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Many articles published in *The Journal of Bahá'í Studies* allude to the institutions and central figures of the Bahá'í Faith; as an aid for those unfamiliar with the Bahá'í Faith, we include here a succinct summary excerpted from http://www.bahai.org/beliefs/bahaullah-covenant/. The reader may also find it helpful to visit the official web site for the worldwide Bahá'í community (www.bahai.org) available in several languages. For article submission guidelines, please visit journal.bahaistudies.ca/online/about/submissions/.

About the Bahá'í Faith

The Bahá'í Faith, its followers believe, is "divine in origin, all-embracing in scope, broad in its outlook, scientific in its method, humanitarian in its principles and dynamic in the influence it exerts on the hearts and minds of men." The mission of the Bahá'í Faith is "to proclaim that religious truth is not absolute but relative, that Divine Revelation is continuous and progressive, that the Founders of all past religions, though different in the non-essential aspects of their teachings, 'abide in the same Tabernacle, soar in the same heaven, are seated upon the same throne, utter the same speech and proclaim the same Faith'" (Shoghi Effendi).

The Bahá'í Faith began with the mission entrusted by God to two Divine Messengers—the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh. Today, the distinctive unity of the Faith They founded stems from explicit instructions given by Bahá'u'lláh that have assured the continuity of guidance following His passing. This line of succession, referred to as the Covenant, went from Bahá'u'lláh to His Son 'Abdu'l-Bahá, and then from 'Abdu'l-Bahá to His grandson, Shoghi Effendi, and the Universal House of Justice, ordained by Bahá'u'lláh. A Bahá'í accepts the divine authority of the Báb and Bahá'u'lláh and of these appointed successors.

The Báb (1819-1850) is the Herald of the Bahá'í Faith. In the middle of the 19th century, He announced that He was the bearer of a message destined to transform humanity's spiritual life. His mission was to prepare the way for the coming of a second Messenger from God, greater than Himself, who would usher in an age of peace and justice.

Bahá'u'lláh (1817-1892)—the "Glory of God"—is the Promised One foretold by the Báb and all of the Divine Messengers of the past. Bahá'u'lláh delivered a new Revelation from God to humanity. Thousands of verses, letters and books flowed from His pen. In His Writings, He outlined a framework for the development of a global civilization which takes into account both the spiritual and material dimensions of human life. For this, He endured torture and forty years of imprisonment and exile.

In His will, Bahá'u'lláh appointed His eldest son, 'Abdu'l-Bahá (1844-1921), as the authorized interpreter of His teachings and Head of the Faith. Throughout the East and West, 'Abdu'l-Bahá became known as an ambassador of peace, an exemplary human being, and the leading exponent of a new Faith.

Appointed Guardian of the Bahá'í Faith by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, His eldest grandson, Shoghi Effendi (1897-1957), spent 36 years systematically nurturing the development, deepening the understanding, and strengthening the unity of the Bahá'í community, as it increasingly grew to reflect the diversity of the entire human race.

The development of the Bahá'í Faith worldwide is today guided by the Universal House of Justice (established in 1963). In His book of laws, Bahá'u'lláh instructed the Universal House of Justice to exert a positive influence on the welfare of humankind, promote education, peace and global prosperity, and safeguard human honor and the position of religion.

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From the Editor's Desk

MICHAEL SABET

As the Bahá'í community watches, the construction of the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá progresses. For a brief time still, the Master's earthly remains rest in a side chamber of the Shrine of the Báb, whose every stone He, "with infinite tears and at tremendous cost, raised and placed in position" (qtd. in Shoghi Effendi, *God Passes By* 275). Soon, those remains will move to their final resting place, near the route from Haifa to Bahjí that was His constant pilgrimage for long years. The design of His shrine, emerging organically from the earth itself—that perfect symbol of humility (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* V)—seems to invite the visitor to come down to commune with the Perfect Exemplar of humility, and to reflect on His life and example.

And how much there is to reflect on. On the one hand, His writings and recorded utterances provide us with His penetrating insights into a breathtaking range of questions. Not every Bahá'í will think of 'Abdu'l-Bahá as a philosopher; the word is, after all, inadequate to capture either the mystery of His station, or the beloved place He holds in the hearts of Baha'is. Yet the depth of philosophical mastery of this exile and prisoner is such that there is no end to the treasures we uncover as we reflect on His words. Douglas Perry's "A New Perspective on Human Evolution" helps us do just that, on one of the most subtle and provocative subjects 'Abdu'l-Bahá addressed: the nature and origins of the human being. Perry demonstrates how, if we can avoid deciding too soon that we know what either science or religion is telling us, and instead remember that both rely on a range of metaphors and models that express different facets of reality, we may sometimes find that apparent contradictions or tensions between them dissolve**.** His work will be of interest to those in the sciences specifically, but every reader will appreciate this example of the dialectic process of putting science and religion into ongoing conversation with each other, in faith that they will reveal their underlying harmony to the patient inquirer.

On the other hand, the pilgrim to the Shrine of 'Abdu'l-Bahá can reflect on His lived example of coherence between unwavering commitment to principle and masterfully effective action in the world. He "tread the mystic way with practical feet" (Jordan, qtd. in "Appreciations of the Bahá'í Faith"). Tahereh Khollas Pourshafie and Janice Orrell's "Fostering Wisdom in Youth through Moral Education in a Bahá'í-inspired School" presents an ethnographic study of a Bahá'i-inspired school that seeks to instill this very quality in its students. The approach described is far from haphazard; curriculum design, teacher training, and school spaces are all crafted to promote the development of students'

innate capacity for wisdom, which in the literature on moral education involves both an altruistic orientation and the capacity to act in a way that responds to the practical situations in front of us. This article is the first in a series of contributions on pedagogy, education, and youth, and we are very excited to share the practical insights of diverse researchers and educators on these vital topics.

This issue also features two book reviews. Ann Boyles reviews *The Bahá'í House of Worship: Design, Construction and Community* by Joe Carter and Nooshfar Afnan. Published by George Ronald in a lush, large format full of color photographs, architectural plans, and inspiring documentations of the Houses of Worship's influence on community development, this book is a rare witness to the evolution of art in the Bahá'í community.

Navid Pourmokhtari's impressive and timely contribution to the discourses related to international relations, *Toward a Paradigm Shift in International Relations: (Re)Claiming World Peace* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2024) is reviewed by Alex Douglas, who notes how the book "documents the unworkable assumptions of IR that humanity must urgently reconsider, making the case for both the avid layperson and the scholar in the field that the time for a paradigm shift has come" (74).

A poem by John S. Hatcher rounds this issue with his customary tongue-in-cheek-and-flowing-hair, seriously-hip-scholar style.

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As a service to our readers, we are including links to articles and books related to the subjects presented in this issue. Articles previously published in the *Journal* are available for free on our website.

Education and Moral Development in Children

by *Susan Clay Stoddart*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-1.1.413(1988)

The author suggests that partly as a result of the controversy over the teaching of religion, schools have avoided teaching children about moral and ethical standards for behavior. Instead, children have been taught that morality is relative and is determined by the cultural, racial, or ethnic group to which people belong. . . . The author calls for teaching children about their spiritual identity, defined by their divine qualities and talents, rather than an identity based on characteristics of race, social class, religious background, and ethnicity. She presents strategies that parents and teachers can use to help children develop an identity with all human beings and a common moral code that can be applied to all behavior.

Developing a Participatory Approach to Learning

by *Maijia Pihlainen*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-4.2.3(1991)

Beginning with a survey of Bahá'í writings and of emerging Bahá'í approaches to education, the article charts the Macau-based School of the Nations' philosophy of education and considers its implications for the school's curriculum development process. The article then proposes that the cooperative approach to education offers a potential instructional model within which Bahá'í principles and ideals, with their emphasis on moral education, participation, cooperation, and consultation, could be effectively implemented.

Science and Religion in Dynamic Interplay

by *Todd Smith*
doi.org/10.31581/jbs-29.4.2(2019)

This paper proposes an approach to conceptualizing and contributing to the harmony of science and religion. In an effort to find points of unity that can serve as a basis upon which to advance the discourse on the subject, it begins by considering some of the legitimate concerns many thinkers have with religion and correlating them with the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. With these correlations in mind, it then describes how it may be fruitful to think about both science and religion as viable sources of knowledge in their own right.

End of the Line

JOHN S. HATCHER

Fleet of foot I was, my blond hair blazing
in autumnal breeze, smiling
at cotton-skirted girls

who lounged in the park, sheltered
beneath arms of maple and elm,
their leaves bright orange and gold.

But now nearing the end of this meandering trek,
each stride becomes more labored than the last.
My strained breath hisses like steam

escaping some ancient, dark iron engine.
My filigreed heart pounds in sync
with legs grown spindly and wooden

as I trod beside the etched stones inscribed
with dates and eloquent epitaphs that recall
fallen ones beside the grey gravel path.

Once through a pullman window,
I gazed on passing farms, quaint villages,
distant mountain peaks, desert strands

stretching to the horizon, each fleeting vision
I kept for reflection in my reverie at the end of day.
As I near it now, I am content to have done enough.

I shall devise no further lists for the future.
All regrets and guilt have become threadbare
from the redundancy of appraisal,

and all those who truly care, stand waiting,
their angelic arms outstretched to embrace me
with O such magnificent love!

And for those I leave behind,
I bequeath a single, tome-filled shelf
proclaiming all I was able to make of this.

A New Perspective on Human Evolution

DOUGLAS PERRY

Abstract

This paper reviews past Bahá'í scholarship on evolution, identifies a gap in this scholarship in light of current evolutionary biology, and uses cladistics—a modern approach to biological classification—to reconsider certain perceived tensions between current concepts in evolutionary biology and certain statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. A summary of taxonomy and phylogenetic tree construction is given, with special emphasis placed on cladistics, a methodology not available in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's day, and heretofore not mentioned in Bahá'í-authored publications related to evolution. This paper concludes with examples of how cladograms may aid in conceptualizing some of the evolution-related statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, (for example, His statement that "man is not an animal"). In using this approach, the intention of the author is not to re-interpret 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements, nor to "prove" any particular interpretation thereof, but rather to bring modern concepts of evolutionary biology into Bahá'í discourse on evolution.

Resumen

Este artículo examina la pasada erudición Bahá'í sobre la evolución, identifica una brecha entre esta erudición a la luz de la actual biología evolucionaría, y utiliza la cladística-una metodología moderna para la clasificación biológica-para reconsiderar ciertas tensiones percibidas entre los actuales conceptos en biología evolucionaría y ciertas declaraciones de 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Se presenta un resumen de la taxonomía y la construcción del árbol filogenético con especial énfasis en la cladística, una metodología no disponible en el tiempo de 'Abdu'l-Bahá y hasta ahora no mencionada en la publicaciones Bahá'ís relacionadas con la evolución. El artículo concluye con ejemplos de cómo cladogramas podrían ayudar en la conceptualización de algunas declaraciones de 'Abdu'l-Bahá relacionadas con la evolución, (por ejemplo, Su declaración que "el hombre no es animal"). En el uso de esta metodología, la intención del autor no es reinterpretar la declaración de 'Abdu'l-Bahá, tampoco "probar" una interpretación particular relacionada, sino, traer conceptos modernos de la biología evolucionaría al discurso Bahá'í sobre la evolución.

Résumé

Dans le présent article, l'auteur passe en revue les études bahá'íes sur l'évolution, y relève une lacune à la lumière de la biologie évolutive actuelle et utilise la cladistique – une approche moderne de la classification biologique – pour réexaminer certaines divergences perçues entre des concepts actuels de la biologie évolutive et certaines déclarations de 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Il présente une synthèse de la taxonomie et de la construction d'arbres phylogénétiques, en accordant une attention particulière à la cladistique, une méthodologie qui n'existait pas à l'époque de 'Abdu'l-Bahá et qui n'a pas été mentionnée jusqu'à présent dans les publications bahá'íes relatives à l'évolution. L'article se termine par des exemples illustrant comment les cladogrammes pourraient aider à

conceptualiser certaines déclarations de ‘Abdu’l-Bahá sur l’évolution (par exemple, sa déclaration selon laquelle « l’homme n’est pas un animal »). En utilisant cette approche, l’auteur n’a pas l’intention de réinterpréter les déclarations de ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, ni de « prouver » une interprétation particulière de celles-ci, mais plutôt d’introduire des concepts modernes de la biologie évolutive dans le discours bahá’í sur l’évolution.

Introduction

Between 1904 and 1905, ‘Abdu’l-Bahá gave a series of table talks on a number of subjects, published in 1908 as *Some Answered Questions*. From 1910 to 1913, He traveled to Europe and North America, and gave many public talks on a wide range of issues. Again, many of these addresses were collected and published as *The Promulgation of Universal Peace*. One subject that He addressed in a number of these talks was human evolution. In these talks, He challenged some of the notions that were current at the time, most notably that because man[1] had descended directly from an ancestor of other primates, the human being was, therefore, merely an animal like any other (Haeckel 6). ‘Abdu’l-Bahá states that man holds a distinct station in the chain of life, and that this distinction is spiritual rather than merely physical (*Promulgation* 262).

1 ‘Abdu’l-Bahá uses this term, as others did at the time, to indicate humanity in general.

‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements on the topic of evolution have been the subject of some scrutiny—mostly by Bahá’ís themselves, who have tended to either read these as an endorsement of a position that seems to be at odds with established scientific consensus, or as requiring careful interpretation in order to show that they are, in fact, compatible with that consensus. In this paper, I offer a different approach by drawing on relatively recent developments in the methods used within evolutionary biology itself. When viewed through the lens of cladistics, the apparent tension between ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements and scientific truth reveals itself to be more a matter of perspective than a fundamental disjuncture in need of reconciliation.

Situating the Contribution

Prior Scholarship

On the subject of evolution, much has been written by Bahá’í scholars over the years.

In *The Purpose of Physical Reality*, John S. Hatcher asserts that “the Bahá’í teachings reject the views of both the creationists and the evolutionists as their theories are commonly presented.” Creation as a whole is eternal, and evolution (cosmological, geological, and biological) is the unfolding of that creation (48–52). Further, in *Close Connections*, Hatcher deduces from ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s comments that the transformation of human evolution “occurs solely within a species or state,

even though these stages of transformation may be radically different in appearance" (122).

Anjam Khursheed, in *Science and Religion: Towards the Restoration of an Ancient Harmony*, asserts that the Bahá'í writings affirm evolution, but that this evolution is divinely directed and not the outcome of blind chance (88–92).

In an article published in the *Journal of Bahá'í Studies*, Craig Loehle presents the view that humans did not evolve accidentally, but according to God's purpose, as "the unfolding of God's Plan" (51). However, this planned unfolding is not to be perceived in a Creationist sense as literally a step-by-step intervention by God, but rather as a gradual actualization of potentialities mediated by an evolutionary process according to natural law. He also develops the concept of human beings as a "special creation" (i.e., transcending other life forms) and yet emerging with other life forms through biological evolution.

William S. Hatcher offers a cogent argument for the increased "complexification" of evolution as proof of the existence of God ("A Scientific Proof"). He starts with an analogy. The directedness of a falling object, which theoretically is free to move in any random direction, but which only moves in one direction—down—offers proof that there is an "invisible force"—gravity—acting on the object. Similarly, evolution is generated by the random actions of mutation and natural selection, yet it, too, only moves in one "direction"—towards greater complexity—implying the action of an invisible force. Moreover, this force must possess the properties of life itself, including the higher consciousness of humans. From this, Hatcher concludes that this force must be divine.

Following the thought of this earlier article, Hatcher held neo-Darwinian theory to be based on the complete randomness of both mutations and natural selection (a position no longer held in modern evolutionary biology).[2] Resting on this assumption of total randomness, Hatcher attests that neo-Darwinian theory is incapable of explaining the "complexification" of evolution (*Epilogue*). As in his article of fifteen years prior, he argues for the existence of an "evolutionary force," divine in origin.

Such a position verges on "intelligent design," the theistic position that life holds evidence of purposeful creation that cannot be based on chance alone. However, as noted, Hatcher's fundamental premise, that of the complete randomness of both mutation and natural selection, is disputed by current research in evolutionary

2 Modern evolutionary biology asserts that mutations, broadly speaking, are not entirely random in the statistical sense, but are shaped by adjacent probabilities—for example, the location of the mutating base pair in a nucleotide sequence. As a rough analogy, the outcome of the role of a die is not completely random in the statistical sense, but is limited or shaped by the number of sides of the die. This has important implications for the apparent directionality of evolution.

biology (Martincorena and Luscombe; Gregory, "Understanding Natural Selection").

In his 1993 book, *The Challenge of Bahá'u'lláh*, Gary Matthews seeks to reconcile the apparent contradiction between biological human evolution (as it was then understood) and 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on the uniqueness of the human station by arguing that the contradiction is semantic: the emergence of the soul constitutes a new "species" in a general, not biological, sense. He adds that further research "may someday settle this issue" (109).

Paul Lample, the compiler of *Bahá'u'lláh's Teachings on Spiritual Reality*, states that the Bahá'í teachings support the scientific concept of evolution while rejecting that evolution operates solely by chance; evolution is essentially purposeful (101). He also asserts that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements regarding the uniqueness of the human station should not be interpreted to mean that humans emerged through a separate, parallel evolutionary pathway.

In 2001, Keven Brown and Eberhard von Kitzing produced a monograph, *Evolution and Bahá'í Belief*, that systematically surveys the philosophical (as opposed to strictly scientific) concepts of evolution, both in Western (i.e., European) and Eastern (i.e., Islamic) traditions leading up to, and current with, the time when 'Abdu'l-Bahá made His major comments related to evolution.

In 2003, Courosh Mehanian and Stephen Friberg published an article that gathered the main statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding evolution, and analyzed them in light of general evolutionary concepts. They concluded that, although humans are biologically part of evolution, "man is much more than an animal," being endowed with a spiritual reality not shared with animals.

In a conference paper published in *Lights of Irfán*, Ian Kluge makes no attempt to reconcile 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution with current scientific thought; on the contrary, he holds that they should be accepted as stated, while waiting for scientific research and thinking to catch up. This position, however, precludes any nuanced interpretation of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements.

In his master's thesis, Salman Oskooi takes the position that 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution must be taken simply at face value, and that, since they are at odds with current evolutionary science, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's comments are simply wrong. Oskooi does assert the infallibility of 'Abdu'l-Bahá on spiritual matters, but claims that this infallibility does not extend to scientific or other subjects. However, Oskooi's position is founded on a letter written on behalf of Shoghi Effendi regarding his own infallibility as being confined to matters relating to the Cause, which Oskooi extends to apply to 'Abdu'l-Bahá as well. In contradiction to this position, a letter on behalf of the Universal House of Justice to an individual believer states that this limitation of infallibility does not apply

to ‘Abdu’l-Bahá (Universal House of Justice, *Messages* 545–46).

In 2023, Bryan Donaldson published a monograph, *On the Originality of Species*, which propounds that ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statement, “man is not animal” (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 359) should be taken as literally true in a biological sense, and proposes that this can be explained by a “parallel evolution” by which humans evolved separately from animals (including primates). Criticism of this position can be found elsewhere (Perry).

Bahman Nadimi’s article “Bahá’í View on Biological Evolution” posits that the evolution of humans did not start at the inception of life on Earth but rather began with some unknown, specialized biological structure at a later stage, suggesting that humans and animals evolved on completely separate paths. There is no scientific evidence for this conjecture.

The Gap in Bahá’í Scholarship on Evolution

For all the valuable perspectives found in this prior scholarship, these contributions all come from the perspective of the *philosophy* of evolution, not the *science* of evolutionary biology. Moreover, this discussion has been confined to Darwinian and neo-Darwinian concepts, which are rooted in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and limited by the knowledge and understanding of those times. As we are now well into the twenty-first century, the time has come to bring modern evolutionary biology into dialogue with ‘Abdu’l-Bahá’s statements on evolution. There are many ways to accomplish this. I choose to approach this subject through the path of phylogenetics and cladistics, which have been foundational to evolutionary biology since the 1960s (Henning), and have since been well substantiated by research as explained further in this paper.

In taking this new approach, my intention is *not* to re-interpret the statements of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, nor to “prove” any particular interpretation of His statements, but rather to demonstrate how incorporating current evolutionary science enriches the discourse on this subject, which is at the nexus of any discussion of one of the central tenets of the Bahá’í Faith, that of the harmony between science and religion.

Premises

The premises of this paper are derived from the overarching themes expounded by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá in His science- and evolution-related talks, as identified by Friberg and Mehanian. These premises are:

1. In terms of biological evolution, humans have progressively evolved from a simpler form (‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions* 210). This is consistent with current evolutionary theory.
2. The essential nature of humans has always existed in potentiality, regardless of the outward organismic form at any point of

evolution (223). This declaration challenges the very concept, implicit in the mainstream scientific discourse since Darwin, that what it means to be human can be described in strictly taxonomic (i.e. biological classification) terms.

3. The feature that distinguishes humans from animals is not the biological organism, but the human spirit, also referred to as the rational soul (241). This does not deny that genus *Homo* can properly be viewed as a taxon[3] in tribe *Hominini*, family *Hominidae*, and order *Primates*, but it challenges the notion that this classification fully explains what a human being is. In other words, the human is, but not *simply*, a primate.

A Developing Discussion

Within the Bahá'í community at large, the questions and discussions regarding human evolution are not settled, nor must they be, nor even should they be. The intersections of science and religion will always be dynamic because they are subject to both changes in scientific theory and in human understanding of scripture; in other words, the questions and discussions unfold as our comprehension of reality evolves.

Some of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's comments on evolution have been seen as enigmatic, initiating attempts—as the earlier literature review shows—at resolution. For example, I draw the reader's attention to one statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá that seems so directly literal in meaning that some feel challenged to understand it in light of evolutionary theory. Specifically:

> The lost link of Darwinian theory is itself a proof that man is not an animal. How is it possible to have all the links present and that important link absent? Its absence is an indication that *man has never been an animal*. It will never be found. (*Promulgation* 355; emphasis added)

In his book, *On the Originality of Species*, Bryan Donaldson holds the position that this statement must be taken in its most literal sense, and therefore posits that human evolution was parallel to, not colinear with, primate evolution. This goes against overwhelming scientific evidence (White et al.), and, although Donaldson makes a valiant effort to reinterpret these findings, his effort ultimately fails not only on evidence but on first principles: the concept that humans have always been human throughout evolutionary history by reason of latent potential cannot be explained by parallel evolution because the problem of instantiation—when and how humans became human—remains. The theory of parallel human evolution merely pushes the problem

3 Taxon (plural taxa) is a general term for any group of organisms that biologists classify together based on shared characteristics such as types of locomotion or reproduction. Species, genera, families, and higher classifications are all examples of taxa.

of instantiation back to an earlier, and entirely speculative, time in evolutionary history (Perry).

For any ongoing discussion on the subject of human evolution, the following excerpt from a letter written on behalf of the Universal House of Justice can be regarded as a grounding statement:

> The Bahá'í view of evolution is more complex and nuanced than that put forward today by those who present evolution and creation in dichotomous terms. Evolution may be understood as the means set in motion by God through which life changes and unfolds. A Bahá'í can strive to reconcile contemporary scientific views with the published statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, which need not be understood to imply a kind of parallel evolution. Rather, 'Abdu'l-Bahá has explained that human life came into existence when the appropriate conditions were established. (5 July 2010)

In the spirit of this statement, I seek to take a holistic approach towards human evolution by viewing it through a different lens (as will be explained in this article) than has heretofore been used in Bahá'í discussions of evolution, one that may help us see 'Abdu'l-Bahá's explanations as harmonious with mainstream scientific consensus.

Ways of Understanding Evolutionary Relationships

There are several ways of viewing evolution, all of which are scientifically valid within the limits of the scope and quality of the underlying data they draw from and the inherent restrictions of the analytic methods on which they are based. It is important to understand that these different presentations of evolutionary data are not contradictory; rather, they view the same phenomena from different perspectives, and, therefore, are complementary. With the exception of the naturalistic tree model commonly used in popular culture, all methods mentioned in this paper are fully accepted within the scientific community. Different methods are chosen for varied reasons. The fact that each of these is simply a distinct perspective that does not contradict other perspectives is evidenced by occasional variations in the terminology by which they are invoked in the literature. A dendrogram, for example, may be referred to as a phylogenetic tree because it really *is* a phylogenetic tree viewed from a different perspective. While variable terminology can occasionally be problematic for the outside inquirer, it does not interfere with a crucial point of this paper, which is that the findings of modern evolutionary biology have a reciprocity and complementarity with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution.

What follows, then, is a brief discussion of phylogenetics—the broad discipline concerned with the evolutionary

relationships between organisms—in order to frame an exploration of two distinct ways of presenting those relationships. The technical details in this section are given to provide context for the overall point that two equally valid and accurate ways of looking at evolution can each highlight aspects of this phenomenon that the other obscures.

Phylogenetics

The discipline of phylogenetics (from the Greek *phylon* for "race" or "tribe" and *geneia* for "origin") is the study of the evolutionary relationships that form the basis of taxonomic[4] classification (Haque). First emerging in the mid-twentieth century, phylogenetics now forms the core of evolutionary biology (Losos et al.).

A phylogenetic tree (figure 1) is the diagrammatic representation of these relationships. By common convention, the beginning of the tree represents the last common universal ancestor (LUCA) for all subsequent forms of life. Consistent with its descriptive designation, a phylogenetic tree arborizes according to divergent evolution, with the point of divergence (called the node) being the most recent common ancestor (MRCA). The tree in figure 1, for instance, depicts the three taxonomic domains (a domain being the highest level category of classification of life): Bacteria, Archaea, and Eukaryota (or Eukarya). Each domain contains a number of kingdoms—the domain Eukaryota, for instance, contains the kingdoms Protista (a term now being used less formally), Fungi, Plantae, and Animalia.

While the first systematic efforts at taxonomy, beginning with Linneus, relied on visual appraisal of shared and different characteristics— bats and birds, for example, both have wings with homologous bone structures, but have completely different modes of reproduction, and so we conclude that bats are flying mammals rather than birds—modern phylogenetics has a wider range of ways to assess how organisms are related. In addition to *phenetic* (i.e., morphological) data (Panchen 132–68)—physical traits such as limbs, gills, and feathers—a phylogenetic tree can be generated using genomic (i.e. molecular) data (Fuellen)—DNA, RNA, and protein sequence

4 *Taxonomy* (from the Greek *taxis* for "order" and *nomos* for "law") is the discipline of naming life forms based on evolutionary relationships. The naming of organisms is as old as language itself, but the systematization of biological naming began with Carl Linnaeus in the eighteenth century. Taxonomic hierarchies are based on the range of evolutionary commonalities (i.e. biological characteristics), with *species* being the unit with the greatest specificity for these characteristics. The progression from most specific (the least commonality) to most general (the greatest commonality) is species → genus → family → order → class → phylum → kingdom → domain. This hierarchical system makes taxonomy more than "a glorified form of filing"; the taxonomic classification of an organism expresses our current understanding (or theory) about its relationship to all other life (Gould 98).

homologies; behavioral data (MacLean et al.)—migration, mating, etc.; and statistical analysis (Gavryushkina et al.)—Bayesian inference, maximum likelihood. The phylogenetic tree is a true and accurate representation of currently available scientific data bearing on evolutionary relationships. However, it is only a qualitative (or at best semi-quantitative) representation, and new data can sometimes lead to changes in the tree.[5]

Before proceeding, it is worth noting that the contention that a number of perspectives on evolutionary relationships are equally valid does not mean that *any* method of visualizing those relationships is valid. For example, in contrast to phylogenetic trees, and to cladograms that we will review later, the common image of a naturalistic tree to represent evolution is misleading in important respects (figure 2). The innate appeal of using

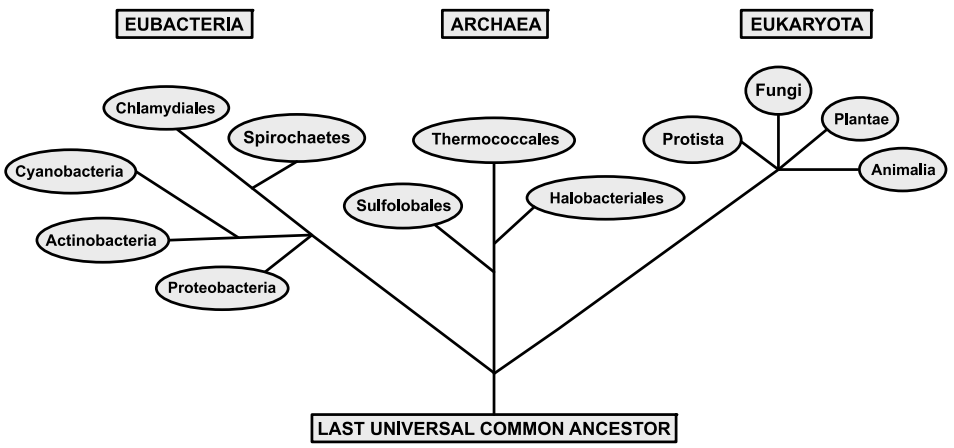

Figure 1. Phylogenetic Tree of Life (after https://www.greennature.ca/tree-of-life/)

a naturalistic tree to describe evolution is understandable. The "tree of life" concept predates Darwin, and a contemporary of Darwin, Ernst Haeckel, used a naturalistic tree to describe evolution as it was then understood. It has remained a popular image ever since, and is what is commonly envisioned when thinking of evolution. However, this representation is not used in the scientific community. The naturalistic

5 For example, it was long disputed whether the giant panda is most closely related to raccoons or bears, due to its sharing morphological characteristics with both. Only once genomic data was available was it determined that the giant panda is, in fact, a true bear. Interestingly, genomic data also showed that the red panda was not in fact a close relative of the giant panda, despite their geographical proximity and several shared morphological features (O'Brien et al.).

tree image obscures and misrepresents actual evolutionary features and relationships in ways that a true phylogenetic tree does not. For example, in figure 2, the placement of Protista at the roots of the tree is problematic. To the layperson, this placement would seem to suggest that all other life evolved from Protista, when in actuality all modern members of Protista share a common ancestor (LUCA) with the rest of living organisms. The figure gives no position for LUCA, but if it did, it would have to be at some point of the thick trunk—which would further confuse the layperson, for whom the tree image intuitively suggests a linear progression from roots to trunk to branches. The use of a literal tree image presents further difficulties. For one, the trunk's ramification into thinner and thinner branches—in the manner of a natural tree—falsely implies some kind of diminution, as of biological information or complexity, when in fact the opposite is true. It also falsely implies derivation, as if a later form of life is merely derived from an earlier form, when in fact new forms of life can emerge with novel properties. Finally, the naturalistic tree shown in figure 2 obscures the true evolutionary pathways of, and relationships between, taxa.

The use of a naturalistic tree to present scientific findings is a good example of how the *way* we represent data can profoundly influence—and in this case, impair—what we can *perceive* about the data.

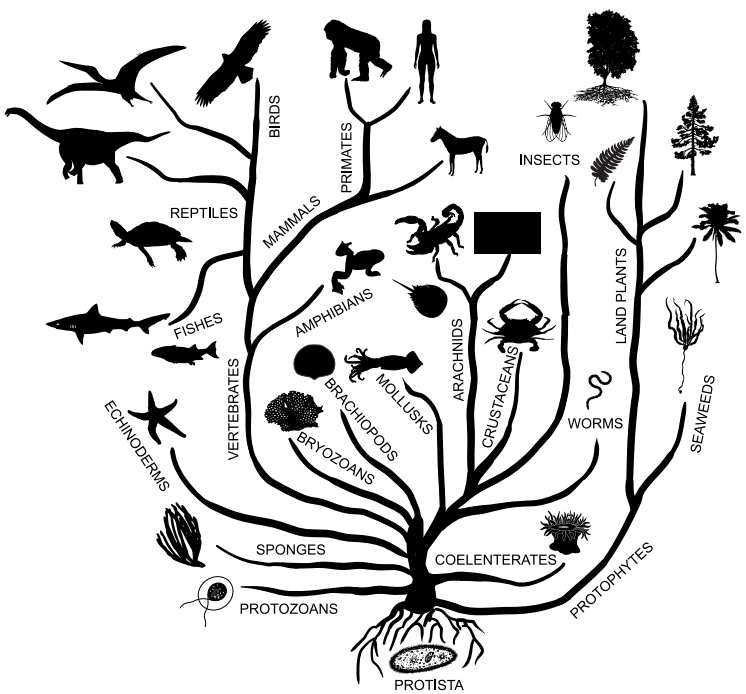

Figure 2. Evolution depicted as a naturalistic tree
(after https://earthsky.org/earth/new-tree-of-life-doesnt-look-as-youd-imagine/)

Dendrograms

Returning to actual scientific practice, phylogenetic trees can be represented in diagrammatic form as dendrograms to visualize evolutionary relationships more easily. In figure 3, taxa belonging to the phylum Chordata are mapped according to their evolutionary relationships using data, both quantitative (genomic information, carbon dating to determine the age of fossils, etc.) and qualitative (observed phenetic similarities and differences, etc.). The horizontal axis loosely represents evolutionary time, meaning that nodes further towards the left of the dendrogram represent a branching-off between lineages that occurred earlier in time than those further to the right. Thus, the most recent common ancestor of agnathans (jawless vertebrates) and Gnathostomata (jawed vertebrates) lived before the most recent common ancestor of marsupial and placental mammals. The vertical axis loosely represents evolutionary "distance." Thus, marsupial and placental mammals are more closely related to each other than either is to frogs.

The Problem of Evolutionary "Progress"

Dendrograms, if constructed faithfully to a sound underlying data set, are one valid way of visualizing evolutionary relationships, and are useful for a number of purposes. If they are the only lens we use for this purpose,

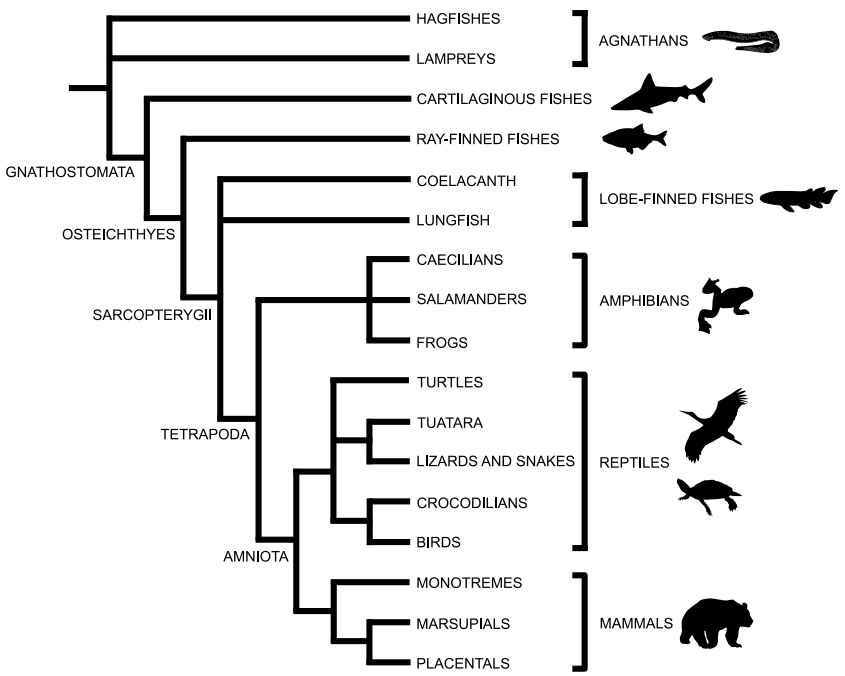

Figure 3. Simple evolutionary dendrogram
(after https://www.instituteofcaninebiology.org/how-to-read-a-dendrogram.html)

however, we may draw inferences from the underlying data that a different visualization would not lead us to, or fail to draw inferences that another (different but equally valid) visualization might suggest. Consider one of the recurring themes in the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá: the directionality and hierarchy of evolution from simpler to more complex organisms, from "lower" to "higher" forms of life, and especially the station of human beings in the order of life; see, for example, "Evolution and the Existence of Man" (*Some Answered Questions* 220–27). This is contrary to the received opinion of most evolutionary biologists now active in the field. Thus, any exploration of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution must address this issue.

Although scientifically correct and useful for charting evolutionary pathways, dendrograms, like most evolutionary tree models, tend to obscure one important aspect of evolution: the progressive emergence of higher orders of life, and the evolutionary relationships based on this emergence. The current dogma holds that, because much (but not all) evolution occurs by chance mutation and natural selection, it must be purposeless, and, therefore, directionless. By extension of this position, a popular tenet is that biological evolution does not advance, it merely changes.[6] Increasing biological complexity, though not denied, is simply dismissed as a byproduct of mindless adaptation. However, there is no scientific basis for this tenet. It is what Richard DeWitt refers to as a philosophical/conceptual "fact" as opposed to an empirical fact; the former are commonly mistaken for the latter even by scientists (31–35).

Because of this position, *teleology* and *progress* are terms effectively banned from the literature in evolutionary biology (Kadykalo). Yet it is undeniable that life has evolved from simplicity to higher and higher orders of complexity in both functionality and capacity (Lipps et al.). This progressive complexity is, of course, captured in the underlying data upon which evolutionary trees are based; however, the *way* these data are presented minimizes or even obscures this phenomenon. For example, dendrograms generally only show evolutionary relationships; information about organismal form and function is entirely missing. A dendrogram is, of course, not incorrect because of this omission; it simply focuses on only one aspect of evolution. A mathematical equivalent of this operation is to plot the 1-dimensional scalar of a 3-dimensional vector. The scalar can only reflect one aspect of the vector, thereby concealing the deeper, richer information of the vector itself. In a comparable manner, this dendrogram shows no increasing complexity; indeed, no "progress" at all.

Every map or model, of course, must simplify the reality that it seeks to explain. A political map of the globe omits topographical features; if we want to know where the high and

6 I personally have heard a professor of evolutionary biology proclaim, "Humans are no more advanced than amoebas, they just occupy different niches."

low points of the earth are found, we need a topographical map. This paper therefore now turns to a different kind of "map" of evolutionary relationships: modern cladistics, which can be used to visualize the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá regarding biological hierarchy, and thus help to reconcile (though not re-interpret) His statements with a modern scientific perspective.

Cladistics

To bring twenty-first century evolutionary biology into dialogue with 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution, we turn to the field of cladistics, which did not exist in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's day. The term was coined in the 1950s and cladistics was established as a subdiscipline of biology by the 1960s.

Cladistics offers a different way of viewing evolution (Williams and Ebach), and can be described as a method of systematic classification within phylogenetics. It operates by arranging taxa into groups, called clades. A clade consists of all taxa that share particular features in common, to the exclusion of all other taxa. For example, Gnathostomes are jawed fish (and their descendants) that diverged from Agnatha, which are jawless chordates such as lampreys. All subsequently evolved creatures with jaws, including all tetrapods (vertebrates with four limbs), are grouped into the clade Gnathostomata, while Agnatha are excluded from this clade. (The shared features that constitute clades—jaws in this example—are called *synapomorphies*, a term that we will return to later).

Though traditionally based on phenetics (observable similarities), which is a relatively simple methodology, the apparent evolutionary relationships identified by cladistics can be verified with molecular data (Mavrodiev and Madorsky), fossil records (Cracraft), ethological studies (Fentress), and by advanced statistical (Huelsenbeck, Ronquist, et al.) and computational (Brooks et al.) methods. Data acquired by separate, complementary methods allow clades to be defined with increasing rigor (Faith and Cranston).

As with all scientific methodologies, cladistics has strengths and weaknesses. While these are summarized in Appendix A, for our purposes one particular strength stands out: cladistics is particularly good at visualizing evolutionary history in terms of phenetics and evolutionary development (Harrison). In other words, it helps us identify when something new has appeared through the processes of evolution.

Cladograms

Cladograms are visual representations of cladistics. They are diagrams that map clades, primarily on evolutionary morphogenesis.

The diagrammatic structure of the cladogram represents both the evolutionary lineage and relatedness of taxa (figure 4). The "root" represents the most recent common ancestor for all the taxa included in a particular

cladogram. As we follow the diagram up from the root, we find "internal nodes"—bifurcations that represent speciation events and common ancestors for subsequent (i.e. above the node) divergent evolutionary lines. Taxa—which can represent individual species or larger taxonomic groups (i.e., clades)—are represented by "terminal nodes" (such as the letters A through F in figure 4). The evolutionary lineage of a given taxon is thus represented by the straight lines connecting a terminal node back to the root. Taxa sharing the same most recent common ancestor are identified as sister taxa. An outgroup is a species or group of species that is closely related to, but not part of, the other taxa being studied (the ingroup). The function of the outgroup is to serve as a reference point for determining the evolutionary relationships of the ingroup (Huelsenbeck, Bollback, et al.).

To see how cladograms can visualize evolutionary relationships, consider figure 5. Here, the root is the most recent common ancestor for all the taxa shown in the figure, from lampreys (Petromyzon) to lizards (Lacertillia). Internal nodes indicate the last common ancestor for subgroups of taxa; for example, the rightmost internal node represents the last common ancestor for lizards and birds (Aves). The taxa (terminal nodes) in this diagram are all clades representing many species. This cladogram allows us to see that birds are more closely related to lizards than to lampreys. The validity of any cladogram to depict these relationships is, of course, dependent on the data used to construct the cladogram.

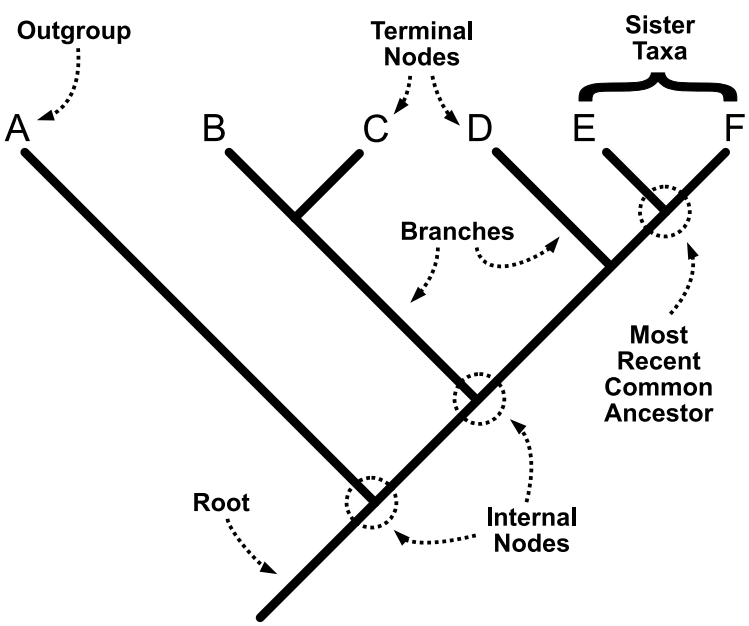

Figure 4. Basic cladogram structure

Before proceeding further, it is important to take in some cautionary considerations for using cladograms as representational tools of evolution (Gregory, "Understanding Evolutionary Trees"). First, it is most important to understand cladogram topology. Any internal node can be rotated 180° without changing the topology of the cladogram. For example, in Figure 6, the cladogram on the left (figure 6A) is equivalent to the cladogram on the right (figure 6B). Visually, the internal node for sister taxa E and F (EF) and taxon D, which we will call clade D(EF), has been rotated 180° about its vertical axis. The left-to-right order of the taxa was changed from A-B-C-D-E-F (figure 6A) to A-B-C-F-E-D (figure 6B). This gives the appearance that the evolutionary relationships of the taxa have changed, but they have not: when traced in the cladogram, the evolutionary pathways and divergent nodes are still the same.

What's important to note here is that the long "main line" of the cladogram represents the direct evolutionary path for whichever particular taxon is found at the rightmost terminal node. It is quite natural for the viewer to consider this node, and its taxon, the ultimate "destination" and focus of the cladogram. However, because nodes can be rotated about their vertical axis without changing the topology of the cladogram, there is *no* singular main line; the choice of which taxon is situated on the main line is made by whoever creates the cladogram. The cladogram can be rearranged such that any of the included taxa can be the terminus of the main line. This is demonstrated in figure 6, where taxon F is the terminus of the main line in figure 6A, and taxon D is the terminus of the main line in figure 6B.

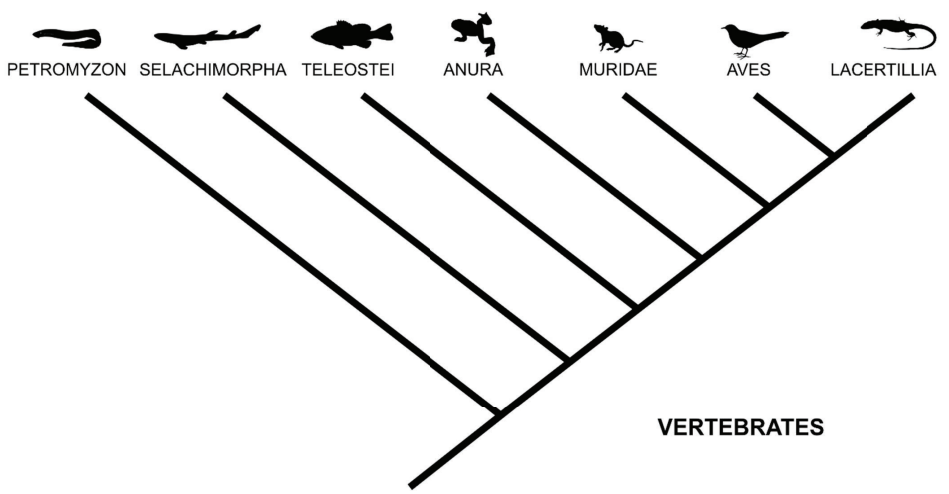

Figure 5. Simple cladogram of vertebrates
(after https://biologydictionary.net/cladogram/)

This is not an inherent weakness of the cladogram as a representational model; on the contrary, it shows the ability of the model to represent the underlying data more clearly, depending on subject focus. Indeed, while the same evolutionary pathways depicted in cladograms are also present in dendrograms and other phylogenetic trees, they can be obscured by the visual arborization, the structural complexity, of these models. In cladograms, not only are these pathways readily apparent, but by transposing taxa along the vertical axis at the proper nodes, the direct lineage of any taxon of interest can be easily visualized. Again, these manipulations do not modify the underlying scientific empirical facts in any way, any more than looking at a sculpture from different angles changes the sculpture itself. However, the viewer needs to be aware of this "polymorphic" property, or they could be misled into thinking that the main line is an immutable backbone.

Having been introduced to the structure and properties of cladograms, we can now explore their applications in biology by expanding our understanding of clades. Clades are defined by particular identifying features (synapomorphies) that taxa have in common. For example, as shown in the cladogram in figure 7, the embryos of fish, lizards, rabbits, and humans develop within amniotic sacs (a synapomorphy), and thus belong to the clade Amniota. All of these creatures have a vertebral column (another synapomorphy), as do lancelets and lampreys; thus, all belong to the clade Vertebrata. However, lancelets and lampreys do not have amniotic sacs, and so are excluded from the clade Amniota. Note also that the clade Amniota is nested in the clade Vertebrata, i.e., all members of clade Amniota are also members of clade Vertebrata, but not all vertebrates are amniotes.

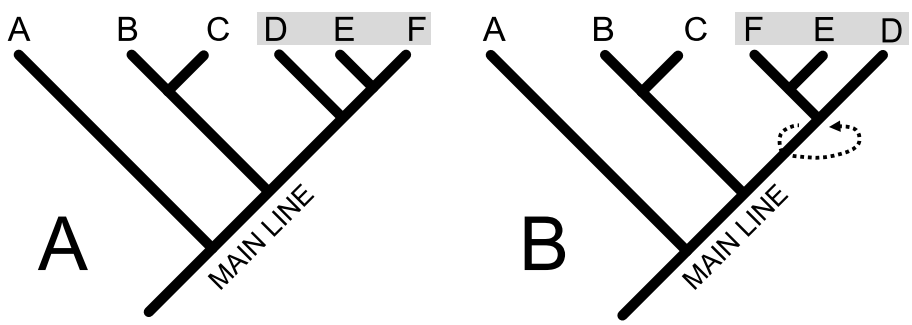

Figure 6. Cladogram equivalence. In panel B, taxa D-E-F have been rotated 180° to appear as F-E-D, yet the topology—and, therefore, the evolutionary relationship it represents, is unchanged.

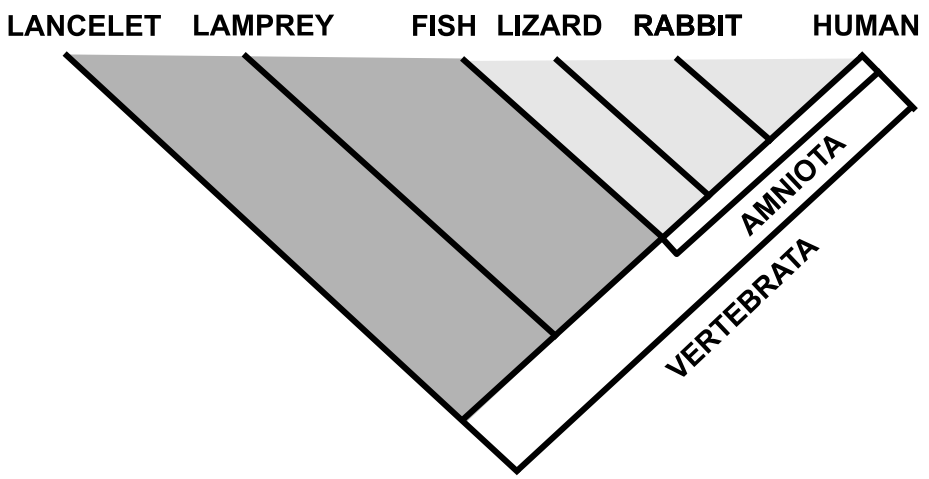

Figure 7. Cladogram with two clades
(after https://bio.libretexts.org/workbench/general_ecology_ecology/chapter_7%3a_the_history_of_life_systematics_and_phylogeny/7.7%3a_phylogeny_and_cladistics)

Figure 8 depicts a wider spectrum cladogram with more examples of synapomorphies and clades. It demonstrates several notable characteristics of cladograms in general: 1) By convention, evolution (the development of taxa with new adaptive features) is depicted as proceeding from left to right. 2) The main line has a positive slope to indicate, vaguely at least, the passage of evolutionary time. 3) The horizontal distance between taxa qualitatively reflects their evolutionary distance (biological difference). 4) The emergence of synapomorphies gives rise to new clades. 5) As evolution continues, specialization and complexity tend to increase and, therefore, the resulting clades generally become more focused, having smaller numbers of taxa included. However, there are many exceptions to this, and this characteristic should be taken as phenomenological. 6) The main line shows the direct evolutionary line for a particular taxon, the selection of which depends on how the cladogram is configured.

This last characteristic is perhaps the most important for the purposes of this paper, which deals with human evolution. Recall that what appears to be the main line is entirely dependent on how we "rotate" the taxa and clades in a cladogram, the topology of which is determined by true evolutionary relationships based on scientific data, and remains unchanged in that cladogram no matter how we view it. This is a subtle but profound distinction that will be developed in the rest of this paper.

The representative value of cladograms is that, because they are based on the appearance of evolving features, evolutionary progress in complexity and functionality can be easily seen. This property can evoke consternation among systematic biologists who hold

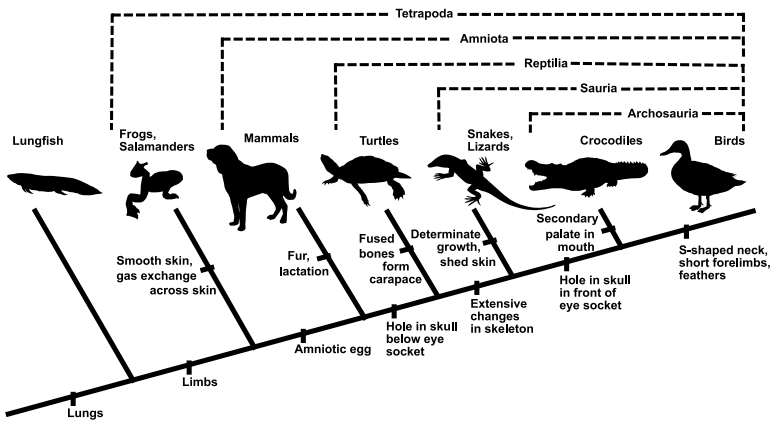

Figure 8. Broad spectrum cladogram withlabeled synapomorphies and clades (after https://srsscience.weebly.com/cladograms--dichotomous-key.html)

what has become a central dogma in evolutionary biology: that evolution has no purpose, no direction, and, therefore, no progression. The corollary of this viewpoint is that one form of life is not more "evolved" than another form of life. Taken to its logical extreme, paramecia are just as "advanced" as humans. Thus, any cladogram that purports to show evolutionary progress is considered to be anthropocentric (Sandvik). Yet, undeniably, evolutionary progress *does* occur, in the form of emerging biocomplexity (Zhang). One need not invoke any kind of teleology to accept this fact; it is due to entirely natural, evolutionary mechanisms (Lenski et al.).

To give an example of how cladograms can clearly reveal the emergence of increasing biocomplexity in evolution, we can examine a cladogram of land plants (figure 9). This cladogram shows some of the evolutionary steps leading to the emergence of angiosperms from a green algal evolutionary ancestor. Angiosperms exhibit greater biocomplexity than their green algal ancestors by having specialized multicellular structures such as roots, stems, leaves, and flowers, which enable advanced nutrient transport, reproduction, and environmental adaptation. They also possess advanced genetic regulation and co-evolutionary relationships with pollinators, reflecting increased ecological integration and evolutionary innovation. In this cladogram, each evolutionary step is a synapomorphy that demarcates a clade. For example, the evolution of multicellular embryos, a synapomorphy that is the hallmark of land plants, places plants ranging from liverworts to angiosperms in the clade Embryophyta (Lecointre and Le Guyader 175). In a similar manner, evolution of vascular tissue led to plants belonging to the clade Vasculata, and the evolution of seeds gave rise to the clade Spermatophyta. In this cladogram, the evolutionary "progress" of plants from simple green algae to biologically advanced angiosperms can be easily seen.

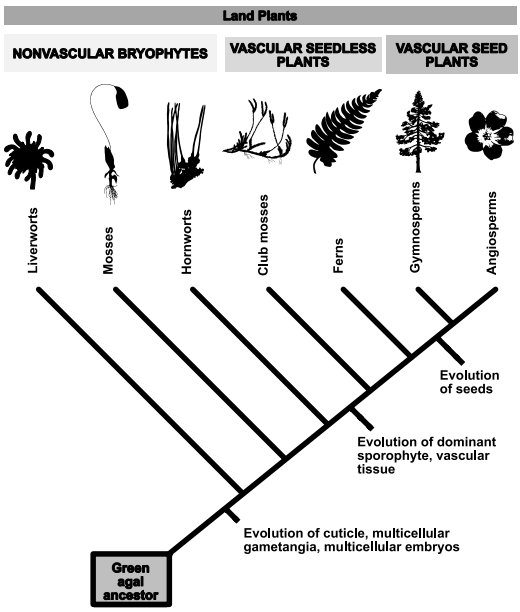

Figure 9. Cladogram of plant evolution (after https://www.bartleby.com/solution-answer/chapter-27-problem-15tyu-biology-mindtap-course-list-11th-edition/9781337392938/evaluate-and-synthesize-15-interpret-data-according-to-the-cladogram-in-figure-27-5-which-plants/f02fcaab-560e-11e9-8385-02ee952b546e)

Using Cladograms to Understand Human Evolution

As a representational tool, cladograms offer a different—and, as far as I can tell from my review of the Bahá'í-related literature, heretofore unexplored—way of visualizing 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution. I emphasize here that viewing these statements through a cladistic lens is *not* re-interpreting scientific facts, *not* proposing a new theory of evolution, *not* discarding other representations of evolution such as phylogenetic trees, and above all, *not* re-interpreting the statements of 'Abdu'l-Bahá. Viewing human evolution by means of cladograms is simply using a well-accepted method to perceive evolutionary phenomena (pathways and emergence) that are less apparent with other methods (Ashlock). Although it can be argued that there is an inherent anthropocentricism in the use of cladograms, nevertheless we can apply this method of viewing of human evolution if we keep the proper use of cladograms, described above, in mind.

We begin with figure 10, which shows a cladogram of human-related synapomorphies (indicated by dotted lines). In this figure, the term *pleisomorphies* refers to ancestral traits not shared with humans; *synapomorphies* refers to those traits shared with humans. The more primitive synapomorphies are lower in the cladogram. Taxa sharing the same synapomorphy are in the same clade. For example, the kangaroo, mouse, and human all have

hair, placing them in the "Hair" clade Mammalia; the kangaroo, however, though possessing a choriovitelline placenta, lacks the more developed chorioallantoic placenta (Themes), and thus does not belong to the "Placenta" clade Placentae. Although the cladogram shown in figure 10 is extremely simplified—indeed, simplistic, showing only a few evolutionary steps—the main line of this cladogram clearly shows the direct evolutionary path for acquiring more characteristics of the current human species, *Homo sapiens*.

Focusing on the order Primates, the cladogram in figure 11 shows the development of humans within this order. Some synapomorphies, from opposable thumbs to bipedalism, that distinguish primate taxa into smaller and smaller clades are labeled, but many more synapomorphies are not identified. In customary practice, cladograms are simplified for the sake of visualizing general evolutionary relationships. Also not shown are the taxa that evolved after the advent of bipedalism (e.g. *H. erectus* and *H. heidelbergensis*) which belong in the genus *Homo* along with *H. sapiens*. These taxa, including modern humans, constitute their own clade. We will explore the implications of this in the concluding remarks.

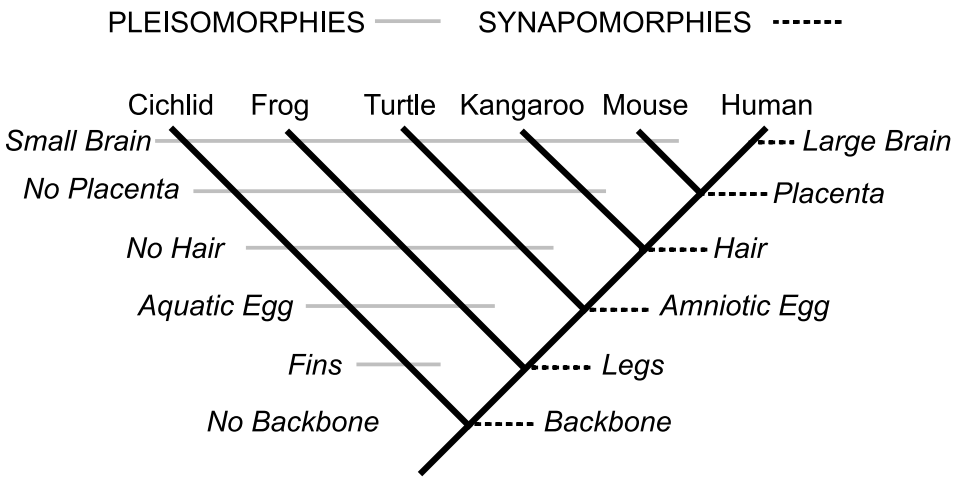

Figure 10. Cladogram showing synapomorphies
(after https://rainbow.ldeo.columbia.edu/courses/v1001/cladogram1.html)

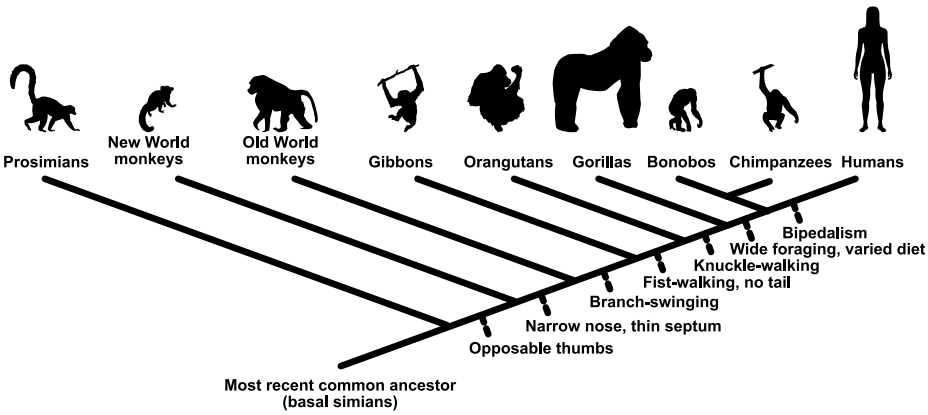

Figure 11. Primate cladogram
(after https://www.pinterest.com/pin/leventozgul1970-adl-kullancnn-evolution-panosundaki-pin--623678248370219145/)

Understanding 'Abdu'l-Bahá's Statements in Light of Cladistics

Using the cladogram as a visualization tool—not to prove anything, but to better comprehend evolutionary relationships—we can now turn to some of the statements made by 'Abdu'l-Bahá about human evolution. In so doing, the intention is not to advance a new interpretation of His statements, but rather to stimulate the reader to revisit and deepen their own understanding of these statements.

Statement One

> The human spirit, which distinguishes man from the animal, is the rational soul, and these two terms—the human spirit and the rational soul—designate one and the same thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is called the rational soul, encompasses all things and as far as human capacity permits, discovers their realities and becomes aware of the properties and effects, the characteristics and conditions of earthly things. (*Some Answered Questions* 241)

In approaching human evolution from a Bahá'í perspective, the fundamental tenet is: humans are separate from animals by reason of having rational souls. 'Abdu'l-Bahá declares that

> [T]he foremost degree of comprehension in the world of nature is that of the rational soul. This power and comprehension is shared in common by all men, whether they be heedless or aware, wayward or faithful. In the creation of God, the rational soul of man encompasses and is distinguished above all other created things: It is by virtue

> of its nobility and distinction that it encompasses them all. (*Some Answered Questions* 250)

The defining feature of the human being—the human essence, in the sense that 'Abdu'l-Bahá discusses it—is spiritual, not physical. This should be borne in mind: while a cladogram can clarify the nature of human beings' biological relationship to animals in a way that helps us view some of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution in a new light—as I hope to demonstrate here—it does not directly speak to the core of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's argument, which focuses on the spiritual essence of the human being.

Statement Two

> The forms assumed by the human embryo in its successive changes do not prove that it is animal in its essential character. . . . Realizing this we may acknowledge the fact that at one time man was an inmate of the sea, at another period an invertebrate, then a vertebrate and finally a human being standing erect. Though we admit these changes, we cannot say man is an animal . . . (*Promulgation* 359)

The straightforward meaning of this statement can be easily visualized by the main line depicting human evolution in figures 10, 11, and 12. I re-emphasize that this direct lineage is also evidenced in phylogenetic trees and other representations of human evolution, but that it is obscured by the structures of those models. The cladogram helps us see more clearly when specific synapomorphies appeared in human ancestors—including those synapomorphies alluded to in this statement by 'Abdu'l-Bahá, namely the vertebral structure, the development of four limbs with bony digits that characterizes tetrapods and enabled vertebrates to live on land, and bipedalism. As a distinct clade in these cladograms, the question of whether the human being is an animal becomes essentially semantic. Consider that from a certain perspective, we can call all tetrapods—all amphibians, reptiles, mammals, and birds—fish, since their last common ancestor with modern fish was a creature we would categorize as a fish or fish-like creature. However, the development of the defining tetrapod synapomorphy, and the further development of the synapomorphies that characterize each of those animal groups, make it more meaningful in most contexts to call a reptile a reptile, a mammal a mammal, etc., rather than thinking of them as "fish." It is similarly reasonable to argue that humans are both within Animalia and yet defined by distinguishing features that set them apart. And while some of these are synapomorphies of the kind considered by evolutionary biology (morphological features such as bipedalism and large brain size), the most distinguishing "synapomorphy" from a Bahá'í perspective is the actualization and appearance of the human spirit. We will examine this more closely in the concluding remarks.

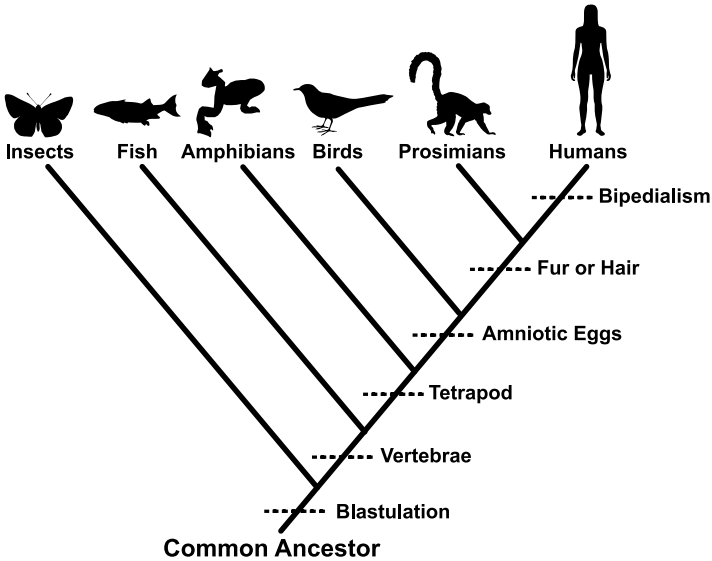

Figure 12. Human evolutionary line from anancestor common to other life forms (after https://www.pinterest.com/pin/189573465546096403/)

Statement Three

> The lost link of Darwinian theory is itself a proof that man is not an animal. How is it possible to have all the links present and that important link absent? Its absence is an indication that man has never been an animal. It will never be found. (*Promulgation* 359).

Figure 13 is a simplified primate cladogram showing the evolutionary relationships between humans and other primates. The bifurcations along the backbone indicate the points at which other primates diverged from the human evolutionary line. Each node of these bifurcations represents the most recent common ancestor (MRCA) of all clades above the node. The cladogram clearly shows that, indeed, there is no "missing link" in the sense held in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's time. A missing link would imply *direct* descent from the other primates: chimpanzees, gorillas, etc. Rather than a missing link, humans shared a MRCA at earlier points in evolutionary history with each of the other primates shown in figure 13. This is a subtle but profound distinction. Rather than "direct descent" as it was understood in 'Abdu'l-Bahá's time, what really occurred was successive divergence: the splitting off of preceeding taxa over time. The notion of a "missing link" has been dismissed in modern evolutionary biology (Williams and Ebach 1), just as 'Abdu'l-Bahá predicted that it would be.

Now, what of the evolutionary line prior to each of the MRCAs shown in figure 13? We may consider some of these evolutionary predecessors as having the potential of evolving into higher organisms, even though

in actual form and function these predecessors possessed none of the outward characteristics of the higher organisms. This potentiality is indicated ipso facto by the subsequent emergence of more advanced species. A mystery of the phenomenon of emergence is that the properties of an emergent entity, whether physical (e.g., a mineral) or biological (e.g., a species) are not found in its predecessor entities; in other words, the predecessors will not themselves display the newly emergent properties. To use a physicochemical example, a molecule of water, H_2O, is composed of two atoms of hydrogen and one atom of oxygen, yet neither elemental hydrogen nor oxygen have any of the physical properties of water: its fluidity, viscosity, boiling point, etc. The potential characteristics of water are only realized when water "emerges" from the chemical combination of hydrogen and oxygen.

This concept can be applied to the emergence of humans, although in this case the emergence is more gradual and, therefore, not as obvious at any given step. This potential for emergence existed in the evolutionary line preceding the MRCAs of humans, chimpanzees, and other primates. 'Abdu'l-Bahá alludes to this emergence when He states, "from the beginning the embryo possesses all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, sight, smell, and taste—in a word, all the powers—but they are invisible and become apparent only gradually" (*Some Answered Questions* 229). The gradual emergence of the human line with the successive divergence of each subsequent MRCA supports the concept of the potentiality of humans in evolutionary deep time.

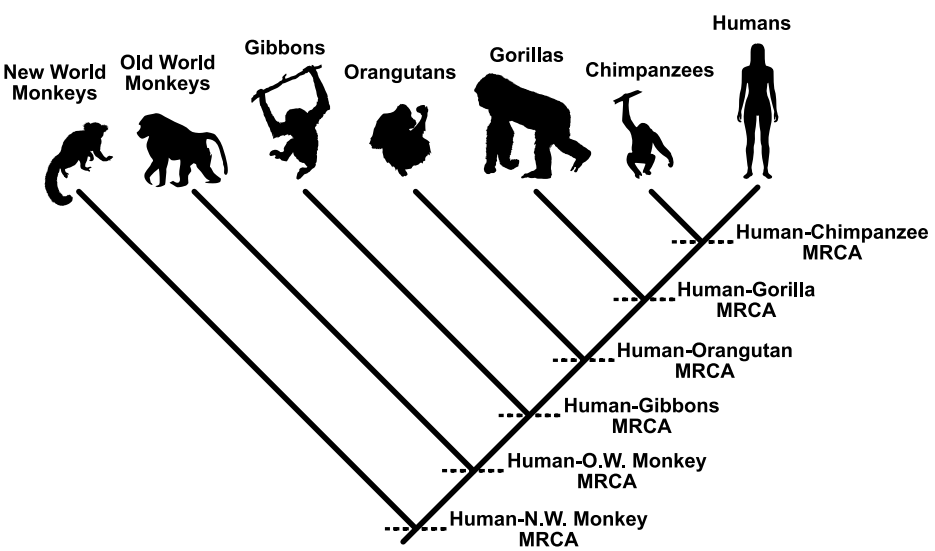

Figure 13. Simplified primate cladogram
(after https://www.researchgate.net/figure/cladogram-depicting-the-phylogenetic-relations-among-seven-primates-adapted-from_fig1_279854352)

There is, of course, a point in evolutionary history when early humans (in biology, hominins) physically appeared on the earth. This appearance may be considered an inflection point between human "potentiality" and human "actuality" in the evolutionary sense used here. This biological emergence conceivably could have been after the divergence of the last primate/human MRCA. This would be in accord with a statement of 'Abdu'l-Bahá that "…it is possible that man simply came into existence after the animal" (*Some Answered Questions* 221). This concept is developed further in Statement Four.

Statement Four

> [T]he antecedence of animals to man is not a proof that the essence of the human species was altered or transformed or that man came from the animal kingdom. For so long as it is acknowledged that these different beings have appeared in time, it is possible that man simply came into existence after the animal. Thus we observe in the vegetable kingdom that the fruits of different trees do not appear all at once; on the contrary, some appear earlier in the season and others later. This priority is not a proof that the later fruit of one tree was produced from the earlier fruit of another. (*Some Answered Questions* 221)

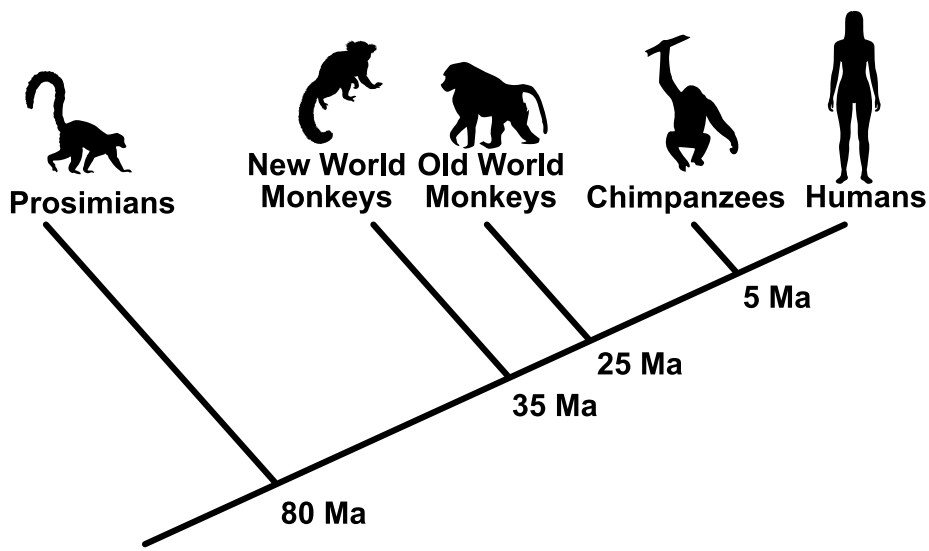

Figure 14. Cladogram showing evolutionary divergence between humans and other primates (Ma = megaannum = millions of years ago) (after https://www.researchgate.net/figure/phylogenetic-tree-of-primates-cladogram-showing-the-evolutionary-divergence-between_fig1_336892351)

The cladograms shown in figures 11, 12, 13, and 14 express this phenomenon. To see this, it is important to note that each of the non-human groups (chimpanzees, gorillas, etc.) did not appear at the evolutionary time of the related MRCA; these groups gradually evolved into their present state just as humans did. (This is why, for example, it is incorrect to say that "humans descended from chimpanzees"; rather, both chimpanzees and humans evolved from a MRCA.) Thus, the topmost horizontal row of each cladogram represents the "fruits" of the different evolutionary "trees" (i.e., the different evolutionary pathways shown in the cladograms). For example, the cladogram in Figure 14 clearly shows that prosimians represent an "earlier fruit" appearing earlier in the evolutionary "season" from a "different tree."(The cladogram in Figure 14 may appear as a single tree, but this is only because each evolutionary pathway for chimpanzees, gorillas, etc. is simplified to a single line; if mapped at a higher resolution that included more evolutionary ancestors and their taxonomic branches, each line in Figure 14 would appear as a tree in its own right.) Alternatively, 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statement makes sense if we consider the "main line" of Figure 14 to be like the soil from which a number of trees (portrayed as simple lines in the cladogram) grew, with each species in those trees being "fruits." This in no way contradicts, or is contradicted by, other statements in the Writings that all of creation is essentially one—clearly, all past and present existing entities in the physical creation are "fruits" of the one "tree" of creation—and consonant with Statement Four, the prior appearance of these "fruits" is not a proof that the later fruit of one tree was produced from the earlier fruit of another: humans did not directly descend from chimpanzees, monkeys, or prosimians.

Statement Five

> Let us suppose that man once bore a resemblance to the animal and that he has since evolved and transformed. Accepting this statement does not prove the transformation of species, but could instead be likened to the changes and transformations that the human embryo undergoes before reaching its full development and maturity, as was earlier mentioned. To be more explicit, let us suppose that man once walked on all fours or had a tail: This change and transformation is similar to that of the fetus in the womb of the mother. Even though the fetus develops and evolves in every possible way before it reaches its full development, from the beginning it belongs to a distinct species. (*Some Answered Questions* 223)

Here, 'Abdu'l-Bahá draws a parallel between human embryogenesis, wherein "ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny"[7] and human phylogenesis. In

7 The concept that "ontogeny

the long evolutionary history leading to the appearance of species *Homo sapiens*, humans have always been human in potentiality. A human embryo is always human regardless of how it may transiently appear *in utero*. It takes time for the embryo to develop into a baby to enter the extrauterine world. In similar fashion, it took time for human form and capacity to be realized in the natural world, allowing the human spirit, the rational soul, to manifest.

The MRCA of humans and any other species—be it chimpanzee, gorilla, or shark—gave rise to divergent lineages through its offspring, one eventually leading to humans and the other to another species. While this ancestor was not human in the taxonomic sense, it can be metaphorically viewed as an embryonic stage in humanity's development, representing a form oriented toward the eventual emergence of human-specific traits. This perspective rejects the notion of a separate, non-animal lineage evolving into humans, and instead affirms that the human form arose from a continuous line of "proto-human" ancestors—traceable along the backbone of a cladogram—culminating in a biological structure capable of manifesting the human spirit or rational soul.

Concluding Remarks: Are Humans a Separate Clade?

Stepping back from all interpretations and speculations on the meaning of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on human evolution, there is, I believe, a fundamental grounding principle, formulated by William Whewell and quoted by Darwin himself in the preface page of *On the Origin of Species*, that we must keep in mind:

> But with regard to the material world, we can at least go so far as this—we can perceive that events are brought about not by insulated interpositions of Divine power, exerted in each particular case, but by the establishment of general laws.

Bahá'ís are in full agreement with this statement. The fundamental position in Bahá'í belief is that the natural universe, together with its underlying physical laws, were created by God ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation* 462–63). They believe that the natural world and its laws are the manifestations of God's creative power, and that nature reflects God's will. Moreover, Bahá'ís understand that physical reality is not a fixed and static creation, but a dynamic and ongoing emanation from God, who sustains it by His will: God the Creator is God the Creating (J. Hatcher, *Purpose* 48). Furthermore,

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recapitulates phylogeny" was first formulated by Étienne Serres in the 1820s, based on the work of Johann Friedrich Meckel, and is known as the Meckel-Serres Law (Dupont). Championed by Ernst Haeckel in his *General Morphology of Organisms* in 1866, it was widely accepted up through the time of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements. Since then, this concept has been largely discredited (Linhard). However, the point that 'Abdu'l-Bahá was making still applies.

Bahá'ís accept that evolution operates according to consistent and universal natural laws that never deviate from their course; science can therefore investigate these universal laws without need of invoking divine "tinkering" in a mechanistic sense. Based on these premises, we can infer that human evolution is coherent and compatible with scientific investigation—it can be fully explained by natural mechanisms, both deterministic and stochastic—and yet still is purposeful and progressive, and reveals the signs of God. Yet the central dogma of current biology is that evolution is purposeless and directionless, that progressive evolution is an illusion, that there is no hierarchical order to life, and—especially—that humankind occupies no special station in life (Kadykalo). Cladograms cannot disprove this belief—or any philosophical interpretation of evolution, theistic or atheistic. Indeed, in spite of their having been criticized as being inherently anthropocentric, introducing an unintended bias in their presentation (Sandvik), we have seen that a cladogram can be arranged so as to give to the unwary reader the appearance that any species—from the human to the hagfish—was the main driving purpose of evolution. So what *can* cladograms do, and why have I suggested that they can help reveal that the apparent tension between some of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on evolution and contemporary science is illusory?

Remembering that every model or map has a particular function, and draws out a particular, partial truth about the thing that it represents, we can say that when given the necessary data and when properly applied, cladograms can clearly reveal emergent biocomplexity and the evolutionary pathways of any species, genus, family, order, etc., efflorescing into the majestic diversity of life—including *Homo sapiens*.

Returning to the definition of a clade: a group of taxa that 1) share a common ancestor, and, therefore, 2) have an exclusive evolutionary history; and 3) possess one or more synapomorphies composed of characteristics, traits, and functional capabilities from molecular to organismal levels. Clades are established by genetics and other molecular studies, paleontology and paleobiology, systematic morphology, and ethology. Thus, cladistics is grounded in scientific research that is current, rigorous, and well accepted. This grounding allows us to use cladistics as a valid technique to help us consider human evolution in light of 'Abdu'l-Bahá's statements on the subject.

Archaic species of genus *Homo* that evolved after the advent of bipedalism include *H. habilis*, *H. erectus*, *H. heidelbergensis*, *H. neanderthalensis*, and *H. floresiensis*. Along with *H. sapiens*, these taxa are assigned to the tribe Hominini, which includes chimpanzees and bonobos. Archaic and modern humans are further classified in subtribe Hominina, and chimpanzees and bonobos are classified in subtribe Panina, genus *Pan*. The last common ancestor between *Pan* and *Homo* lived

at least five, and perhaps as early as seven, million years ago (Tocheri et al.).

Within this taxonomic structure, genus Homo could be assigned to its own clade based on these established synapomorphies: bipedalism (Leutenegger), genetic homology (Coleman), a significantly larger cranial capacity (Stanyon et al.), complex linguistics (Tattersall; Corballis), and culture formation employing fire, tools, and art (Lake). Current scientific evidence suggests that differences in mental abilities between apes and humans are gradual (Penny). This is consistent with evolutionary development as a whole: ethological studies repeatedly demonstrate rudimentary thought and feeling in lower mammals, suggesting that this distinction is in degree, not kind. Others, however, such as the biological anthropologist and linguist Terrence Deacon, see this in a different light. In Deacon's words, "Biologically, we are just another ape. Mentally, we are a new phylum of organisms" (23). In biological taxonomy, Phylum is a classification rank positioned just below Kingdom, representing a significantly different evolutionary category (Williams and Ebach 31).

For humans, therefore, perhaps a more exclusive clade could be derived based on the one "synapomorphy" that is unique, 'Abdu'l-Bahá attests, among the entire range of life: the rational soul, which He describes as possessing moral will and a consciousness capable of transcending nature and perceiving the Light of God (*Some Answered Questions* 250). An appropriate designation for this clade might be: *Rationalis*.

Appendix A – Strengths and Weaknesses of Cladistics

Some advantages of cladistics include (Ashlock):

1. It is grounded in evolutionary theory and is complementary to, not incompatible with, other methodologies in phylogenetics.
2. It is based on empirical data with diverse properties, obtained from separate methods and sources, which improves classification validity.
3. It is quite useful for studying evolutionary relationships in all the major specialties of biology from botany to zoology.
4. It is particularly good at visualizing evolutionary history in terms of phenetics and evolutionary development (Harrison).

Taken collectively, these advantages make cladistics an ideal approach to understanding evolution in general and, for our interests, human evolution in particular. More importantly, this approach offers a platform for higher discourse with wider communities, lay and scientific alike.

David Williams and Malte Ebach, co-authors of the standard textbook on cladistics have said, "*cladistics is classification*" (403, original emphasis). In

biology, classification in general can be problematic for several reasons that apply to cladistics:

1. Cladistics isn't well suited to accommodate reticulate evolution (Sneath), i.e., evolution that occurs from the lateral exchange of genetic information by horizontal gene transfer, etc. (Belal and Heath). Horizontal gene transfer can occur in bacteria, for example, by generalized transduction from viral infection (Arnold et al.).
2. Cladistics is better at incorporating some types of data than others. For example, it is not an ideal classification system for fossil records that are incomplete and lacking information about evolutionary relationships (Grantham).
3. Cladistics can be restrictive, limiting the inclusion of subtly diverse taxa (Christoffersen). This is a criticism of taxonomy in general.

Cladistics is focused on the classification of known taxa rather than the discovery of unknown taxa (Williams and Ebach 396). This is not a disadvantage *per se*, it merely reflects the focus of any classification methodology.

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Fostering Wisdom in Youth through Moral Education in a Bahá'í-inspired School

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Abstract
This article reports a focused ethnographical study that examined the practices of an independent Bahá'í-inspired school that aspires to deliberately foster students' acquisition of wisdom as well as their capacity to be moral citizens who will contribute to the common good. The school's starting point is a Bahá'í belief that all humans have an innate potential for developing wise thinking and noble dispositions. Its key strategy is the deliberate use of an ethos-driven moral curriculum framed by nineteen moral capabilities designed to promote a deep understanding amongst staff and students of moral and prosocial thought and action. The aim is twofold: to enable students to develop wise thinking and noble behavior, and to equip them to contribute to the positive transformation of society. Drawing on the first author's sustained dialogue with the school leadership and immersive observation of the school's life world, this study explores the means used to advance these aims, and draws some preliminary conclusions about their effect. It finds that the day-to-day practices through which the nineteen moral capabilities framework is operationalized do incrementally transform students by fostering their wise thinking and moral action.

Résumé
Le présent article rend compte d'une étude ethnographique ciblée qui a examiné les méthodes d'une école indépendante d'inspiration bahá'íe cherchant à favoriser, chez les élèves, l'acquisition de la sagesse ainsi que la capacité d'être des citoyens moraux qui contribueront au bien commun. Le point de départ de l'école est la croyance bahá'íe selon laquelle tous les êtres humains possèdent le potentiel inné de développer une pensée sage et un caractère noble. Sa stratégie clé consiste à utiliser délibérément un programme moral axé sur l'éthique, conçu autour de dix-neuf compétences morales ayant pour objet de favoriser une profonde compréhension, chez le personnel et les élèves, d'une pensée et d'une conduite morales et prosociales. L'objectif est double : permettre aux élèves d'acquérir une pensée sage et un comportement noble, et leur donner les moyens de contribuer à une transformation positive de la société. S'appuyant sur le dialogue soutenu entre la première auteure et la direction de l'école ainsi que sur l'observation immersive du cadre de vie scolaire, cette étude explore les moyens utilisés pour atteindre ces objectifs et tire quelques conclusions préliminaires quant à leur efficacité. Elle permet de constater que les pratiques quotidiennes par lesquelles le cadre des dix-neuf compétences morales est mis en œuvre transforment progressivement les élèves en favorisant chez eux une pensée sage et une conduite morale.

Resumen
Este artículo informa sobre un enfocado estudio etnográfico el cual examinó las prácticas de una independiente escuela de

inspiración Bahá'í que aspira fomentar deliberadamente la adquisición de sabiduría por los estudiantes así como su capacidad de ser ciudadanos morales quienes contribuirán al bien común. El punto de partida de la escuela es una creencia Bahá'í que todos los seres humanos tienen un innato potencial para desarrollar pensamiento sabio y disposiciones nobles. Su estrategia clave es el uso deliberado de un currículo moral impulsado por etos en el marco de diecinueve capacidades morales diseñadas para promover un profundo entendimiento entre el personal y los estudiantes de pensamiento y acción morales y pro-sociales. El objetivo es doble: habilitar a los estudiantes a desarrollar pensamiento sabio y comportamiento noble y capacitarles para contribuir a la positiva transformación de la sociedad. Recurriendo al sostenido diálogo de la primera autora con el liderazgo de la escuela y una observación inmersiva de la vida escolar, este estudio explora los medios usados para avanzar estos objetivos, y llega a unas conclusiones preliminares acerca de su efecto. El estudio encuentra que las prácticas diarias por medio de las cuales el marco de estas diecinueve capacidades se operativiza, en efecto, transforma en forma progresiva a los estudiantes fomentando su pensamiento sabio y acción moral.

The purpose of moral education in schools can be stated simply: it aims to develop students' capabilities for determining what is right and wrong in their own and others' behavior and for understanding the reasoning behind moral decisions (Halstead and Pike 1–3). Kohlberg's theory of moral development highlights that moral reasoning is developmental; the individual's capacity for moral reasoning advances over stages as she develops and matures (26–28). Thus, as a primary site of socialization during childhood, schools play an important role in providing opportunities and support that will foster students' moral development over time.

If we further interrogate the purpose of moral education in schools, however—if we ask *why* we would want to help students develop moral reasoning, an understanding of right and wrong, and the ability to choose behaviors that align with a moral standard—we discover that the research on moral education in schools reveals diverse motivations for its inclusion in school curricula, and different desired impacts on student values and behavior. In some cases, schools' rationale for including moral education is to address students' antisocial behavior, and this goal also motivates some of the research in the field (Kidron and Fleischman; Freitas et al.). This kind of motivation can be attributed to a global perception of youth—and young adolescents in particular—as a potentially problematic group dealing with significant physical, social and emotional changes and challenges. In society generally, young people are often perceived as irresponsible and self-centered. This commonly held perception motivates educational theorists, leaders and educators to research effective ways to motivate and enable students to change their social behavior and develop capabilities for cooperative moral action and good citizenship. Moral education, in this

context, is framed in essentially negative terms, in the sense that it is used to address a deficiency or lack rather than being a good for its own sake.

A different set of motivations for researching moral education conceptualizes it as a positive good. Faith-based schools exemplify this: they adopt a structured and intentional approach in which moral education often occupies a central place in their curriculum, in support of their mission to inculcate the beliefs, values and practices of their particular religion and to graduate students who are moral thinkers and responsible members of society.

This article uses a case study of moral education in a Canadian Bahá'í-inspired school, Nancy Campbell Academy (NCA), to identify the intent behind the incorporation of moral education within their curriculum, explore the practices through which it is advanced, and assess (in preliminary form) the impact it has on the students' acquisition of wisdom. Nancy Campbell Academy was chosen as the case study because it is explicit about the motivation behind the inclusion of moral education: to develop students' moral capabilities and leadership skills by aligning with universal human values. The ultimate goal of NCA is to develop leaders with a world-embracing vision who believe in human nobility, are capable of applying moral principles to practical problems and situations, and contribute meaningfully to the betterment of society. Moral education, in this context, is far from a mere corrective to undesirable behavior, and is instead an integral component of a holistic education. The founder of NCA, Gordon Naylor, recognizes that nobility and wisdom are latent potentials within all youth and this understanding is central to the ethos and educational practices of the school.

Following from this premise, the curriculum for moral education is designed to awaken and develop students' innate capacity for nobility and wisdom.[1] NCA adopts a strengths-based approach in its curriculum and pedagogy that emphasizes the positive attributes of youth through communicative and social interactions. This is an explicitly positive, rather than deficit-centered, approach that recognizes youths' innate altruism and willingness to contribute to the betterment of the world; it reflects the Bahá'í perspective on young people, as described for instance by the Universal House of Justice:

> While global trends project an image of this age group as

1 NCA materials, leadership, and staff use a range of terms to describe the capacities they seek to foster in students. For the purposes of this paper, we use two terms—nobility and wisdom—that both resonate with the language used by NCA, and conceptually map on to the overall capacities it aims to develop, as well as (in the case of wisdom) to the literature on moral development. Nobility, as we use the term, is the individual's inherent potential for goodness, while wisdom represents the active expression and application of that potential. See below for greater elaboration on both definitions.

> problematic, lost in the throes of tumultuous physical and emotional change, unresponsive and self-consumed, the Bahá'í community—in the language it employs and the approaches it adopts—is moving decidedly in the opposite direction, seeing in junior youth instead altruism, an acute sense of justice, eagerness to learn about the universe and a desire to contribute to the construction of a better world. (Riḍván 2010)

In 2016, Sona Farid-Arbab outlined a significant challenge for Bahá'í inspired education, noting that Bahá'í inspired schools aim to graduate noble and wise humans who will become leaders for global peace and cooperation. Farid-Arbab also acknowledges that there is a growing number of examples of effective and innovative educational efforts aiming to achieve such aspirations. Despite these observations, she argues that "although much has been achieved over the decades, it has been clear to all who have contributed to these efforts that the vision of what may be called 'Bahá'í education' is a distant one." Our article makes no claim to actually articulate a vision of "Bahá'í education"; however, it does offer a detailed examination of one Bahá'í-inspired school and its attempts to provide a comprehensive curriculum in support of the primary goal of producing wise and noble global citizens who find joy in service to others. Rather than suggesting that this school is a prototype for all Bahá'í schools, we present the case study as a basis for further analysis, one that offers insights and approaches that can be considered, adopted, and adapted by others in the field.

Conceptual Background

Before turning to the case study, we will outline the general conceptual understandings that inform the study design and structure its observations. We will first highlight a few considerations about the concept of moral education and the pursuit of prosocial behavior in schools that are relevant for our study, before turning to the concept of wisdom as a specific outcome of moral education.

Moral Education and Prosocial Behavior

The literature on moral education frames the purpose of such education as fostering prosocial thinking and behavior. Zhang et al., for example, describe moral education as intending to generate at both social emotional learning and the behavior outcome of voluntary actions aimed at benefiting others (15031). In this framing, social emotional learning equips students with emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal skills, which are capacities that underpin moral reasoning and concern for others. These, in turn, support the emergence of voluntary prosocial actions. The challenge confronting educators, then, is to identify effective strategies to foster students'

ability to think in moral terms, and to inculcate the disposition to be concerned with moral behavior and with the wellbeing and benefit of others (Kidron and Fleischman; Freitas et al.).

Moral reasoning and prosocial behavior cannot be developed in a vacuum; they develop in response to an interactive environment. Human development studies have identified the emergence of moral emotions, such as guilt and empathy, in the child's early years. Malti et al. argue that social interactions with caregivers and others at this early stage are fundamentally important in children's development of capabilities for negotiating complex social and moral situations in everyday life using "moral and prosocial behavior" (4). The interactive environment of the school is the context for further development of these capabilities (Kohlberg).

Malti et al. distinguish between morality and sociality, noting that while they are strongly related, they are not the same. However, they affirm that moral development is "central to the emergence of socially responsible attitudes and values" (4). Faith and philosophical traditions have long shaped both how morality is understood on its own terms, and how it informs sociality, offering foundational insights for moral education. For example, Tan Tai Wei explains that a Confucian framework for moral education emphasizes the practice of just principles in interpersonal relationships—principles such as commitment, strength of will, and correct motive (i.e. goodwill to one's fellow humans rather than self-aggrandizement) (33–37). Such traditions offer enduring frameworks for moral education, emphasizing character formation, ethical intent, and meaningful relationships as essential to human development.

Most research in developmental psychology is understandably limited to the immediate context of children's lives, but if we frame the desired outcome for children as navigating an increasingly interconnected world in a moral way, then the broader global context assumes great importance. Peterson, for example, suggests that a more global education is needed in order to generate an expanded world view in children (247). Specifically, the development of children as global citizens requires an environment that provides a meaningful ethic for developing bonds between all human beings; such an ethic must promote in the child an understanding of global justice and a conception of the moral relationship between people that extends beyond national boundaries.

This is by no means an exhaustive exploration of the literature on moral education, but it does permit us to trace the broad requirements of an effective moral education curriculum. Moral education in schools requires more than the mere articulation and repetition of prosocial values. It requires a purposeful vision and, above all, active engagement. Learning to be moral global citizens requires complex, situated, and engaged processes, driven by tenets of inclusion and justice. A moral

education curriculum that supports this must be embedded within a dynamic, interactive environment that fosters prosocial thinking and reasoning and encourages meaningful action and interaction that reflect and reinforce prosocial behavior.

Wisdom

Moral education and wisdom are deeply interconnected. Wisdom, of course, is a complex concept,[2] but for the purposes of our study we use the term to indicate a human capacity, innate yet developmental, by which the individual applies their internalized moral framework to real-life situations in a contextually appropriate way. Wisdom thus requires knowledge but is not reducible to it; it is the ability to apply knowledge thoughtfully and ethically to create positive change in communities and the world.

This understanding of wisdom is reflected by a number of thinkers. Zhang et al., for instance, adopt a two-dimensional view of wisdom as encompassing both a disposition—altruism—and a behavioral element—creative problem-solving. Zhang et al. regard wisdom as a "global psychological quality that engages intellectual ability, prior knowledge and experience in a way that integrates both virtue (moral standards) and wit (intelligence) and is increased through life experiences and continued practice" (15031). Pascual-Leone similarly describes the wise person as one who, while being in the moment, conceptually and experientially integrates their knowledge and the multiplicity of their life experiences from an historical and cultural perspective. When this integration has sufficient breadth, depth and cohesion, wisdom appears. Such wisdom has the capacity to resolve contradictions between ideas regarding behavior, beliefs, actions, bodies of knowledge and the realities of life, while maintaining a concern for the interests and welfare of others (272). Pascual-Leone perceives wisdom to be different from either creativity or intelligence alone, because it not only involves cognition "but also affect and personality as a whole" (272). Like Zhang et al., Pascual-Leone sees altruism as a disposition that is core to wisdom: wisdom allows "a weakening of ego-centered characteristics, which leads to greater intuition and to an empathic understanding of other, self, world, and nature as equally strong concerns" (272).

Sternberg similarly describes wise practice as making "reflective responses that balance considerations in search for a common good" ("Why Schools Should Teach for Wisdom" 235). Elaborating on this point, he argues that

> wisdom is . . . about balance. It

2 Zhang et al., for example, argue that the definition of wisdom has become diffuse, filtered through each of the various disciplines—philosophy, psychology, gerontology, human development etc.—that has made it a focus of systematic study. Wisdom may also be defined differently based on the cultural and situational context in which it is being observed (15030).

> is in the application of successful intelligence to balance your own interests with the interests of other people and with the interests of larger entities—entities like your community or country or the natural world—to adapt, shape and select your environment over the short and long term in the service of a common good. ("Wisdom" 127)

Complementing the internal, reflective work of wisdom is its practical dimension. Staudinger explains that although collective knowledge becomes manifest in proverbs, wisdom is only contained in "their insightful application to a given problem" (283). Similarly, Kristjánsson, drawing on Aristotle, introduces the notion of phronesis, or practical wisdom, referring "to the capacity of knowing and enacting the right course of (moral) action through a process of identifying and deliberating between competing values, emotions and alternatives" (2). Nabobo argues that wisdom fosters balance, provoking in those who achieve it "insight, hope, and the ability to affirm their sense of identity" (41). These authors exhibit a common understanding of wisdom as more than the acquisition and accumulation of knowledge: rather, it is the appropriate use of that knowledge to empower individuals to face the challenges of life in a manner that is effective, both practically and morally.

The above observations suggest that wisdom is a complex and multifaceted quality that can be progressively developed. It integrates intellectual, emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions. It involves the application of knowledge and experience to balance individual and community interests. It includes empathy and a weakening of ego-centered characteristics and requires understanding and assessing situations to arrive at balanced, moral behavior whose ultimate aim is contributing to the betterment of the world.

Thus, where moral education is broadly aimed at cultivating character and virtue in individuals by fostering prosocial behavior and moral reasoning from an early age, wisdom education is the subset of moral education that hones the practical application of moral principles in real-life situations. Through wisdom education, individuals are motivated to nurture and develop their innate wisdom, and thus equipped to apply knowledge and ethical understanding to make thoughtful and balanced decisions that are compassionate and just. They become capable of navigating complex situations and resolving conflict in ways that consider the benefit of both the individual and the community.

A Bahá'í Approach to Moral Education and Wisdom

As a starting point for considering how a Bahá'í-inspired educational framework might approach moral education and the cultivation of wisdom in students, we can consider the concept of the nobility of the human being in

the Bahá'í writings. "Nobility" here describes a belief about the human being as such, regardless of background or social context: the essence of the human being is a creation in the image of God. Thus, Bahá'u'lláh says of the human being: "Noble have I created thee, yet thou hast abased thyself. Rise then unto that for which thou wast created" (Hidden Words Arabic no. 22). Moral education, then, is not about imposing an external standard upon a student conceived of as a blank slate—or much less as a problematic, antisocial individual. It is instead a project of uncovering and actualizing inherent nobility, of creating the conditions in which the seeds of innate goodness can germinate and grow.

This understanding is reinforced by further exploration of a Bahá'í ontology of the human being. The Universal House of Justice describes the noble essence of every person as a soul that potentially expresses all the attributes of God (1 March 2017). Thus, the soul has the capacity to reflect all divine attributes such as compassion, generosity, love and wisdom. Bahá'u'lláh states: "Regard man as a mine rich in gems of inestimable value. Education can, alone, cause it to reveal its treasures, and enable mankind to benefit therefrom" ("Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd"). The Bahá'í writings explain that these qualities are innate in all humans but remain dormant until recognized and developed. The mining metaphor implies that discovering and polishing these inner gems require effort.[3] Bahá'ís believe that the "reality of man"[4] is a latent potential "even as the flame is hidden within the candle and the rays of light are potentially present in the lamp" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 27:3). 'Abdu'l-Bahá describes the innate potential within human beings as a dimension of human reality that can be likened to a seed:

> If we sow the seed, a mighty tree appears from it. The virtues of the seed are revealed in the tree; it puts forth branches, leaves, blossoms, and produces fruits. All these virtues are hidden and potential in the seed. (*Promulgation* 90)

While "education . . . alone" is the means for fostering the development of innate potential, this cannot be conceived of as a process imposed unilaterally by an outside authority on the individual. The Bahá'í writings make it clear that the individual's own volition is crucial to the process: "All that which ye potentially possess can, however, be manifested only as a result of your own volition" (Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings* 77:1). The moral responsibility of aligning one's volition with a moral framework for behavior, and then acting according to that framework—i.e. both understanding and

3 See Pourshafie and Habel for further discussion on this point.

4 "Man" in the Bahá'í writings is used in the generic sense of human being unless the context indicates otherwise, in keeping with the literary conventions governing the original translations from Arabic and Persian into English.

internalizing moral principles as personal values that express one's own nobility, and then using wisdom to apply them to real-life situations—not only contributes to one's own intellectual and spiritual growth but also to the transformation of society. The human being's innate potential nobility is actualized when she makes a deliberate and conscious commitment to exhibit wise speech and wise actions, primarily through interacting with and caring for others.

Betts-Razavi and Mahmoudi, writing in the concept of peace education, effectively summarize these principles: "Every human being possesses the capacity to reflect spiritual qualities. . . . [N]obility belongs to every human soul as a latent potential and this human potential finds expression in a two-pronged moral purpose – personal spiritual development and the betterment of the world" (230).

The essentially spiritual view of the human being does not mean that the Bahá'í Faith denies the importance of intellectual education, or sees moral education as the only important kind. Indeed, 'Abdu'l-Bahá explains that

> Man has two powers; and his development, two aspects. One power is connected with the material world, and by it he is capable of material advancement. The other power is spiritual, and through its development his inner, potential nature is awakened. These powers are like two wings. Both must be developed, for flight is impossible with one wing. Praise be to God! Material advancement has been evident in the world, but there is need of spiritual advancement in like proportion. (*Promulgation* 60)

Therefore, from the point of view of Bahá'í beliefs, if humanity is to advance toward the nobility of its station, the co-development of both the material powers and the spiritual nature within must be nurtured. The balance implied by the metaphor of the two wings suggests a connection to the concept of wisdom developed above. Moral/spiritual precepts cannot be applied as abstract truths that simply override material considerations; they must be applied rigorously but contextually, in a manner that balances faithful adherence to moral truth with creative application to practical circumstances.

The Bahá'í concepts of human nobility and wisdom can be correlated to some of the concepts found in the literature on moral education. The Bahá'í desire to foster nobility in student behavior aligns with the general educational concern with prosocial behavior patterns; when schools aspire to promote moral values and a knowledge of social practices that respect the rights of all people and that value human diversity (Kidron and Fleischman 7; Freitas et al. 3), they are arguably affirming that students have the capacity to both express their own nobility and honor the inherent nobility of others. The goal of moral education for both educational theorists and Bahá'í

educators can be expressed in similar terms: to equip youth with the capabilities to live their lives well and serve their communities effectively. More practically, educational theorists and Bahá'í educators have a compatible understanding of the process of developing prosocial behavior, wisdom and nobility: these are viewed as dispositions and capabilities that are developed over time and through action when the educational environment deliberately fosters students' innate potential. While there is thus overlap between both goals and process between the two approaches to moral education, Bahá'í educators situate their endeavors within a larger context. For Bahá'ís, moral education is not necessitated merely by the need to prevent social disfunction. It rests on the recognition of human beings as spiritual beings who have a two-fold moral purpose: that of developing their latent spiritual and intellectual potentialities and contributing to the well-being of the entire society. Thus, both the self-actualization of the individual and the realization of the purpose of human society as a whole depend upon moral education.

The Case Study

Having presented the conceptual background that informs the case study, we now turn to the study itself. We begin with a description of the Nancy Campbell Academy, enumerate the nineteen moral capabilities that are at the center of its approach to moral education, and briefly considering how these capabilities correlate to the concept of wisdom in the literature canvassed above. We then outline the methods used to generate the case study, before turning to the central question of this paper: how does NCA's approach to moral education work in practice, and what are its impacts? This exploration is by way of a narrative, based on the first author's embedded observations at NCA.

The Nancy Campbell Academy

Nancy Campbell Academy is an independent, Bahá'í-inspired school. It accepts students from diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. At the time of the observer's engagement with the school, the approximately one hundred enrolled students were from China, Kuwait, Arabia, Canada, Mexico and the United States. Roughly fifty percent of the students were Bahá'ís. As part of the enrolment process, which includes an interview, all students were recorded as having explicitly expressed a desire to be at NCA. Approximately ninety percent of NCA staff were Bahá'ís, including teachers, administrators and service staff.

NCA's educational mission, reflected in its promotional materials and expressed by leadership and staff during interviews, is to provide a foundational education aimed at helping students achieve academic excellence within a clear moral framework. Together these goals reflect the school's commitment to both intellectual development and ethical/moral growth as essential dimensions of a well-rounded education. NCA further describes its

mission as being to prepare for admission to university students who are oriented towards unity in diversity and are committed to contributing to it as tomorrow's leaders. The school's focus on moral education as an integral component of education overall is evident in how it presents its mission; its brochure, for instance, states as a fundamental premise the fact that educational efforts should not be solely directed towards students' intellectual development and training, but must also include the infusion of moral values, cultivating student nobility and fostering wisdom.

NCA's curriculum is based on the Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum. Additionally, it purposefully includes the overarching concept of world citizenship "as part of everyday life" ("Nancy Campbell Academy").

The Nineteen Moral Capabilities

At the core of NCA's approach to moral education is a set of nineteen moral capabilities that not only guide the curriculum but inform the daily interactions between members of the school community as well as their spiritual lifeworld.

These capabilities interweave moral concepts with individual attitudes, virtues and skills. One criteria behind the selection of the capabilities is that each should be observable in staff and student behavior. Thus, members of the NCA community strive to develop the capability to:

1. Evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses without involving ego.
2. Transcend their lower passions by focusing on higher purposes and capabilities.
3. Manage their affairs and responsibilities with rectitude of conduct based on moral and ethical principles.
4. Learn from systematic reflection upon action within a consistent framework.
5. Perceive and interpret the significance of current events and trends considering an appropriate historical perspective.
6. Think systematically and strategically in the search for solutions.
7. Form a common vision of a desirable future based on shared values and principles, and articulate this in a way that inspires them to work towards its realization.
8. Imbue their actions and thoughts with love.
9. Encourage others and bring happiness into their hearts.
10. Take initiative in a creative and disciplined way.
11. Sustain effort, persevering and overcoming obstacles.
12. Participate effectively in consultation.
13. Build Unity in Diversity.
14. Commit themselves to empowering educational activities as both students and teachers.
15. Recognize relationships of domination and contribute to

transformation into relationships based on interconnectedness, reciprocity and cooperation.

16. Contribute to the establishment of justice.

17 Serve in societal institutions to facilitate the expression of the talents of others that are affected by these institutions.

18. Be a responsible and loving family member as a child or spouse or parent.

19. Cultivate and create a sense of beauty in every endeavor.

These moral capabilities align with elements of wisdom that emerged in the literature review. For example, the capability to evaluate one's strengths and weaknesses without ego resonates with Sternberg's concept of weakening ego-centeredness, enabling balanced and reflective decision-making for the common good ("Why Schools Should Teach for Wisdom" 235). The capabilities of serving societal institutions and being a responsible family member demonstrate the practical application of wisdom to create harmony and facilitate the growth of others, as highlighted by Sternberg's balanced approach to living ethically in the world ("Wisdom" 127). Furthermore, Sternberg's idea of balancing individual, communal, and global interests to work toward a greater good corresponds to the capability of forming and articulating a common vision.

The capability of learning from systematic reflection mirrors Kristjánsson's concept of practical wisdom (phronesis), where thoughtful deliberation on past experiences leads to morally sound actions (1–8). The capability of perceiving current trends within an historical perspective, combined with capabilities pertaining to group decision making in service to the common good (for instance, numbers 7, 12, and 13) reflects Pascual-Leone's assertion that integrating life experiences and cultural context enhances wisdom and enables holistic problem-solving while prioritizing the wellbeing of others (272).

Many of the capabilities can be seen as advancing one or both of the two elements of wisdom identified by Zhang et al.: altruism, and creative problem-solving behavior (15030). We can highlight just three examples. The capability of transcending lower passions by focusing on higher purposes is definitionally connected to altruism in a Bahá'í context, since lower passions are the desires of the egotistical self, while the higher purposes that the Bahá'í teachings direct the human being towards are those concerned with the common good. The capabilities of creative and disciplined initiative and persevering through obstacles are crucial to the behavioral element of wisdom. And the capability of managing responsibilities with moral principles reflects the integration of virtue and knowledge emphasized by Zheng et al.

Notably, Staudinger's emphasis on applying collective knowledge insightfully to complex challenges highlights the capability of thinking systematically and strategically in the search

for solutions. Lastly, the capabilities of imbuing actions with love and bringing happiness to others echo Nabobo's conception of wisdom as fostering balance, hope, and identity affirmation.

It was a point of interest to discover during the interviews in this study that NCA leaders and staff had an operational understanding of wisdom, and how the moral capabilities contributed to its development, that was very much in line with the understanding that emerges from the literature. As just one example, the school leadership shared an understanding of wisdom as comprising two components: first, "purity of motive," and second, the ability to produce "beauty in [one's] life." This echoes the conception of wisdom as rooted in an inner disposition of altruism and finding outward expression in behaviors that are practically and morally suited to circumstances. The concept of "beauty" captures this second element on an intuitive level: the judgment that an act or outcome is beautiful is the aesthetic equivalent of the analytical judgment of the act as suitable, or the moral judgment of the act as correct.

Methodology

The first author and observer-narrator is both a member of the Bahá'í Faith and an educator with diverse international experiences of schools and education systems. The author's personal values, commitments and experiences naturally influence the recorded observations, particularly of wisdom education in Bahá'í schools. Due to their shared world view as both educators and as members of the Bahá'í Faith, familiarity, trust, and inclusive belongingness were quickly established between the observer and school staff. Genuine participant/observer relationships were developed with the NCA leadership, staff and students, making it possible for all involved to potentially evaluate and change their thinking during the process.

The observer reached out to the school founder one year prior to the beginning of the project, and began a conversation to seek consent to observe the daily life of the school.

The overall approach taken to conducting the case study was comparable to a focused ethnography (Wall). The main tools for generating the narrative were non-participant observations and a reflective journal that were informed by the reading of key documents and interviews with key stakeholders. The observation focused on teaching and learning interactions, as well as informal social interaction and relationships between staff, students and parents. The initial telling of this narrative by the first author was to the second author, also an educator. The final re-telling in this article is a joint re-construction, intended primarily, but not exclusively, to inform an audience of Bahá'í educators, both formal (teachers) and informal (parents, and anyone who interacts with young people).

The narrator's daily immersion in the life of the school, including participation in daily activities and social intercourse, enabled both planned and

opportunistic observations. A "fly on the wall" technique was adopted to record activities and interactions as they occurred. Time was spent with students in the dormitories and with the students and staff in the school cafeteria. Thus, information was gained about students' and staff's day-to-day activities and interactions. Observations were also conducted during staff meetings and student behavior management consultations, in formal classes, assemblies and cultural events, and while accompanying the founder to several public speaking events. Interview questions each day were generated from recorded reflections on the previous day's participation, observations and reflections. While each interview thus did not always contain the same questions, all questions were focused in one way or another on gaining insight into the following:

- Why and how did the school foster students' noble and wise decisions and actions?
- What were informants' perceptions of what constituted wisdom and how it is acquired?
- Whose responsibility was it to foster the development of wisdom?

The interviews sought to uncover specific details about curriculum content and about individuals' experiences of educational and social processes used to enhance students' capacity to express their innate nobility, to engage in moral reasoning, and to exercise wisdom.

A total of fifty-four semi-structured interviews were conducted with questions that were relevant to each individual and their place in the school. Interviewees included the founder and the senior leadership (Principal and Vice Principal), sixteen teachers, and five service and administrative staff (a member of the kitchen staff, two administrators, one communication staff and one counsellor). The decision to include all staff, rather than just teaching staff, was based on the school's commitment to the moral concept of unity in diversity, which entails that the views and actions of all members of the institution are valued and respected. Students were randomly selected for interviews, taking gender balance into consideration; one boy and one girl from each grade from 7 to 13 were chosen, for a total of fourteen student interviewees. Some interviews were repeated, to further explore issues that needed clarification. Interviews with former students and staff were opportunistic and dependent on their attendance at the school, their availability and their willingness to be interviewed.

Key documents were also analyzed: the curriculum, in particular an overview of subjects taught in citizenship classes; the "Nineteen Moral Capabilities" (MCs) constituting the foundational principles of the school; and the school's philosophical values (Naylor). These documents were analyzed before and during the interview and observation processes to gain a deeper understanding of the school's philosophy. The analysis highlighted

moral education issues and questions for interviews and consultation.

The Narrative: The Nineteen Moral Capabilities in Practice

Of course, many organizations articulate lofty principles but fail to develop the culture, processes, or structures that permit them to be realized. The following narrative, based on the first author's observations, describes how the nineteen moral capabilities were in fact evident as actionable pathways to facilitate wisdom at NCA. This narrative highlights the role of education in nurturing individuals' capabilities to contribute to a better world.

The narrative begins with salient observations from interviews that demonstrate how NCA community members themselves see the nineteen moral capabilities operating, followed by the complementary findings from the first author's own observations of interactions at NCA.

Founder

We begin with insights from NCA's founder, Gordon Naylor. These are presented at some length since they provide insight into the core values and beliefs that underpin the school's philosophy and practices; in other words, Naylor articulates the aspirations that generated the nineteen moral capabilities, while subsequent interviews and observations permit us to consider how these aspirations are being realized in practice.

Naylor's description of his vision for the school highlights a number of complementary, interwoven aspirations. At the core is the importance of unity amongst a diverse student body: "We hold Unity in Diversity as watchwords for our school. Our students come from all over the world, and we value the diverse experiences that they have had." This is paired with an equally strong commitment to academic excellence: "We promote achieving academic excellence through a curriculum that provides students with an optimal learning environment geared to helping them develop their full academic potential." But this vision—academic excellence within a harmonious school environment—is incomplete without a third component: teaching students to serve others and their communities. Naylor, drawing on the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, argues that it is no longer enough to follow the golden rule, to "do unto others as you would have them do unto you"; it is better to prefer others to yourself,[5] because this will have a direct impact on the quality of service you render. He states that service is an important component of wisdom, describing the act of service as an opportunity to create an environment for the students and staff to put the nineteen moral capabilities into practice. Indeed, a disposition to serve can be the catalyst for developing wisdom. When individuals have a disposition to serve,

5 See, Bahá'u'lláh, Kalimát-i-Firdawsíyyih 10:2.

> Even if they don't have all the knowledge components, it begins a dynamic of growth, which provokes a thirst for knowledge, a thirst for skill, a thirst for how to better be able to serve and with it comes joy and happiness which benefits others.

Naylor refers to this process as resulting in "true glory for human beings." He expresses the conviction that individuals feel fulfilled when they are of service to other people, noting that "Their sense of fulfilment is greater depending on the level of selflessness." In this context wisdom can be understood as embodying "absolute selflessness—to be able to look after the best interest of another person and that this has a direct impact on the quality of service which would become one of self-sacrifice and self-effacement."

Naylor's conception of wisdom is rooted in a recognition that the greatest source of wisdom is God. He further suggests that this recognition will make one "other-focused" and concerned with action, reflection and consultation on individual and collective development.

This vision—in which wisdom is cultivated in the context of an orientation towards service—is a laudable and lofty educational aim. The natural question, of course, is: How does NCA facilitate the acquisition of such wisdom and sense of service amongst its students? Naylor describes the following action-oriented strategic elements that were employed as deliberate pedagogies to provide a platform to achieve the school's vision and to ensure that the daily lived experience of students and staff was consciously aligned with that vision:

- Promoting spiritual awareness in the school environment.
- Upholding the principle of unity in diversity.
- Holding workshops to orient both staff and students to the nineteen moral capabilities, focused on how to translate them into personalized language (see below) and implement them in daily life.
- Employing the technique of consultation (see "The Process of Consultation" section).
- Developing mentorship relationships.
- Using dance and theatre workshops to enhance social, moral, and spiritual understandings
- Using morning assemblies as a "communal experience" to reaffirm and strengthen the oneness of the school community.

Despite Naylor's emphasis on the importance of the moral capabilities,

he cautions that it is important not to be too direct about them as the students might develop an aversion to them. Instead, staff members are expected to provide activities designed for students to gain experiential knowledge of the moral capabilities. Importantly, he explains that staff should be exemplary models of moral and wise behavior. Staff are expected to provide students with feedback that identifies and applauds students' noble and wise choices and actions as they occur (MC no. 14). This expectation illustrates NCA's commitment to help students become aware of their emerging capabilities and strengths. The curriculum includes World Citizenship units of study that incorporate the nineteen MCs into the learning outcomes.

Leaders

The school leadership (Principal and Vice Principal) describe how the nineteen moral capabilities operate in practice. As part of their own commitment to the school's vision, the leadership promotes the expectation that all staff and students will draw on all the nineteen capabilities to develop the necessary attitudes, skills and knowledge to help transform themselves and contribute to the moral, intellectual and social progress of their communities (MC no. 7).

This expectation is supported by a key strategy designed to make the nineteen moral capabilities real to students, and to give them a grounded and personalized understanding of their everyday implications. At the beginning of the school year, students are asked to rewrite the moral capabilities in "youth talk"—that is, to express them in their own words and in ways that enable other youth to understand their meaning. Students engage in small groups, each focusing on one moral capability, rewriting it in language that expresses their personal understanding in terms of the attitudes, virtues and skills required for its implementation.

The leadership also takes concrete steps to help NCA teachers incorporate the capabilities into their work. The principal's own experience with the moral capabilities dates to her time as an NCA teacher; she recalls her joy in coming to know about them, and explains how she designed and incorporated them into every English, history, and world citizenship class she taught. Now, as a school leader, she continues to use staff meetings to encourage and assist teachers to put them into practice within each disciplinary curriculum. She notes that it is important to guide and support staff to develop teaching capabilities to achieve this institutional intent. She gives the example of encouraging staff to work out what it might look like to apply the capabilities in a calculus class, or how a physics teacher might challenge his class to prove the existence or non-existence of God through physics, causing the students to examine everything from an ethical and moral perspective. The principal highlights how science, which can be viewed as concerned

only with facts about the natural world and therefore not concerned with morality, can be taught in a way that helps students develop wisdom through the consideration of ethical issues. The principal expands on this by describing a lesson in which a hypothetical situation was put to the students relating to the genetic modification of human beings, which provided an opportunity to raise moral questions around whether the possibility of doing something is sufficient reason for attempting it: "Can you do whatever you like?" While apparently simple, this question is an important starting point for helping students think about the role of science and technology in the project of bettering the world. The school leadership unanimously emphasizes that facilitating students' wisdom requires educators who share a united vision—one that recognizes students as "noble beings" who uphold "a moral responsibility for truth," who are "developing their capacity to serve, while holding a vision of 'embracing a world' with all its limitations."

In the experience of the leadership, acquiring the nineteen capabilities is ultimately transformative for students; it "create[s] a real shift in a student's mental framework." By encouraging learners to see themselves as noble beings and to recognize the interconnectedness of all things, the nineteen moral capabilities support a holistic approach to education, one that fosters ethical inquiry, moral reasoning and a deeper understanding of the world across all subjects.

Teaching Staff

The NCA teachers provide rich insight into how the quality of their communication with students is crucial to the efficacy of the nineteen moral capabilities. One teacher's words effectively summarize the emphasis they all placed on the role of positive encouragement: "it is really important in a classroom setting for a teacher to be really, really positive and appreciate all the steps that children take towards wisdom."

Teachers explain that encouraging feedback in the classrooms supports students' acquisition of knowledge, and helps them as they develop the capacity to both learn from others and to think for themselves, always drawing inspiration from the nineteen capabilities. As one teacher puts it, wisdom can be gained by "asking questions of ourselves, of our peers and also of our mentors." They describe a goal of guiding students to develop the confidence to believe in their own strength to question, analyze and develop solutions.

One teacher describes the example of an English class in which students carried out a character analysis of the title character in Shakespear's *Hamlet* through the lens of the nineteen moral capabilities, with a particular focus on the first: the moral capability of evaluating one's own strengths and weaknesses without involving ego. By applying the moral capabilities to Hamlet, and assessing which ones stood to be strengthened in the character, they practiced the wisdom that

comes from applying moral reasoning. As the teacher puts it:

> They [students] need to realize that they can figure these things out, come up with things they had never thought about before and, therefore, they (learn) they are smart, and they are wise.

The teachers express a belief that their actions as teachers who use the nineteen moral capabilities framework are contributing to raising up "a generation of wise children and people who are interested in increasing their wisdom." By referencing the capabilities at appropriate moment, they feel they are helping students become aware of, and more likely to use, the moral guidelines.

Students

The NCA students interviewed in this study provide evidence that the aspirations of the school's founder, leadership, and teachers with respect to the moral capabilities are being met.

First, they refer positively to the structure and discipline of the school, and affirm that the capabilities are incorporated in each class and the whole school environment. A common remark from the students was that the moral capabilities are incorporated into every class, "even Math class." They recognize that the capabilities extend beyond the substantive curriculum into the processes and habits they develop. One student shares the example of how the nineteen moral capabilities create a sense of responsibility in students, encouraged by their teachers, to take proper notes in class and to complete the required work for each lesson.

Second, the students express that the clarity of the moral framework and its incorporation into all aspects of school life do, in fact, help them to understand wisdom. As one student puts it: "Here you focus on the moral character, you have guidelines to do that; it is sort of like a parenting school . . . [the teachers] are like our parents for a while, like in classes we have many moral things that the teachers bring to us." Students feel strongly that their understanding and application of the MCs generates the behavior, attitudes and skills needed to be a wise person. One student explains that "the whole idea of NCA is about bringing wisdom to young people and showing them the moral capabilities."

Administrative and Service Staff

It might seem natural to assume that, as an essentially pedagogical device, the nineteen moral capabilities would be relevant only within the teacher-student relationship. This is not the case; consistent with NCA's vision of itself as a whole community, the capabilities permeated all roles and relationships. I was struck by the degree to which the service and administrative staff took to heart the importance of personally modelling them as part of NCA's project of helping students to learn their everyday application. One of the administrative staff indicates that he

deliberately implements them, for instance by loving where he is and the people that he works with and by creating an environment that is beautiful. The communication director indicates that he implements the moral capability about "managing one's responsibilities with rectitude of conduct that is based on moral and ethical principles" by striving "to be truly honest." He explains that honesty is critically important when he communicates with parents regarding the school's vision and intent.

Observer's Reflections on NCA's Practices

What follows are some reflections on the extent to which what was shared by the leaders, staff, and students aligns with the observations of the first author during her time at NCA. This section emphasizes ways in which the school integrates the nineteen moral capabilities into daily practice, leading to distinctive features that set it apart from other educational institutions.

Orienting Staff and Students to the School's Vision

During the first author's time at NCA—sitting in classroom sessions, attending morning assemblies, living in the dorm, observing extra-curricular activities, and having informal chats—she observed NCA leadership's significant investment of time and focus into professional learning for staff. This reflected a recognition that to achieve their vision of fostering students' innate potential for wisdom and nobility, they needed to ensure that staff had a clear understanding of what fostering nobility and wisdom might look like in practice. As such, teachers were given spaces to learn, reflect, and consult about how to actively enrich the learning environment by incorporating strategies that enact the nineteen moral capabilities within the curriculum.

Staff meetings served as a key mechanism to ensure teachers' understanding of the core expectations of their roles and responsibilities within the school. They were thus a vital setting to reinforce the embedding of the nineteen moral capabilities.

In the first author's observation, these training spaces were themselves profoundly coherent with the moral capabilities. For instance, the point was not to train teachers to be, or pretend to be, perfect: the first author observed that during the staff development programs, teachers were encouraged to see themselves as learners, openly acknowledging mistakes in front of students. As one teacher put it:

> When we practice the nineteen moral capabilities, or when we have workshops for the teachers and the staff, one of the things that staff are encouraged to do is to admit to their students when they make a mistake.

In our view, this element of NCA's culture strongly reflects MCs 14 ("Commit themselves to empowering

educational activities as both students and teachers") and 15 ("Recognize relationships of domination and contribute to transformation into relationships based on interconnectedness, reciprocity and cooperation"), since teachers' willingness to admit when they are wrong can both empower students and prevent the tendency of the teacher-student relationship to privilege the teacher as one who knows, and diminish the student as one who does not know.

Another space that was observed to play a central role in the deliberate cultivation of the nineteen moral capabilities was the morning assembly. The first author was present at almost all morning assemblies during the ethnographic study and was invited to actively participate by reciting a prayer. The morning assembly provided an environment in which all participants could focus on higher purposes and capabilities (MC no. 2). This was a structured setting, in which an "initiator"—typically a staff member, but sometimes a student—would begin an exchange, with other community members then engaging with the initial contribution. This fostered honest engagement and respectful interaction, creating a dynamic and trusting relationship between the initiator, the reactor and responder. Such trust and positivity were seen to contribute to students' confidence in considering new other initiatives they might pursue. As with other deliberately included actions and interactions by staff and leadership, the morning assemblies functioned as a communal experience, where students and staff affirmed each other and reinforced the oneness of the school and its community.

Building Unity in Diversity

Consistent with MC no. 13, unity in diversity was consistently emphasized and promoted in the observed assemblies, classroom interactions, dance workshops, performances, etc. On the one hand, this occurred in explicit ways. For instance, teachers encouraged students to share cultural traditions and perspectives, reinforcing belonging across differences of nationality and faith as a positive contribution to global society. Staff responses during interviews confirmed that this practice was deliberate: they spoke of raising students' awareness of diversity as a strong means for promoting unity in a way that is conducive to happiness. "They [the students] have diversity in school, and they promote it, and they promote moral standards, and they promote equality of people all across the board, men and women" (MC no. 13). Student responses confirmed that the school environment did, in fact, generate a sense of unity in diversity. Asone student remarked: "despite what difference you have in religion, it's all one. It's considered one here so really no one's [religion is] better than the other."

On the other hand, the ethos of unity in diversity infused many other facets of the teacher-student relationship. It was evident for example in teachers' care not to use any social pressure to push students to change their

personal beliefs or opinions on any matter. Teachers again confirmed that this was a deliberate approach, based on an understanding that "everyone is searching for truth"; not only will students not arrive at truth through indoctrination, but the diversity of perspectives in the student body is a valuable resource, allowing each to learn from others as they freely investigate reality.

The effort to promote unity in diversity was not undertaken by the teachers alone. Students were observed to take ownership of this moral capability; through deliberate actions aimed at building unity in diversity and encouraging their peers, students actively contributed to creating a positive and joyful environment. In their reflections, students explained that they experienced joy and satisfaction in their interactions when relating to others in a supportive and kind manner, emphasizing the idea that one's happiness is deeply connected to the relationships built with others. These comments, combined with observations of the students, suggest that they saw moral capability 9 (Encourage others and bring happiness into their hearts) as inextricable from building unity in diversity: unity is about more than acknowledging and respecting diversity, it requires building relationships of encouragement, support and kindness across all lines of difference.

Providing Encouraging Feedback to Students on Wise Action (MCs no. 12 and no. 14)

Many of the practices and processes that were observed to contribute to student uptake of the moral capabilities related to how communication was approached very deliberately at NCA. One dimension of this approach involved encouragement. Teachers acted on a shared conviction (attested in their interviews) that supportive encouragement was crucial to students' implementation of the nineteen moral capabilities.

Encouragement was of at least two kinds. In class, teachers were observed to frequently pause to affirm students' strengths, explicitly linking feedback to moral capabilities such as reflection and accountability. This kind of "retrospective encouragement" was complemented by "prospective encouragement," in which teachers used encouragement to elicit student reflection, expressing confidence that they had the capacity to think things through in a wise way. This was most clearly observed in the context of NCA's world citizenship curriculum, which provided a direct opportunity for students to develop their ability to reflect on their actions. For example, in a geography class, students were asked to consider and contrast the moral implications of using products from a factory that employed child labor or from one that relied on forced labor. Rather than steering students toward a "right answer," teachers encouraged them to

reflect on their own reasoning process, creating space to critically examine the ethical implications of everyday choices and reinforcing the importance of aligning personal decisions with values that promote justice and social responsibility. The result of this approach was that students gained more than an understanding of whether something in the abstract was right and wrong; they learned that they themselves had the capacity to apply moral reasoning to the world around them. They learned that they had wisdom.

Fostering Consultation

Another key element of the deliberate approach to communication at NCA was the priority given to consultation (itself one of the MCs), understood as a collective approach to truth seeking through the exchange of ideas, rooted in the teachings of the Bahá'í Faith. In consultation, participants are encouraged to share their views with complete honesty, paired with courtesy, and then to treat their contribution as the property of the group rather than a personal position to be championed. The staff described being deliberate about efforts to enhance students' understanding of the concept of consultation, and this matched observations: the practice of consultation was consistently evident across a wide range of school activities, from staff meetings and student council sessions, to planning sessions prior to dance workshops and performances.

Even behavior management meetings were an opportunity to practice consultation. During one such session, a student was respectfully invited to explore the issue of punctuality in the spirit of consultation. Rather than a disciplinary approach that might make a student defensive and limit his ownership of the issue, this consultative environment helped the student reflect honestly on his responsibility and ultimately reach the decision to set an alarm, ensuring he would arrive at school on time. It was observed in this and other examples that consultation helped students gain a clearer understanding of their own attitudes and choices, and how they learned and led.

Consultation is not only applied to the classroom or to issues confronting students; it informs the approach to self-reflection at the level of the school itself. Feedback at NCA is much more than a one-way process. The school places high importance on students' opinions of the curriculum, the learning processes and social interactions. This is in keeping with the spirit of consultation. There is no assumption that only some members of the community have insights or ideas about how to improve the school; everyone is encouraged to share their perspective. Explicit changes have been made to the program as a result of students' suggestions. The school's response to students' feedback goes a long way to impress on students that their considered opinion is valued and agentic. They experience their education environment as an ongoing work in progress based on staff and student consultation and reflection.

Working towards a Common Vision

Consultation was observed to be integral to the pursuit of another of the moral capabilities: the capability to articulate a common vision for a desirable future based on shared values and principles. This capability acknowledges that capable leaders are those who can articulate a vision and in doing so inspire others to work towards its realization. At NCA this was not limited to a single overarching vision for the school, but was applied in both formal and everyday contexts. For example, students practiced this capability through creative dance and theatre workshops, service projects, oral English classes where they delivered speeches, and through consultation in group projects and extracurricular activities. In these settings, students were encouraged to stand and speak about issues at the heart of social needs—envisioning a world free of racism, inequality, or other forms of injustice. They were also guided to consult with peers—finding out what others hope to achieve, and then articulating a shared vision that reflected collective values. The feedback they received helped them refine whether they had expressed the vision clearly.

From a purely academic perspective, NCA has a strong track record of high achieving students obtaining university scholarships, and taking advanced placement exams to gain university level credits. However, while academic success was naturally strongly emphasized in the school, students were encouraged to become capable leaders who can articulate a vision that goes beyond their own personal success—a vision "which people desire and feel is true," as Naylor put it. This perspective aligns with the Bahá'í understanding that the "honour and distinction of the individual" does not consist in becoming solely the best physician, architect or plumber, but rather is generated by applying knowledge and skills learned for the "social good" ('Abdu'l-Bahá, *Secret* 2). In keeping with the Bahá'í approach to social change, working towards the social good is framed at NCA as a collaborative project, not something that a person does on someone else's behalf guided only by their own ideas and priorities. Hence, in matters large and small, from group projects to extra-curricular activities, students were encouraged to

> find out what other students want and what they are hoping to achieve. The feedback they receive assists them to understand whether they have articulated the vision properly (MC no. 7).

Students were observed to be doing exactly this—frequently checking in with each other to ensure that, in whatever they were jointly engaged in, they had a common understanding of the goal being pursued, a vision towards which they were working. These conversations, however quick and informal, naturally drew on the

skills of consultation. In their own reflections during interviews, students clarified that they saw staff, students, and the school curriculum all working together to form a common vision for the school. They reiterated that, "the teachers, the kids and the learning programme all have to fit together. And if one of them's not working then nothing's going to work." They also understood the work of developing a common vision as being fundamentally collaborative, with others' insights and strengths being a resource: "if there are many people around you who are wise, because I find that many of the teachers at [NCA] are very knowledgeable and wise people who've gained wisdom through experience, and when people like that are around you, you are more likely to gain wisdom, to become like them."

It was also observed that students took seriously their responsibility to inspire others—whether through routine interactions such as group consultations, or in performances deliberately designed to inspire, such as creative dance and theatre workshops or speeches. Reflecting on their participation in these kinds of activities, students were able to articulate a sense of responsibility to something greater than their own selves.

Learning to Be of Service by Being of Service

It was observed that service to the community is regarded as a significant strategy within the school's approach to moral capability development. Mtawa and Nkhoma point out that service-learning functions as an educational pedagogy for advancing citizenship, conscientization and civic agency and as a capability practice for developing global citizens. They argue for an expansive pedagogical model that enriches life through a capability approach, in which service-learning "moves beyond skills to cultivate critical consciousness, civic agency and citizenship" (112). In alignment with this perspective, school leaders emphasized their commitment to raising the standard of moral leadership through service.

> We are working to raise the standard of moral leadership by raising up students that will really be able to serve humanity. This service to humanity will enrich their own lives as well as the lives of others (MCs no. 2, no. 16, and no. 17).

Students were observed to "learn by doing" when it came to being of service. They explained that through creative dance and theatre workshops, which is the practical component of the compulsory world citizenship classes, they were not only performing but also raising social, moral, and spiritual awareness among themselves and their audiences. In one case, when invited to another school to address racism, students consulted on how best to intervene, deciding first to model unity in their own attitudes and then designing games, performances, and discussions

that encouraged reflection without preaching. They described these workshops as "an amazing experience," noting how participation transformed their own understanding and growth:

> . . . there's workshop, it facilitates a lot of growth in people. You should see the difference, when people first come to workshop and when they leave.

Students emphasized that service—whether through workshops, the fifty compulsory hours of annual service, or community projects—gave them not only "a chance to serve the world" and help society, but also opportunities to grow as a person, "to change [one's] personality." In this way they recognized that true fulfillment comes from selfless service.

Conclusion

Articulating the motivation behind many efforts to learn about wisdom education, Sternberg states: "If the future is plagued with conflict and turmoil, this instability does not simply reside *out there somewhere*; it resides and has its origin *in ourselves*" (2004167). Reflecting on the problems that face global citizens, Laszlo similarly insists that it is not "the world" that is the cause of our problems, but rather the "human beings" who inhabit it (25–26). These insights underscore the urgent need for education to develop students' attitudes and values as well as their skills and knowledge, so that future leaders will understand humanity's interconnectedness and become champions of justice and builders of unity. This imperative calls for a deliberate approach to moral education, one that recognizes—as Bahá'u'lláh affirms, that each human being is a "mine rich in gems of inestimable value" ("Lawḥ-i-Maqṣúd"). The process of drawing forth these inner virtues requires intentionality, structure, and a shared vision of what matters most. Thus, we should expect Bahá'í-inspired schools to provide a comprehensive educational experience—comprising material, intellectual, social, and spiritual education— that recognizes the noble potential within each student, seeks to cultivate their spiritual qualities, and works to foster the wisdom required to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.

NCA exemplifies this deliberate approach. As this focused ethnography has illustrated, the school has intentionally designed its moral curriculum and pedagogy to include principles that the scholarly literature would recognize as "wisdom education," based on a moral and social vision that affirms the innate goodness of human beings. NCA's nineteen moral capabilities framework is consciously woven into the structures and practices of the school.

As explored above, this deliberate approach begins with the leadership's communicating its vision, and implementing practices that nurture a learning environment that views students as innately noble and that fosters wisdom. Teachers' understanding of their own moral capabilities is regarded as critical

if they are to align their teaching strategies and course content with the nineteen moral capabilities framework, and this is reflected in the deliberate approach to orienting teachers on an ongoing basis to the framework. School spaces are designed to help students actively engaged with the framework on their own terms, such as through the "youth talk" strategy. Communication practices that are coherent with the framework are deliberately cultivated: teachers are expected to provide detailed feedback to students when they are observed to make wise choices that focus on the interests of others, and students are given the opportunity to use consultation with their teachers and peers as both a way to generate shared understanding, and a tool to work through any social or learning challenges. Students are guided to see diversity as a source of strength, to build unity across difference, and to find happiness and joy in doing so. In all these ways, wisdom is nurtured through practice at NCA. The central value of the moral capabilities framework at NCA enables a shared understanding among the leadership, staff and students about what matters most, and with it a shared aspiration for moral excellence that does not begin and end with words. In the first author's time at NCA, she observed students who viewed themselves and others as noble beings working to cultivate spiritual qualities, and who had a profound understanding of their place in a global society, and their responsibility to promote the advantage of the whole.

In short, the school's approach does appear to help students cultivate the attributes and qualities that the scholarly literature identifies as "wisdom". Specifically, the students were observed to both adopt an altruistic orientation towards their school community and the wider world, and to practice applying moral reasoning to practical situations.

This article aimed to take up the challenge articulated by Sona Farid-Arbab, and draw on both theory and practice to contribute to the ongoing work of articulating a common vision of a Bahá'í-inspired education. We have identified aspirations and practices at NCA that were observed to be distinctive, deliberate, explicit and worthy of further discussion. We do not doubt the genuineness of the aspirations of all those involved in shaping this school, which they unashamedly understand to be a work-in-progress that is nurtured over time by all its members. The school's leader, Gordon Naylor, has welcomed this exploration and interpretation of the school's values and practices, and willingly offer's NCA's example as a contribution to the the evolving conception of a Bahá'í-inspired education. We suggest that a positive next step would be to follow up with a selection of NCA graduates to explore the long-term impact of NCA's education on them and their life trajectory. Such research could contribute to building an evidence-based framework for Bahá'í-inspired education.[6]

6 The authors wish to express their gratitude to the founder of Nancy Campbell

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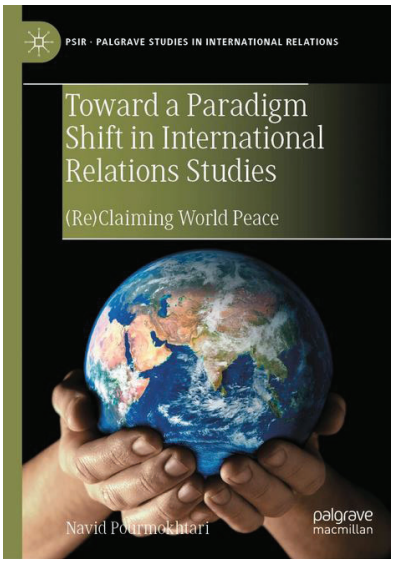

Book Reviews

Toward a Paradigm Shift in International Relations: (Re)Claiming World Peace by Navid Pourmokhtari. Palgrave Macmillan, 2024, xii + 125 pages, including index.

ALEX DOUGLAS

The international institutions and norms of the last eighty years are struggling to maintain their efficacy. The discourses surrounding the establishment and growth of these institutions, such as the liberal school of international relations theory (IR), seem increasingly powerless to map an escape from the gravitational pull of conflict. A resolutely altruistic observer, unwilling to embrace a combative nationalism and struggling to find credible alternatives in IR, might hypothesize that IR needs a paradigm shift.

In his book, Navid Pourmokhtari offers a nuanced analysis of IR supporting this very hypothesis. This is an ambitious and valuable goal. While the practice of making foreign policy is often divorced from theorizing IR, a new IR paradigm—or even a willingness to question the current paradigm—could inspire new approaches to policy that lead humanity out of cycles of conflict and realize the promise of a more collaborative future. As the Bahá'í International Community has written, "the needs of the moment call for . . . devising a new conceptual framework, which includes a new set of underlying assumptions" centered on the oneness of humankind (2). Without a new conceptual framework, or paradigm, policy-makers will have trouble envisioning or embracing more promising approaches to foreign affairs.

To make his case that IR needs a paradigm shift, Pourmokhtari examines IR, and highlights its limitations, through the lenses of Thomas Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1962) and Michel Foucault's discourse theory. He describes the "West-centric" foundational assumptions of IR, including the idea that "war and conflict represent a timeless, universal condition" (9). Pourmokhtari argues that IR, informed by these assumptions, "advances a mode of knowledge relations and knowledge practices that tell us everything about war and almost nothing substantive on how to achieve a lasting, global peace" (1); in fact, "the promotion of war . . . is [IR's] primary

object" (102). He details, through a "Foucaldian-inspired discourse analysis" (17), the mechanisms through which the field of IR privileges these views and marginalizes alternative ways of thinking.

Pourmokhtari's application of philosophical analytical tools to IR allows him to step outside of the constraints of the field and examine it critically. He describes not only the conceptual shortcomings of IR, but the mechanisms by which the field constrains theorists, such as academic norms (117) and discourses that "demarcate the limits of what can be perceived as well [as] conceived or imagined" (18). His analysis of the discourse around the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks and the war on terror is a particularly helpful illustration of the latter mechanism. He describes how influential voices promoted the frameworks of "modern us" versus an immutable "pre-modern them" (24), helping legitimize the war on terror as a "global-cultural clash among entire peoples" (27). He criticizes these frameworks as "ahistorical and non-empirical" (25), and says that they mask the reality of Al Qaeda as a "historically shaped and politically motivated phenomenon" (26). This discourse analysis reveals how these frameworks constitute "knowledge/power-truth relations" (18) that legitimize one way of thinking and preclude others. Pourmokhtari's application of discourse analysis to IR is the book's greatest strength. It not only may help would-be paradigm shifters in IR to see the roadblocks in their path, but is also valuable more generally for those seeking to understand the kinds of dynamics that can hold back intellectual exploration in any discipline.

Some readers will wish for Pourmokhtari to build a more rigorous case against the assumptions of IR theory themselves. He could cite evidence, for example, that human nature is not inexorably conflict-prone, that war is not inevitable, that the state has only occasionally been the fundamental organizing unit of world affairs, or that national interests are increasingly difficult to separate from global interests as humanity faces challenges like climate change, pandemics, and the need to regulate emerging technologies. However, we can reasonably consider these arguments to be outside of the scope of this work, and for all of the reasons Pourmokhtari details they are unlikely to gain purchase within the IR discipline.

Pourmokhtari accompanies his primary focus on the dynamics of theorizing with discussion of the substance or implications of the theories themselves. He offers a particularly insightful characterization of IR in his description of Hobbesian thought as "a manifestation of the logic of [the modern state system]," summarizing it by saying "all humans are theorized as self-interested and conflict-prone" (39). Pourmokhtari's rejection of this thinking as offering "legitimacy and freedom to 'wage war'" (41) is well-founded, and he offers systemic examples of how it manifests in military spending and the structure of the

United Nations, but readers may also desire examples of how such assumptions are woven into policy-making processes at the level of individual actors.

Lest readers imagine that the issues with IR as a whole can be attributed to a single dominant school within the discipline, Pourmokhtari examines liberalism, realism, peace studies, and security studies and highlights the ways in which they all reinforce the dominant paradigm and legitimize war. He describes liberalism and realism as "paradigm maintainer theories" that "[demarcate] the discipline such that alternatives are relegated to the margins where questions of war and military conflict are concerned" (103). However, in his analysis the critical turn in IR is more promising; it "problematize[s] and question[s] the warmongering orientation of the discipline" (79). He adds that "[t]he insights of critical theorists will doubtless prove crucial to achieving a paradigm shift" (121).

Pourmokhtari could draw more connections between IR and Kuhn's model of paradigm shifts, for example by analyzing the evolution of IR scholarship towards, presumably, its current resemblance to "expert puzzle-solv[ing]" (12). Pourmokhtari briefly traces the genealogy of IR within the current paradigm from the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia; a broader examination of how humans think and have thought about global affairs, including outside of Western academic contexts, might allow him to identify previous paradigm shifts and more easily characterize the current paradigm. Such a broader perspective might also give Pourmokhtari the opportunity to appreciate any relative advantages of the current paradigm, particularly in the context in which it was first adopted.

Pourmokhtari stops short of proposing a new paradigm or enumerating its requirements. While readers will inevitably yearn for a proposal, Pourmokhtari's restraint leaves us with a more rigorous and tightly argued volume that may appeal to a broader academic audience and serve as an invitation for others to contribute to the development of a new paradigm.

However, for readers eager to imagine a new paradigm, Pourmokhtari does offer several signposts. Above all, he argues that a new paradigm should consider peace a possibility and speak to how it can be obtained. He notes that the contributions of the feminist school are particularly attuned to "the spirit of the age" (121) and highlights the exclusion of women in the conception of the modern state and IR's focus on "masculine power that merely represses and exploits" in contrast to concepts of collective power and "compassion, persuasion, nurturing, and caring" (99). Pourmokhtari speaks eloquently of the oneness of humankind, although he could say more about its implications for IR.

The Bahá'í International Community, in its 2024 statement on "Embracing Interdependence: Foundations for a World in Transition," says, "Rather than continue to hold on

to outworn concepts and unworkable assumptions, leaders, together with the peoples of the world, must arise, and with resolute will, consult together in search of appropriate solutions." Pourmokhtari's monograph is an important contribution to this effort. It documents the unworkable assumptions of IR that humanity must urgently reconsider, making the case for both the avid layperson and the scholar in the field that the time for a paradigm shift has come.

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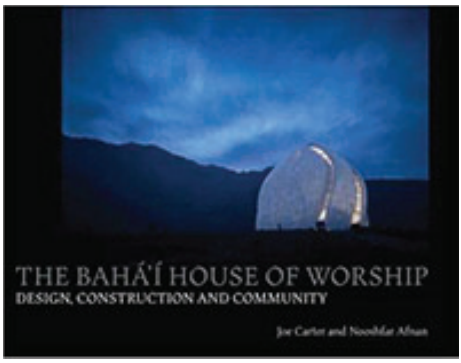

The Bahá'í House of Worship: Design, Construction and Community by Joe Carter and Nooshfar Afnan. Oxford: George Ronald Publisher, 2022.

viii + 310 including bibliography, notes and references, brief note about the origin of the book, and author bios

ANN BOYLES

Midway through *The Bahá'í House of Worship: Design, Construction and Community*, authors Joe Carter and Nooshfar Afnan pose a question central to the theme of their volume: "The challenge for all the architects of a Bahá'í House of Worship is how to create what may be our most ancient building type in a new way. What is sacred space for our age, one that is open to all the people of the world, to all faiths, or no faith? There are no precedents" (187).

While published in coffee table book format with stunningly beautiful photographs to illustrate what such sacred spaces can look like, Carter and Afnan's work offers more: substantive text that addresses this question.

Carter, himself an architect, and Afnan, an experienced writer on arts and culture, are well qualified to author such a volume. The informative opening essays situate the development of Bahá'í architectural expressions within a broader view of religion, civilization and architecture. The bulk of the book, however, is devoted to telling the stories of how the first of these temples have come into existence. The text provides information about their designs and construction processes, their relation to the environments and cultures from which they have emerged, and the awards and tributes they have garnered. As a coffee table book, it can certainly be dipped into, but a front-to-back reading conveys a wonderful sense of how temple-building efforts have evolved and how their design coheres with community development around the world.

A unique and central institution in the faith, the Bahá'í House of Worship is described in the Bahá'í writings as the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár ("dawning place of the mention of God") and as a collective center of society. Thus, it brings together two indispensable expressions of faith: worship and service. Not only a structure for prayer and meditation, it also consists of associated dependencies that develop in accordance with the needs—educational, medical, social—of the surrounding community. Since the ground was broken for the first Bahá'í House of Worship, fifteen of these institutions have been raised up around the world, a development guided by the central authority of the Faith. The book conceptualizes this emergent process as occurring in three distinct stages to date: the period of early growth, through the raising of Houses of Worship in Ashgabat and Chicago; the era of the construction of continental Houses of Worship circling the globe; and the current stage, marked by the emergence of national and local temples from the matrix of community-building efforts.

The word "emergence" deserves special attention in this context, as it has been used repeatedly by the Universal House of Justice to describe the process through which these Houses of Worship have been brought into existence in designated locations around the world. Envisioning how a seed breaks through the surface of the soil as a young plant or how an entity gradually becomes manifest through evolutionary processes can perhaps help us to appreciate the trajectory of this development. Carter and Afnan's organization and discussion provide readers with the opportunity to better understand this emergence in terms of both design/construction and community development.

Regarding design, the only requirement for a Bahá'í House of Worship is that it have a nine-sided plan inscribed within a circle. In the first stage of development, which began in 1902, it was natural to expect that more traditional elements of sacred architecture—including the drum and dome, for example—would be incorporated into this new format. And so in Ashgabat, while the first Bahá'í temple

certainly adhered to the necessary design requirements, Islamic cultural influences, particularly the Taj Mahal, are also apparent. In Chicago, on the other hand, the architect stated explicitly that his goal was to avoid any specific past style and instead to use "a composite architecture, expressing the essence in the line of each of the great architectural styles, harmonizing them into one whole" (Louis Bourgeois, qtd. in Carter and Afnan, 65). This second temple, then, already began to move away from tradition through innovations in design as well as construction materials and methods.

As for community development, the contrast between the Ashgabat and Chicago temple-building projects highlights their emergence from very different cultural matrices and communities. In Ashgabat, the mostly-Persian Bahá'ís had formed a tight-knit community forged through hardship, persecution and exile in Russian Turkestan. They drew strength from each other. They lived in close proximity. They prayed together. They socialized together. They needed to educate their children. Their desire to construct a House of Worship and, importantly, its dependencies was an organic outgrowth of their desire to satisfy these needs. The Chicago temple's origins and context were very different. Widely scattered across the continent, the early Bahá'ís in North America could not draw on physical proximity and did not have the same needs as their co-believers in Ashgabat. Their model was not one of a "local" House of Worship. 'Abdu'l-Bahá guided them from the outset to think of it as an institution for the entire continent. In essence, while the Ashgabat temple grew from the seeds of a unified community, the Chicago temple-building project was a means through which the North American Bahá'í community learned how to work together in unity.

The completion and dedication of the Chicago temple in 1953 heralded the next phase of emergence identified by the authors: the establishment of Bahá'í Houses of Worship on each continent, to serve as beacons in the same manner as the one in Chicago. During this stage, the Bahá'í community grew, achieved wide geographic spread, and welcomed diverse populations to join in building a world based on the unity of the human family and shared belief in one Creator. Architectural designs of the Houses of Worship built during this stage evolved correspondingly.

The volume explores how, while unity in concept and essence of form was preserved, the temples' diverse designs and construction processes reflected humanity's "changing cultural perspectives" to a greater and greater degree (Carter and Afnan 4). The continental temples in Africa (Kampala, Uganda) and Australia (Sydney) largely held true to the form of their two predecessors (by featuring the drum and dome, for example), but the next three, in Europe (in Frankfurt, Germany), Central America (Panama City, Panama), and the Pacific Islands (Apia, Western Samoa), innovated by eliminating the drum. Distinctive

cultural elements were also incorporated in the Panamanian and Samoan Houses of Worship. The next temple, in New Delhi, India, saw the entire structure take on the shape of a lotus flower. Its structural features, while adhering to the design brief, spoke to its cultural context through a striking appearance and innovative construction. The last of the continental Houses of Worship, in South America (Santiago, Chile), dedicated in 2016, marked a further evolutionary step. In this "temple of light," innovations in design and materials allowed the building both to absorb and emit light. Structural elements underwent radical change. The traditional base-middle-top design was "replaced with nine torqued, gossamer wings that leap directly from pools on the ground to meet around a glowing oculus at the top" (191). And yet the building maintains a sense of approachability and connection with the landscape and the people who gather within it.

The evolution in design and construction during this era of temple building was matched by advances in learning around the world about the relationship between worship and community. In Santiago, efforts to engage the support and harness the energies of the local population around the temple went hand in hand with the construction process. And elsewhere, in cities and villages around the world, Bahá'ís were learning that by gathering together with their families, friends, neighbors, and others for devotional gatherings—"occasions where any soul may enter, inhale the heavenly fragrances, experience the sweetness of prayer, meditate upon the Creative Word, be transported on the wings of the spirit, and commune with the one Beloved"—they could evoke the spirit of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár (Universal House of Justice, 29 December 2015).

This development leads us on to the third—and current—stage identified by the authors. Efforts are being made in nations and localities around the world to raise up vibrant, purposeful, and spiritually healthy communities. The level of energy and effectiveness reached in this work indicates a community's readiness to engage in constructing an edifice that will give physical expression to the spiritual forces set in motion. Carter and Afnan trace the construction of the world's first two national Houses of Worship, in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Papua New Guinea, and the first five local Houses of Worship, in Battambang, Cambodia; Norte del Cauca, Colombia; Tanna, Vanuatu; Matunda Soy, Kenya; and Bihar Sharif, India.

At this stage in the emergence of the institution of the Mashriqu'l-Adhkár, the process of temple-building stems directly from a community's development and needs—in much the same way that it did in Ashgabat. Consultation with people living in the area of the temple is actively pursued, more design elements are drawn from national and local cultural contexts, and attention is given to environmental concerns and sustainability. Recognizing this, the Universal House

of Justice writes that the Battambang temple "unquestionably belongs to the land from which it has risen" (1 September 2017) and describes the House of Worship in Norte del Cauca as a symbol of "a significant milestone in a process of development that has unfolded in this region over the course of many decades" (22 July 2018). In Vanuatu, the emergence of the Bahá'í temple was seen as pointing toward "a great change that is taking place on this island spiritually and materially" (qtd. in Carter and Afnan 264).

The Bahá'í House of Worship: Design, Construction and Community, with its detailed and chronological treatment of the Bahá'í temple-building process, provides the reader with a helpful sense of arc and scope, in which are embedded a number of recurrent themes including the metaphor of light, the dynamics of crisis and victory, and achieving a balance between innovation and maintaining what one commentator refers to as the "presence of the hand" (Marsh Kelmans, qtd. in Carter and Afnan, 198).

Of course, the temple-building project is not finished. As more and more national and local communities manifest capacities to sustain a vibrant community life around both worship and service and thus demonstrate their readiness to establish this institution in their midst, more Bahá'í Houses of Worship will emerge. In fact, since the publication of this volume, there has been further movement in this direction. In 2023, the Universal House of Justice called for a national House of Worship to be raised up in Canada, and for two more local Houses of Worship to be built in Kanchanpur, Nepal, and Mwinilunga, Zambia. What innovations in design and form will be manifested in these new institutions? What specific cultural features will be incorporated? How will their national and local communities become involved? The prospects are exciting. A volume such as *The Bahá'í House of Worship: Design, Construction and Community* provides readers with a helpful perspective on these developments, allowing us not only to look back at the path we have been walking but to envision, at least in broad brush strokes, what lies ahead.

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Biographical Notes

ANN BOYLES is currently a member of the editorial board of *The Bahá'í World* publication, for which she previously served as senior writer and editor. She has taught English at the university level and has had poetry, short fiction, and scholarly non-fiction pieces published. Several of her dramatic works have been widely performed. Ann was honored to serve for ten years as a member of the Continental Board of Counsellors for the Bahá'í Faith in the Americas.

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DOUGLAS PERRY has had a long career in higher education as a scientist, professor, and senior academic leader. His education is in life sciences, holding two undergraduate degrees and three graduate degrees, includes a Ph.D. in Biomedical Sciences (specializing in cell biology) from the Icahn School of Medicine at Mt. Sinai (New York). As a federally funded research scientist on the faculty of the Indiana University School of Medicine, he published more than forty professional works and served as a member of various professional organizations. As an academic leader, he was the one of the principal founders of the Indiana University School of Informatics (2000) and the founding dean of the College of Informatics at Northern Kentucky University (2006). Dr. Perry retired as Vice President for Academic Affairs at Indiana Tech (Fort Wayne) and is now a member of the faculty for the Wilmette Institute course Science, Religion, and the Bahá'í Faith.

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