feeling radiate. But of itself, it has no particular quality, it is no object, it has no form.

Now how does this relate to the question of the quest for truth, a quest in common both for the scientist, the artist, and the spiritual seeker? The exercise of remembrance, such as we daily practice it through the repetitions of the Greatest Name, rehearses in us the ability to direct ourselves towards a point of truth, while letting go of every image we might have of it, any feeling. We are approaching the very beginning of the universe in our own mind. Before the appearance of mental images of forms and qualities in our minds, we find *intentions* to perceive or create forms. In a state of communion with the Spirit of the Manifestations of God, that can occur as a result of remembrance of His Greatest Name, new intentions can be born in our minds from the Primal Will, through the mediation of the Holy Spirit. These may mean *new perceptions* of the world—we see things anew—or they release the impulse to create new entities or relationships in the world, if we carry out our intentions in action. Thus we can become co-creators of a new civilization.

From the intentions born out of the communion with His transcendent Spirit creative thinking can issue. Creative thinking is something going on in our minds; it is self-propelling, self-generating. Thought, on the contrary, is the finished, fixed result of these relatively fluid processes; the result shows itself in words, in concepts, or becomes

solidified in the definite shapes of an accomplished work of art, or may be translated into the building of well-defined institutions, resulting in actions that benefit civilization. However, unless we master the process before the finished result, we will not develop our creative potential to the fullest.

VII

I would like to be more specific about the relationship between the pure heart and the scientific approach to reality. Certainly, useful scientific work that is in full correspondence with a given code of scientific methodology can be done without using the heart. However, I think that discoveries that lead to fundamentally new, basic insights concerning the world presuppose purity of heart and a sincerely truth-seeking attitude, at least with regard to the specific matter under investigation. In saying so, I do not say that the total person needs to have a pure heart with regard to all fields of human existence (which would mean sainthood), be it the quest for religious truth or personal moral integrity. Now the corollary of the above statement is that scientific method never is self-sufficient. It presupposes the mindset of the researcher in terms of a pure and truth-seeking heart.

My experience, and I think that of many others, has proven that the indiscriminate application of scientific method to any phenomenon will not automatically reveal the truth—the inner essence—of the phenomenon being investigated, but rather will confirm a number of assumptions already implicit in the method itself. I am speaking out of my own experience with academic musicological research. Scientific method may become like a prejudice, hindering the open, susceptible mind—which is more or less how we would define a pure heart—from reflecting the truth of the matter which is the inherent essence of the phenomenon studied. I am not suggesting we should discard the use of objective methods, but we must not put implicit faith in any scientific method as leading to the uncovering of the truth of the matter we are investigating. It must be applied judiciously, and with a truth-seeking attitude. The truth we seek is the truth of that which is under investigation, and this truth is its divinely created endowment of inherent purpose and essential attributes, as well as its network of interactions with other created entities.

Already seventy or eighty years ago Edmund Husserl, the founder of phenomenology, coined the famous slogan: “*Zu den Sachen selbst!*”—“To the things themselves!” Through phenomenological contemplation of the object under investigation, Husserl described a rational, stringent approach to reality, based on a sensitive attitude that seeks to incorporate the subjective consciousness and conscience of the researcher while on the other hand emphasizing a methodical approach that aims at preventing subjectivism from detracting from an other-oriented, matter-of-fact attitude. In a phenomenological context, truth unravels its essential nature in the light of evidence in man’s transcendental self, and is of a progressive nature, according to Husserl. Thus, the acquisition of such a mindset through a methodic exercise of the mental faculties will help maintain contact with commonsensical reality and help eliminate the absurdities that sometimes result from a naive belief in objective scientific methods as such.

Now Husserl, in his critique of the implicit crisis caused in Western civilization by the objectivist approach to reality, defines a few basic states of mind that the researcher has to be able master in order to be a truthful researcher. One of these he terms the *transcendental self*, and he describes meticulously how man momentarily attains to this by rehearsing the intention by which man suspends all judgments about the world, lets go of all efforts at explanation, and explores the phenomena appearing to him from the point zero of an open, unassuming mind. In his own words:

This ubiquitous detachment from any point of view regarding the objective world we term the *phenomenological epoché*. It is the methodology through which I come to understand myself as that ego and life of consciousness in which and through which the entire objective world exists for me, and is for me precisely as it is. Everything in the world, all spatio-temporal being, exists for me because I experience it, because I perceive it, remember it, think of it in any way, judge it, value it, desire it, etc. It is well known that Descartes designates all this by the term *cogito*. For me the world is nothing other than what I am aware of and what appears valid in such *cogitationes*. *The whole meaning and reality of the world rests exclusively on such cogitationes*. My entire worldly life takes its course within these. I cannot live, experience, think, value, and act in any world which is not in some sense in me, and derives its meaning and truth from me. If I place myself above that entire life and if I abstain from any commitment about reality, specifically one which accepts the world as existing, and if I view that life exclusively as consciousness of the world, then I reveal myself as the pure ego with its pure stream of *cogitationes*. I certainly do not discover myself as one item among others in the world, since I have altogether suspended judgement about the world. I am not the ego of an individual man. I am the ego in whose stream of consciousness the world itself—including myself as an object in it, a man who exists in the world—first acquires meaning and reality. (Husserl, *The Paris Lectures* 8)

This particular state of mind has been a theme recurring through the history of both science and religion: Buddha dealt with similar mental exercises in detail in his *Mahāsātipatthana Sutta* in which He defined the conditions of mindfulness in meditation and life; and Descartes, to whom Husserl refers above, described a similar principle through his famous dictum “*Cogito ergo sum*”; and we all know Bahá’u’lláh’s instruction to the true seeker that he should “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” (*Kitáb-i-Íqán* 192).

I would moreover suggest that Bahá’u’lláh encourages us to attain this state of mind daily through the short obligatory prayer in which the act of testifying or witnessing has a central position, this being the only repeated word. I am proposing, therefore, that *the intention to “testify” or “bear witness” is a complex but integrated state of mind in which we, either having observed a particular reality or simultaneously while observing it, state that observation or experience in the presence of another, attesting to the truth of what we say through the evidence of our own being.* The mastery of this state of mind has a number of implications for a spiritual civilization beyond this context, be it in the arts, the sciences, or for the sanity of the human mind.

I consider that the developments that took place in Husserl’s philosophy, including his critique of objective science, are of particular importance to the question of the use and usefulness of scientific method in a Bahá’í context. He in no way intended to do away with science or get away from a rational or scientific discourse; he was not in favor of relativizing truth entirely by reducing it merely to a projection of psychological mechanisms, or even further, by degrading the question of truth to merely individual points of view, such as is often done in the postmodern world. He actually developed a constructive critique of a number of ideas central to objective science, such as the dichotomy between inner and outer reality, thus allowing a point of view that incorporated the unity of existence into systematic thought. I would think that for Bahá’í researchers, a reconsideration of Husserl’s ideas in the light of Bahá’u’lláh’s Revelation might be fruitful as a means of creating a fresh approach to scientific methodology altogether, one that would accommodate a spiritual aspect in the process of rational research and investigation.

Consistently with the phenomenological approach, the question of truth will have to be assessed through *self-evidence*. Constant effort to cleanse one’s heart by forgetting all presuppositions and assumptions, and letting go of one’s pet ideas and favorite opinions will help to avoid clogging up mental clarity. “Self-evident” truths may turn out to be insufficient as new aspects of the phenomenon under investigation emerge, and will have to be reconsidered and revised accordingly. Thus truth for the unselfish researcher will be progressive. For art, self-evidence might be a sufficient criterion for assessing the appropriateness and wellformedness of an expression. For “hard” science one would have to supplement the self-evident thesis with logical proofs and experimental testing, and possibly adjust it in the light of new experience.

VIII

We have studied the ongoing process of creation in nature as well as in human beings and human civilization. First we contemplated the idea of creation without causation, then we probed the philosophy of the Primal Will and the Primal Point. We discussed purity of heart as a prerequisite for communion with this reality, as being fundamental for human life in general and indispensable for truth in science and art. One aspect of the pure heart is its openness, its having no form. Creative intentions spring from this point of origin. Intentions still have no specific form, but they represent an essential will to manifest a relationship to something positively existing in the manifest world. Intentions pass through the world of images and archetypes—the former more like vision, the latter more like cognitive patterns—before or while materializing in this world of differences. This brief summary of some salient points presented above is at the same a restatement aimed at orienting our intention away from a cosmic ontology in order to rediscover the relevance and applicability of these ideas for understanding and releasing human creativity. This restatement is based on the assumption that the world we experience and the human consciousness created to know about it spring from the same point of unity.

I would now like to close by presenting two testimonies from excellent creators in the field of human civilization, one a scientist and one an artist. The first testimony is a letter written by Albert Einstein formulated in response to an inquiry initiated by the journal *L’Enseignement Mathématique*⁷ about a hundred years ago:

(A) The words or the language, as they are written or spoken, do not seem to play any role in my mechanism of thought. The psychical entities which seem to serve as elements in thought are certain signs and more or less clear images which can be “voluntarily” reproduced and combined.

There is, of course, a certain connection between those elements and relevant logical concepts. It is also clear that the desire to arrive finally at logically connected concepts is the emotional basis of this rather vague play with the above mentioned elements. But taken from a psychological viewpoint, this

combinatory play seems to be the essential feature in productive thought—before there is any connection with logical construction in words or other kinds of signs which can be communicated to others.

(B) The above mentioned elements are, in my case, of visual and some of muscular type. Conventional words or other signs have to be sought for laboriously only in a secondary stage, when the mentioned associative play is sufficiently established and can be reproduced at will.

(C) According to what has been said, the play with the mentioned elements is aimed to be analogous to certain logical connections one is searching for.

. . . . It seems to me that what you call full consciousness is a limit case which can never be fully accomplished. This seems to me connected with the fact called the narrowness of consciousness. . . . (Qtd. in Hadamard 142–43)

I would like to draw your attention specifically to a few points mentioned here. Professor Einstein's creative thinking only reaches a conceptual, communicable formulation quite at the very end. Evidently, he must be superbly in control of the mathematical language and its conventions to master this final stage. However, the reasoning process itself is preconceptual, preverbal, closer to an artist's work than to exact science, since he works with mental images. In his last remark concerning the narrowness of consciousness, Professor Einstein seems to suggest that the creative moments do not happen in a state of full consciousness, since a fully conscious, concentrated mind, is too narrowed in its attention span, is too controlled, is not sufficiently free flowing to conceive new and unexpected ideas. It is now generally accepted that the creative process often passes through different phases: one characterized by concentrated effort to penetrate a field; the second characterized by a more turbulent grappling with problems that can find no solution through well-known techniques of problem solving; the third phase being that of the "Aha!" experience, a creative illumination that comes as a surprise when the mind is not working in a concentrated manner; and the final one being the practical application and testing of the ideas conceived.⁸

The second example is another introspective account from one of European music history's greatest creative geniuses, namely Johannes Brahms. In an interview with a young American journalist in Vienna in 1896 attended by Maestro Joachim (a famous violinist and lifelong friend of Brahms) as well as a stenographer and translator from the American Embassy in Vienna.

"Dr. Brahms, "I queried, "how do you contact Omnipotence? Most people find Him very aloof."

"That is the great question," Brahms replied. "It cannot be done merely by will power working through the conscious mind, which is an evolutionary product of the physical realm and perishes with the body. It can only be accomplished by the soul-powers within—the real ego that survives bodily death. Those powers are quiescent to the conscious mind unless illumined by Spirit. . . . To realize that we are one with the Creator, as Beethoven did, is a wonderful and awe inspiring experience. Very few human beings ever come into that realization and that is why there are so few great composers or creative geniuses in any line of human endeavor. I always contemplate all this before commencing to compose. This is the first step. When I feel the urge I begin by appealing directly to my Maker and I first ask Him the three most important questions pertaining to our life here in this world—whence, wherefore, whither [*woher, warum, wohin*]?"

"I immediately feel vibrations that thrill my whole being," Brahms continued. "These are the Spirit illuminating the soul power within, and in this exalted state, I see clearly what is obscure in my ordinary moods; then I feel capable of drawing inspiration from above, as Beethoven did. Above all, I realize at such moments the tremendous significance of Jesus' supreme revelation, 'I and my Father are one.' Those vibrations assume the forms of distinct mental images, after I have formulated my desire and resolve in regard to what I want—namely, to be inspired so that I can compose something that will uplift and benefit humanity—something of permanent value.

"Straightaway the ideas flow in upon me, directly from God, and not only do I see distinct themes in my mind's eye, but they are clothed in the right forms, harmonies and orchestration. Measure by measure, the finished product is revealed to me when I am in those rare, inspired moods, as they were to Tartini when he composed his greatest work—the Devil's Trill Sonata. I have to be in a semi-trance condition to get such results—a condition when the conscious mind is in temporary abeyance and the subconscious is in control, for it is through the subconscious mind, which is a part of Omnipotence, that the inspiration comes. I have to be careful, however, not to lose consciousness, otherwise the ideas fade away. . . ." (Abell 4–6)

“But don’t make the mistake, my young friend, of thinking that because I attach such importance to inspiration from above, that that is all there is to it, by no means. Structure is just as consequential, for without craftsmanship, inspiration is a ‘mere reed shaken in the wind’ or ‘sounding brass or tinkling cymbals.’

“Here again I took my cue from Beethoven who had both inspiration and workmanship in a superlative degree. I have worked very hard on all my major compositions. I began my First Symphony in 1855 and I did not put the finishing touches to it until 1876. What do you think of that? I know of no other composer who labored twenty-one years over one work.”

“But Johannes,” protested Joachim, “you wrote also during those two decades many other works in big form as well as dozens of smaller pieces. . . .

Brahms: “I see that you were afraid that I was giving Mr Abell the idea that I toiled unremittingly and incessantly on my first symphony, and I am glad to you have corrected that impression. I wish, however, to impress upon him the great truth that my compositions are not the fruits of inspiration alone, but also of severe, laborious and painstaking toil; I want the readers of this book, in the years to come, to realize that a composer who hopes to write anything of lasting value, must have both inspiration and craftsmanship.” (Abell 58–59)

Summarizing this extraordinary account of the creative process, one can see that the contemplation of the Word of God is the first stage, and that this releases creative ideas. The focus on the purpose and meaning of man’s earthly life is important. Moreover, the intention to serve and benefit humanity is an integral part of the composer’s attitude. To be receptive to inspired ideas, one must be in a state between the waking and dreaming state. The channel for inspired ideas is the artist’s mastery of his craft, and this demands lifelong discipline and constant critical reassessment. Thus the existence of inspiration depends entirely on a receptacle that is only formed through rehearsing, study, and practical experience, and critical revisioning to improve one’s performance.

IX

Let me try to synthesize some of the points made above concerning noncausal creation by emanation, the world as an emergent phenomenon to be witnessed by the human spirit and as object of scientific research, by taking a quotation from the Báb as my point of departure: “Verily, the sun is but a token from My presence so that the true believers among My servants may discern in its rising the dawning of every Dispensation” (*Selections* 159).

The idea of the rising sun, the dawning of the light, the appearance of the Sun of Truth, is an archetypal one in our religion. Yet, if one views the sunrise from the point of view of objective science, it does *not* really exist; the scientific explanation is that the planet turns towards the sun, making it gradually visible. Thus from the point of view of objective natural science we are dealing with an illusion of perception. And nevertheless, the Sacred Scripture suggests that this “illusion” is the very reason for the creation of the sun! Certainly, we would say that God in creating a phenomenon that seems to be something else than it turns out to be after scientific scrutiny, is a trickster. But I would say, rather, He shows us the very essence of art: Art is solely made because of its emergent, symbolic reality. Its construction, its explanation from the point of view of producing it, is a different story—probably a scientific one. Its symbolic reality, however, is its essence, not the aspect of it that concerns how it is put together, analyzed, or explained scientifically. Its immediate appearance in our “life world” (*Lebenswelt* as Husserl would call it) carries a significance so profound that it provides the very reason for its existence. The metaphorical nature of the sunrise, which is only accessible to the human mind, and about which man can bear witness before God and his fellow man—was the essential reason for its creation!

Notes

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1. See Saiedi, *Logos and Civilization*.
2. See Margulis and Sagan.
3. Provisional translations.
4. See Heidegger, “The Question of Technology,” a lecture under the title “Technik und die Kehre” given in 1953. I have used the Norwegian translation in *Oikos og Techne* 75–111).
5. See Saiedi, chap. 5.

6. For more details on remembrance, refer to the chapter about the meditation on the Greatest Name in Thoresen, *Unlocking the Gate of the Heart*.
7. Vol. 4 (1902) and vol. 6 (1904).
8. These phases have been more carefully explained and applied to the process of meditation in a Bahá'í context in Thoresen, *Unlocking the Gate of the Heart*.

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