

## The Reality of Man

When we ponder over the reality of the microcosm, we discover that in the microcosm there are deposited three realities. Man is endowed with an outer or physical reality. It belongs to the material realm, the animal kingdom, because it has sprung from the material world. This animalistic reality of man he shares in common with the animals.

The human body is like animals subject to nature's laws. But man is endowed with a second reality, the rational or intellectual reality; and the intellectual reality of man predominates over nature....

Yet there is a third reality in man, the spiritual reality. Through its medium one discovers spiritual revelations, a celestial faculty which is infinite as regards the intellectual as well as physical realms. That power is conferred upon man through the breath of the Holy Spirit. It is an eternal reality, an indestructible reality, a reality belonging to the divine, supernatural kingdom; a reality whereby the world is illumined, a reality which grants unto man eternal life.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Foundations of World Unity, p. 51

Having created the world and all that liveth and moveth therein, He, through the direct operation of His unconstrained and sovereign Will, chose to confer upon man the unique distinction and capacity to know Him and to love Him—a capacity that must needs be regarded as the generating impulse and the primary purpose underlying the whole of creation.... 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 favor, so enduring a bounty.

Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, p. 65

All praise and glory be to God Who, through the power of His might, hath delivered His creation from the nakedness of non-existence, and clothed it with the mantle of life. From among all created things He hath singled out for His special favor the pure, the gem-like reality of man, and invested it with a unique capacity of knowing Him and of reflecting the greatness of His glory. This twofold distinction conferred upon him hath cleansed away from his heart the rust of every vain desire, and made him worthy of the vesture with which his Creator hath deigned to clothe him. It hath served to rescue his soul from the wretchedness of ignorance.

Bahá'u'lláh: Gleanings, pp. 77-78

The station of man is great, very great. God has created man after His own image and likeness. He has endowed him with a mighty power which is capable of discovering the mysteries of phenomena. Through its use man is able to arrive at ideal conclusions instead of being restricted to the mere plane of sense impressions. As he possesses sense endowment in common with the animals, it is evident that he is distinguished above them by his conscious power of penetrating abstract realities. He acquires divine wisdom; he searches out the mysteries of creation; he witnesses the radiance of omnipotence; he attains the second birth—that is to say, he is born out of the material world just as he is born of the mother; he attains to everlasting life; he draws nearer to God; his heart is replete with the love of God. This is the foundation of the world of humanity; this is the image and likeness of God; this is the reality of man; otherwise, he is an animal. Verily, God has created the animal in the image and likeness of man, for though man outwardly is human, yet in nature he possesses animal tendencies.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 262-263

The reality of man is his thought, not his material body. The thought force and the animal force are partners. Although man is part of the animal creation, he possesses a power of thought superior to all other created beings.

If a man's thought is constantly aspiring towards heavenly subjects then does he become saintly; if on the other hand his thought does not soar, but is directed downwards to centre itself upon the things of this world, he grows more and more material until he arrives at a state little better than that of a mere animal.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: Paris Talks, pp. 17-18

As we have before indicated, this human reality stands between the higher and the lower in man, between the world of the animal and the world of Divinity. When the animal proclivity in man becomes predominant, he sinks even lower than the brute. When the heavenly powers are triumphant in his nature, he becomes the noblest and most superior being in the world of creation. All the imperfections found in the animal are found in man. In him there is antagonism, hatred and selfish struggle for existence; in his nature lurk jealousy, revenge, ferocity, cunning,

hypocrisy, greed, injustice and tyranny. So to speak, the reality of man is clad in the outer garment of the animal, the habiliments of the world of nature, the world of darkness, imperfections and unlimited baseness.

On the other hand, we find in him justice, sincerity, faithfulness, knowledge, wisdom, illumination, mercy and pity, coupled with intellect, comprehension, the power to grasp the realities of things and the ability to penetrate the truths of existence. All these great perfections are to be found in man. Therefore, we say that man is a reality which stands between light and darkness. From this standpoint his nature is threefold: animal, human and divine. The animal nature is darkness; the heavenly is light in light.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, p. 465

For the inner reality of man is a demarcation line between the shadow and the light, a place where the two seas meet;<sup>1</sup> it is the lowest point on the arc of descent,<sup>2</sup> and therefore is it capable of gaining all the grades above. With education it can achieve all excellence; devoid of education it will stay on, at the lowest point of imperfection.

Every child is potentially the light of the world –and at the same time its darkness; wherefore must the question of education be accounted as of primary importance. From his infancy, the child must be nursed at the breast of God’s love, and nurtured in the embrace of His knowledge, that he may radiate light, grow in spirituality, be filled with wisdom and learning, and take on the characteristics of the angelic host.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Selections ...’Abdu’l-Bahá, pp. 130-131

Without doubt each being is the center of the shining forth of the glory of God—that is to say, the perfections of God appear from it and are resplendent in it. It is like the sun, which is resplendent in the desert, upon the sea, in the trees, in the fruits and blossoms, and in all earthly things. The world, indeed each existing being, proclaims to us one of the names of God, but the reality of man is the collective reality, the general reality, and is the center where the glory of all the perfections of God shine forth - that is to say, for each name, each attribute, each perfection which we affirm of God there exists a sign in man. If it were otherwise, man could not imagine these perfections and could not understand them. So we say that God is the seer, and the eye is the sign of His vision; if this sight were not in man, how could we imagine the vision of God? For the blind (that is, one born blind) cannot imagine sight; and the deaf (that is, one deaf from birth) cannot imagine hearing; and the dead cannot realize life. Consequently, the Divinity of God, which is the sum of all perfections, reflects itself in the reality of man –that is to say, the Essence of Oneness is the gathering of all perfections, and from this unity He casts a reflection upon the human reality. Man, then, is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the center of radiation: the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror. The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the object of existence is the appearance of the perfections of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Some Answered Questions, pp. 195-196

The spirit of man must acquire its bounties from the Kingdom of God in order that it may become the mirror and manifestation of lights and the dawning point of divine traces, because the human reality is like the soil. If no bounty of rain descends from heaven upon the soil, if no heat of the sun penetrates, it will remain black, forbidding, unproductive; but when the moistening shower and the effulgent glow of the sun’s rays fall upon it, beautiful and redolent flowers grow from its bosom. Similarly, the human spirit or reality of man, unless it becomes the recipient of the lights of the Kingdom, develops divine susceptibilities and consciously reflects the effulgence of God, will not be the manifestation of ideal bounties, for only the reality of man can become the mirror wherein the lights of God are revealed. The reality of man will then be as the spirit of this world, for just as the animus of life quickens the physical human body, so the body of the world will receive its vivification through the animating virtue of the sanctified spirit of man.

It is evident that the holy Manifestations and divine dawning points are necessary, for these blessed and glorious Souls are the foremost Teachers and Educators of mankind, and all human souls are developed through Them by the bounty of the Holy Spirit of God.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá: Promulgation of Universal Peace, pp. 330-331

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<sup>1</sup> Qur’an 25:55, 35:13, 55:19-25. See also Marriage Prayer revealed by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá beginning ‘He is God! O peerless Lord! In Thine almighty wisdom Thou hast enjoined marriage upon the peoples...’

<sup>2</sup> See Some Answered Questions, pp. 328-9 for ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comments on the arc of descent and ascent.