

Philosophy  
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1. Although it is recognized that the contemporary men of learning are highly qualified in philosophy, arts and crafts, yet were anyone to observe with a discriminating eye he would readily comprehend that most of this knowledge hath been acquired from the sages of the past, for it is they who have laid the foundation of philosophy, reared its structure and reinforced its pillars. Thus doth thy Lord, the Ancient of Days, inform thee. The sages aforesaid acquired their knowledge from the Prophets, inasmuch as the latter were the Exponents of divine philosophy and the Revealers of heavenly mysteries. Men quaffed the crystal, living waters of Their utterance, while others satisfied themselves with the dregs. Everyone receiveth a portion according to his measure. Verily He is the Equitable, the Wise.

Empedocles, who distinguished himself in philosophy, was a contemporary of David, while Pythagoras lived in the days of Solomon, son of David, and acquired Wisdom from the treasury of prophethood. It is he who claimed to have heard the whispering sound of the heavens and to have attained the station of the angels. In truth thy Lord will clearly set forth all things, if He pleaseth. Verily, He is the Wise, the All-Pervading.

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

*Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After The Kitáb-i-Áqdas, pp. 144-145*

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

Consider Hippocrates, the physician. He was one of the eminent philosophers who believed in God and acknowledged His sovereignty. After him came Socrates who was indeed wise, accomplished and righteous. He practised self-denial, repressed his appetites for selfish desires and turned away from material pleasures. He withdrew to the mountains where he dwelt in a cave. He dissuaded men from worshipping idols and taught them the way of God, the Lord of Mercy, until the ignorant rose up against him. They arrested him and put him to death in prison. Thus relateth to thee this swift-moving Pen. What a penetrating vision into philosophy this eminent man had! He is the most distinguished of all philosophers and was highly versed in wisdom. We testify that he is one of the heroes in this field and an outstanding champion dedicated unto it. He had a profound knowledge of such sciences as were current amongst men as well as of those which were veiled from their minds. Methinks he drank one draught when the Most Great Ocean overflowed with gleaming and life-giving waters. He it is who perceived a unique, a tempered, and a pervasive nature in things, bearing the closest likeness to the human spirit, and he discovered this nature to be distinct from the substance of things in their refined form. He hath a special pronouncement on this weighty theme. Wert thou to ask from the worldly wise of this generation [p. 147] about this exposition, thou wouldst witness their incapacity to grasp it. Verily, thy Lord speaketh the truth but most people comprehend not.

After Socrates came the divine Plato who was a pupil of the former and occupied the chair of philosophy as his successor. He acknowledged his belief in God and in His signs which pervade all that hath been and shall be. Then came Aristotle, the well-known man of knowledge. He it is who

discovered the power of gaseous matter. These men who stand out as leaders of the people and are pre-eminent among them, one and all acknowledged their belief in the immortal Being Who holdeth in His grasp the reins of all sciences.

I will also mention for thee the invocation voiced by Bálinus who was familiar with the theories put forward by the Father of Philosophy regarding the mysteries of creation as given in his chrysolite tablets, that everyone may be fully assured of the things We have elucidated for thee in this manifest Tablet, which, if pressed with the hand of fairness and knowledge, will yield the spirit of life for the quickening of all created things. Great is the blessedness of him who swimmeth in this ocean and celebrateth the praise of his Lord, the Gracious, the Best-Beloved. Indeed the breezes of divine revelation are diffused from the verses of thy Lord in such wise that no one can dispute its truth, except those who are bereft of hearing, of vision, of understanding and of every human faculty. Verily thy Lord beareth witness unto this, yet the people understand not.

This man hath said: 'I am Bálinus, the wise one, the performer of wonders, the producer of talismans.' He surpassed everyone else in the diffusion of arts and sciences and soared unto the loftiest heights of humility and supplication. Give ear unto that which he hath said, entreating the [p. 148] All-Possessing, the Most Exalted: 'I stand in the presence of my Lord, extolling His gifts and bounties and praising Him with that wherewith He praiseth His Own Self, that I may become a source of blessing and guidance unto such men as acknowledge my words.' And further he saith: 'O Lord! Thou art God and no God is there but Thee. Thou art the Creator and no creator is there except Thee. Assist me by Thy grace and strengthen me. My heart is seized with alarm, my limbs tremble, I have lost my reason and my mind hath failed me. Bestow upon me strength and enable my tongue to speak forth with wisdom.' And still further he saith: 'Thou art in truth the Knowing, the Wise, the Powerful, the Compassionate.' It was this man of wisdom who became informed of the mysteries of creation and discerned the subtleties which lie enshrined in the Hermetic writings.

*Bahá'u'lláh: Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed After The Kitáb-i-Áqdas, pp. 146-148*

3. The most important principle of divine philosophy is the oneness of the world of humanity, the unity of mankind, the bond conjoining east and west, the tie of love which blends human hearts.

*'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í World Faith, p. 244; Foundations of World Unity, p. 50*

4. Galen the Greek physician and philosopher who lived in the second century A.D., wrote a treatise upon the civilization of nations. He was not a Christian but he has borne testimony that religious beliefs exercise an extraordinary effect upon the problems of civilization. In substance he says: "There are certain people among us, followers of Jesus the Nazarene who was killed in Jerusalem. These people are truly imbued with moral principles which are the envy of philosophers. They believe in God and fear Him. They have hopes in His favors, therefore they shun all unworthy deeds and actions and incline to praiseworthy ethics and morals. Day and night they strive that their deeds may be commendable and that they may contribute to the welfare of humanity; therefore each one of them is virtually a philosopher, for these people have attained unto that which is the essence and purport of philosophy. These people have praiseworthy morals even though they may be illiterate."

*'Abdu'l-Bahá: Bahá'í World Faith, pp. 249-250*

5. The mission of the prophets, the revelation of the holy books, the manifestation of the heavenly teachers and the purpose of divine philosophy all center in the training of the human realities so that they may become clear and pure as mirrors and reflect the light and love of the Sun of Reality. Therefore I hope that whether you be in the east or the west you will strive with heart and soul in order that day by day the world of humanity may become glorified, more spiritual, more sanctified; and that the splendor of the Sun of Reality may be revealed fully in human hearts as in a mirror. This

is worthy of the world of mankind. This is the true evolution and progress of humanity. This is the supreme bestowal.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 262

6. Philosophy consists in comprehending the reality of things as they exist, according to the capacity and the power of man. For the phenomenal reality can comprehend the Pre-existent attributes only to the extent of the human capacity. The mystery of Divinity is sanctified and purified from the comprehension of the beings, for all that comes to the imagination is that which man understands, and the power of the understanding of man does not embrace the Reality of the Divine Essence. All that man is able to understand are the attributes of Divinity, the radiance of which appears and is visible in worlds and souls.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Bahá'í World Faith*, p. 322

7. Philosophy is of two kinds: natural and divine. Natural philosophy seeks knowledge of physical verities and explains material phenomena, whereas divine philosophy deals with ideal verities and phenomena of the spirit. The field and scope of natural philosophy have been greatly enlarged, and its accomplishments are most praiseworthy, for it has served humanity. But according to the evidence of present world conditions divine philosophy—which has for its object the sublimation of human nature, spiritual advancement, heavenly guidance for the development of the human race, attainment to the breaths of the Holy Spirit and knowledge [p. 327] of the verities of God—has been outdistanced and neglected. Now is the time for us to make an effort and enable it to advance apace with the philosophy of material investigation so that awakening of the ideal virtues may progress equally with the unfoldment of the natural powers. In the same proportion that the body of man is developing, the spirit of man must be strengthened; and just as his outer perceptions have been quickened, his inner intellectual powers must be sensitized so that he need not rely wholly upon tradition and human precedent. In divine questions we must not depend entirely upon the heritage of tradition and former human experience; nay, rather, we must exercise reason, analyze and logically examine the facts presented so that confidence will be inspired and faith attained. Then and then only the reality of things will be revealed to us. The philosophers of Greece—such as Aristotle, Socrates, Plato and others—were devoted to the investigation of both natural and spiritual phenomena. In their schools of teaching they discoursed upon the world of nature as well as the supernatural world. Today the philosophy and logic of Aristotle are known throughout the world. Because they were interested in both natural and divine philosophy, furthering the development of the physical world of mankind as well as the intellectual, they rendered praiseworthy service to humanity. This was the reason of the triumph and survival of their teachings and principles.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, pp. 326-327

8. About one thousand years ago a society was formed in Persia called the Society of the Friends, who gathered together for silent communion with the Almighty.

They divided Divine philosophy into two parts: one kind is that of which the knowledge can be acquired through lectures and study in schools and colleges. The second kind of philosophy was that of the Illuminati, or followers of the inner light. The schools of this philosophy were held in silence. Meditating, and turning their faces to the Source of Light, from that central Light the mysteries of the Kingdom were reflected in the hearts of these people. All the Divine problems were solved by this power of illumination.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *Paris Talks*, p. 173

9. Inasmuch as the fundamental principle of the teaching of Bahá'u'lláh is the oneness of the world of humanity, I will speak to you upon the intrinsic oneness of all phenomena. This is one of the abstruse subjects of divine philosophy.

Fundamentally all existing things pass through the same degrees and phases of development, and any given phenomenon embodies all others. An ancient statement of the Arabian philosophers declares that all things are involved in all things. It is evident that each material organism is an aggregate expression of single and simple elements, and a given cellular element or atom has its coursings or journeyings through various and myriad stages of life. For example, we will say the cellular elements which have entered into the composition of a human organism were at one time a component part of the animal kingdom; at another time they entered into the composition of the vegetable, and prior to that they existed in the kingdom of the mineral. They have been subject to transference from one condition of life to another, passing through various forms and phases, exercising in each existence special functions. Their journeyings through material phenomena are continuous. Therefore, each phenomenon is the expression in degree of all other phenomena. The difference is one of successive transfereces and the period of time involved in evolutionary process.

'Abdu'l-Bahá: *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*, p. 349

10. The Hegelian philosophy which, in other countries, has, in the form of an intolerant and militant nationalism, insisted on deifying the state, has inculcated the war-spirit, and incited to racial animosity, has, likewise, led to a marked weakening of the Church and to a grave diminution of its spiritual influence. Unlike the bold offensive which an avowedly atheistic movement had chosen to launch against it, both within the Soviet union and beyond its confines, this nationalistic philosophy, which Christian rulers and governments have upheld, is an attack directed against the Church by [p. 183] those who were previously its professed adherents, a betrayal of its cause by its own kith and kin. It was being stabbed by an alien and militant atheism from without, and by the preachers of a heretical doctrine from within. Both of these forces, each operating in its own sphere and using its own weapons and methods, have moreover been greatly assisted and encouraged by the prevailing spirit of modernism, with its emphasis on a purely materialistic philosophy, which, as it diffuses itself, tends increasingly to divorce religion from man's daily life.

Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 182-183

11. Philosophy, as you will study it and later teach it, is certainly not one of the sciences that begins and ends in words. Fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splitting is meant, not a sound branch of learning like philosophy.

We have no historical proof of the truth of the Master's statement regarding the Greek philosophers visiting the Holy Land, etc. but such proof may come to light through research in the future.

As regards your own studies: he would advise you not to devote too much of your time to the abstract side of philosophy, but rather to approach it from a more historical angle. As to correlating philosophy with the Bahá'í teachings; this is a tremendous work which scholars in the future can undertake. We must remember that not only are all the teachings not yet translated into English, but they are not even all collected yet. Many important Tablets may still come to light which are at present owned privately.

Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 445

12. The recrudescence of religious intolerance, of racial animosity, and of patriotic arrogance; the increasing evidences of selfishness, of suspicion, of fear and of fraud; the spread of terrorism, of

lawlessness, of drunkenness and of crime; the unquenchable thirst for, and the feverish pursuit after, earthly vanities, riches and pleasures; the weakening of family solidarity; the laxity in parental control; the lapse into luxurious indulgence; the irresponsible attitude towards marriage and the consequent rising tide of divorce; the degeneracy of art and music, the infection of literature, and the [p. 188] corruption of the press; the extension of the influence and activities of those “prophets of decadence” who advocate companionate marriage, who preach the philosophy of nudism, who call modesty an intellectual fiction, who refuse to regard the procreation of children as the sacred and primary purpose of marriage, who denounce religion as an opiate of the people, who would, if given free rein, lead back the human race to barbarism, chaos, and ultimate extinction—these appear as the outstanding characteristics of a decadent society, a society that must either be reborn or perish.

Shoghi Effendi: *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh*, pp. 187-188

13. The other main objection to the conscientious objectors is that their method of establishing peace is too negative. Non-co-operation is too passive a philosophy to become an effective way for social reconstruction. Their refusal to bear arms can never establish peace. There should be first a spiritual revitalisation which nothing, except the Cause of God, can effectively bring to every man's heart.

Shoghi Effendi: *Unfolding Destiny*, p. 436