

# **God's Program for Human Development**

## Creation, Science & Harmony of Science and Religion

*by William E. Kraus, M.D.*

As you watch the video clip, "The Dawn of Man", from **2001: A Space Odyssey**, Stanley Kubrick, 1968, write down your observations and thoughts regarding the physical (biological), social (way of life), and spiritual (guidance) development of man.

**PHYSICAL**

**SOCIAL**

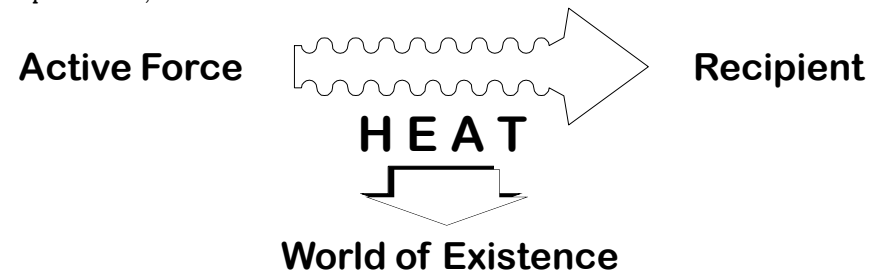
**SPIRITUAL**

Now, reflecting upon the clip and your notes, answer the following questions:

- How is man distinct from animals?
- What is the purpose of man?
- How did man evolve?

**Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh, Lawh-I-Hikmat (Tablet of Wisdom), pg. 140**

“That which hath been in existence had existed before, but not in the form thou seest today. The world of existence came into being through the heat generated from the interaction between the active force and that which is its recipient. These two are the same, yet they are different. Thus doth the Great Announcement inform thee about this glorious structure. Such as communicate the generating influence and such as receive its impact are indeed created thought the irresistible Word of God which is the Cause of the entire creation, while all else besides His Word are but the creatures and the effects thereof. Verily thy Lord is the Expounder, the All-Wise.”



*What other processes follow this pattern?*

**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 180-181**

“Know that it is one of the most abstruse spiritual truths that the world of existence - that is to say, this endless universe - has no beginning.

We have already explained that the names and attributes of the Divinity themselves require the existence of beings. Although this subject has been explained in detail, we will speak of it again briefly. Know that an educator without pupils cannot be imagined; a monarch without subjects could not exist; a master without scholars cannot be appointed; a creator without a creature is impossible; a provider without those provided for cannot be conceived; for all the divine names and attributes demand the existence of beings. If we could imagine a time when no beings existed, this imagination would be the denial of the Divinity of God. Moreover, absolute nonexistence cannot become existence. If the beings were absolutely nonexistent, existence would not have come into being. Therefore, as the Essence of Unity (that is, the existence of God) is everlasting and eternal - that is to say, it has neither beginning nor end - it is certain that this world of existence, this endless universe, has neither beginning nor end. Yes, it may be that one of the parts of the universe, one of the globes, for example, may come into existence, or may be disintegrated, but the other endless globes are still existing; the universe would not be disordered nor destroyed. On the contrary, existence is eternal and perpetual. As each globe has a beginning, necessarily it has an end because every composition, collective or particular, must of necessity be decomposed. The only difference is that some are quickly decomposed, and others more slowly, but it is impossible that a composed thing should not eventually be decomposed.”

**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 196-197**

“... the Divinity of God, which is the sum of all perfections, reflects itself in the reality of man - that is to say, the Essence of Oneness is the gathering of all perfections, and from this unity He casts a reflection upon the human reality. Man, then, is the perfect mirror facing the Sun of Truth and is the center of radiation: the Sun of Truth shines in this mirror. The reflection of the divine perfections appears in the reality of man, so he is the representative of God, the messenger of God. If man did not exist, the universe would be without result, for the object of existence is the appearance of the perfections of God.

Therefore, it cannot be said there was a time when man was not. All that we can say is that this terrestrial globe at one time did not exist, and at its beginning man did not appear upon it. But from the beginning which has no beginning, to the end which has no end, a Perfect Manifestation always exists. This Man of Whom we speak is not every man; we mean the Perfect Man. For the noblest part of the tree is the fruit, which is the reason of its existence. If the tree had no fruit, it would have no meaning. Therefore, it cannot be imagined that the worlds of existence, whether the stars or this earth, were once inhabited by the donkey, cow, mouse and cat, and that they were without man! This supposition is false and meaningless. The word of God is clear as the sun. This is a spiritual proof, but one which we cannot at the beginning put forth for the benefit of the materialists. First we must speak of the logical proofs, afterward the spiritual proofs.”

**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 198-199**

“The beginning of the existence of man on the terrestrial globe resembles his formation in the womb of the mother. The embryo in the womb of the mother gradually grows and develops until birth, after which it continues to grow and develop until it reaches the age of discretion and maturity. Though in infancy the signs of the mind and spirit appear in man, they do not reach the degree of perfection; they are imperfect. Only when man attains maturity do the mind and the spirit appear and become evident in utmost perfection.

So also the formation of man in the matrix of the world was in the beginning like the embryo; then gradually he made progress in perfectness, and grew and developed until he reached the state of maturity, when the mind and spirit became visible in the greatest power. In the beginning of his formation the mind and spirit also existed, but they were hidden; later they were manifested. In the womb of the world mind and spirit also existed in the embryo, but they were concealed; afterward they appeared. So it is that in the seed the tree exists, but it is hidden and concealed; when it develops and grows, the complete tree appears. In the same way the growth and development of all beings is gradual; this is the universal divine organization and the natural system. The seed does not at once become a tree; the embryo does not at once become a man; the mineral does not suddenly become a stone. No, they grow and develop gradually and attain the limit of perfection.

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All beings, whether large or small, were created perfect and complete from the first, but their perfections appear in them by degrees. The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine system is one. Whether they be small or great beings, all are subject to one law and system. Each seed has in it from the first all the vegetable perfections. For example, in the seed all the vegetable perfections exist from the beginning, but not visibly; afterward little by little they appear. So it is first the shoot which appears from the seed, then the branches, leaves, blossoms and fruits; but from the beginning of its existence all these things are in the seed, potentially, though not apparently.

In the same way, the embryo possesses from the first all perfections, such as the spirit, the mind, the sight, the smell, the taste - in one word, all the powers - but they are not visible and become so only by degrees.

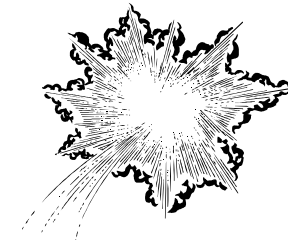
Similarly, the terrestrial globe from the beginning was created with all its elements, substances, minerals, atoms and organisms; but these only appeared by degrees: first the mineral, then the plant, afterward the animal, and finally man. But from the first these kinds and species existed, but were undeveloped in the terrestrial globe, and then appeared only gradually. For the supreme organization of God, and the universal natural system, surround all beings, and all are subject to this rule. When you consider this universal system, you see that there is not one of the beings which at its coming into existence has reached the limit of perfection. No, they gradually grow and develop, and then attain the degree of perfection.

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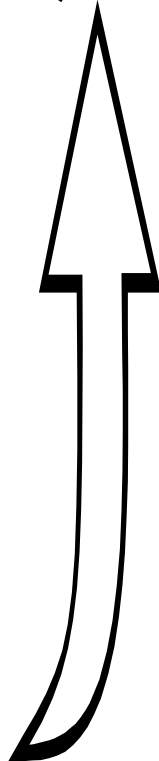
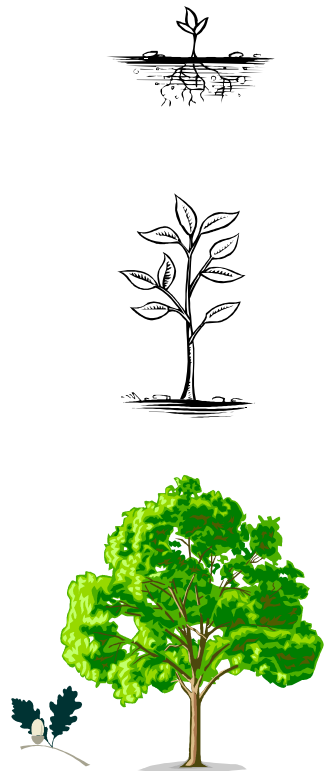
by William E. Kraus, M.D.

According to the current estimate of astrophysicists, it was approximately 15 billion years ago that a cosmic fireball of inconceivable magnitude suddenly exploded. Multitudes of galaxies were formed out of the fragments of this explosion, and in one of these, clouds of gas condensed and formed a medium-size star, our sun. Other gas clouds, circling around this star, condensed too, forming a number of planets about 4.6 billion years ago. One of these planets was our earth.



2 years 10 billion years

Timeframe taken from  
*The Human Dawn, pg. 18*



the earth's atmosphere  
unbreathable for the  
first seven months

1 year 4.6 billion years

after ten months, organisms larger than  
microscopic start appearing (when the  
intensity of sunlight and bacteria began  
release oxygen into the atmosphere – the  
process known as photosynthesis)



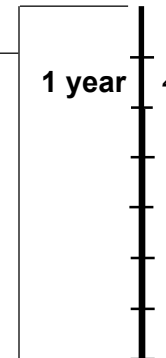
fish followed two weeks later  
seven days after that, plants  
started growing on land.

the next nine days saw much activity, with the  
arrival of insects, amphibians, forests and reptiles

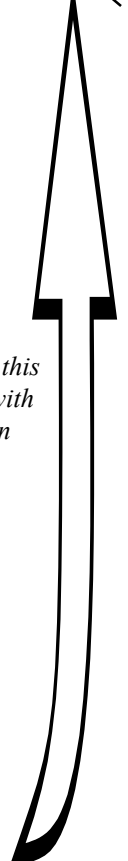
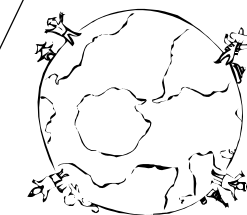
it was just fifteen days ago that the earth first  
felt the ponderous tread of dinosaurs

Mammals followed the next day and, for some as yet  
unknown reason, managed to survive when the dino-  
saurs, possibly due to the earth being devastated by a  
meteorite, suddenly vanished a mere five days ago.

If we take the present time as being noon on a Monday, then the first apes  
arrived on the previous Friday afternoon, the australopithecines at 6:00 this  
morning, and anatomically modern humans, known to scientists as *Homo  
sapiens sapiens*, emerged only eleven minutes ago. More recently, it has  
been one minute since the birth of agriculture, 20 seconds since the build-  
ing of the first city, and only 1.5 seconds since the signing of the American  
Declaration of Independence.



How does this  
compare with  
the story in  
Genesis?



**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Tablet to August Forel, pgs. 8-13**

“Now concerning mental faculties, they are in truth of the inherent properties of the soul, even as the radiation of light is the essential property of the sun. The rays of the sun are renewed but the sun itself is ever the same and unchanged. Consider how the human intellect develops and weakens, and may at times come to naught, whereas the soul changeth not. For the mind to manifest itself, the human body must be whole; and a sound mind cannot be but in a sound body, whereas the soul dependeth not upon the body. It is through the power of the soul that the mind comprehendeth, imagineth and exerteth its influence, whilst the soul is a power that is free. The mind comprehendeth the abstract by the aid of the concrete, but the soul hath limitless manifestations of its own. The mind is circumscribed, the soul limitless. It is by the aid of such senses as those of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch, that the mind comprehendeth, whereas the soul is free from all agencies. The soul as thou observest, whether it be in sleep or waking, is in motion and ever active. Possibly it may, whilst in a dream, unravel an intricate problem, incapable of solution in the waking state. The mind, moreover, understandeth not whilst the senses have ceased to function, and in the embryonic stage and in early infancy the reasoning power is totally absent, whereas the soul is ever endowed with full strength. In short, the proofs are many that go to show that despite the loss of reason, the power of the soul would still continue to exist. The spirit however possesseth various grades and stations.

As to the existence of spirit in the mineral: it is indubitable that minerals are endowed with a spirit and life according to the requirements of that stage. This unknown secret, too, hath become known unto the materialists who now maintain that all beings are endowed with life, even as He saith in the Qur'an, 'All things are living'.

In the vegetable world, too, there is the power of growth, and that power of growth is the spirit. In the animal world there is the sense of feeling, but in the human world there is an all-embracing power. In all the preceding stages the power of reason is absent, but the soul existeth and revealeth itself. The sense of feeling understandeth not the soul, whereas the reasoning power of the mind proveth the existence thereof.

In like manner the mind proveth the existence of an unseen Reality that embraceth all beings, and that existeth and revealeth itself in all stages, the essence whereof is beyond the grasp of the mind. Thus the mineral world understandeth neither the nature nor the perfections of the vegetable world; the vegetable world understandeth not the nature of the animal world, neither the animal world the nature of the reality of man that discovereth and embraceth all things.

The animal is the captive of nature and cannot transgress the rules and laws thereof. In man, however, there is a discovering power that transcendeth the world of nature and controlleth and interfereth with the laws thereof. For instance, all minerals, plants and animals are captives of nature. The sun itself with all its majesty is so subservient to nature that it hath no will of its own and cannot deviate a hair's-breadth from the laws thereof. In like manner all other beings, whether of the mineral, the vegetable or the animal world, cannot deviate from the laws of nature, nay, all are the slaves thereof. Man, however, though in body the captive of nature is yet free in his mind and soul, and hath the mastery over nature.

Consider: according to the law of nature man liveth, moveth and hath his being on earth, yet his soul and mind interfere with the laws thereof, and even as the bird he flieth in the air, saileth speedily upon the seas and as the fish soundeth the deep and discovereth the things therein. Verily this is a grievous defeat inflicted upon the laws of nature. ...

In fine, that inner faculty in man, unseen of the eye, wresteth the sword from the hands of nature, and giveth it a grievous blow. All other beings, however great, are bereft of such perfections. Man hath the powers of will and understanding, but nature hath them not. Nature is constrained, man is free. Nature is bereft of understanding, man understandeth. Nature is unaware of past events, but man is aware of them. Nature forecasteth not the future; man by his discerning power seeth that which is to come. Nature hath no consciousness of itself, man knoweth about all things.

Should any one suppose that man is but a part of the world of nature, and he being endowed with these perfections, these being but manifestations of the world of nature, and thus nature is the originator of these perfections and is not deprived therefrom, to him we make reply and say: the part dependeth upon the whole; the part cannot possess perfections whereof the whole is deprived.

By nature is meant those inherent properties and necessary relations derived from the realities of things. And these realities of things, though in the utmost diversity, are yet intimately connected one with the other. For these diverse realities an all-unifying agency is needed that shall link them all one to the other. For instance, the various organs and members, the parts and elements, that constitute the body of man, though at variance, are yet all connected one with the other by that all-unifying agency known as the human soul, that causeth them to function in perfect harmony and with absolute regularity, thus making the continuation of life possible. The human body, however, is utterly unconscious of that all-unifying agency, and yet acteth with regularity and dischargeth its functions according to its will."

## **'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 143-145**

### THE FIVE ASPECTS OF SPIRIT

"Know that, speaking generally, there are five divisions of the spirit. First the **vegetable spirit**: this is a power which results from the combination of elements and the mingling of substances by the decree of the Supreme God, and from the influence, the effect and connection of other existences. When these substances and elements are separated from each other, the power of growth also ceases to exist. So, to use another figure, electricity results from the combination of elements, and when these elements are separated, the electric force is dispersed and lost. Such is the vegetable spirit.

After this is the **animal spirit**, which also results from the mingling and combination of elements. But this combination is more complete, and through the decree of the Almighty Lord a perfect mingling is obtained, and the animal spirit - in other words, the power of the senses - is produced. It will perceive the reality of things from that which is seen and visible, audible, edible, tangible, and that which can be smelled. After the dissociation and decomposition of the combined elements this spirit also will naturally disappear. It is like this lamp which you see: when the oil and wick and fire are brought

together, light is the result; but when the oil is finished and the wick consumed, the light will also vanish and be lost.

The **human spirit** may be likened to the bounty of the sun shining on a mirror. The body of man, which is composed from the elements, is combined and mingled in the most perfect form; it is the most solid construction, the noblest combination, the most perfect existence. It grows and develops through the animal spirit. This perfected body can be compared to a mirror, and the human spirit to the sun. Nevertheless, if the mirror breaks, the bounty of the sun continues; and if the mirror is destroyed or ceases to exist, no harm will happen to the bounty of the sun, which is everlasting. This spirit has the power of discovery; it encompasses all things. All these wonderful signs, these scientific discoveries, great enterprises and important historical events which you know are due to it. From the realm of the invisible and hidden, through spiritual power, it brought them to the plane of the visible. So man is upon the earth, yet he makes discoveries in the heavens. From known realities - that is to say, from the things which are known and visible - he discovers unknown things. For example, man is in this hemisphere; but, like Columbus, through the power of his reason he discovers another hemisphere - that is, America - which was until then unknown. His body is heavy, but through the help of vehicles which he invents, he is able to fly. He is slow of movement, but by vehicles which he invents he travels to the East and West with extreme rapidity. Briefly, this power embraces all things.

But the spirit of man has two aspects: one divine, one satanic - that is to say, it is capable of the utmost perfection, or it is capable of the utmost imperfection. If it acquires virtues, it is the most noble of the existing beings; and if it acquires vices, it becomes the most degraded existence.

The fourth degree of spirit is the **heavenly spirit**; it is the spirit of faith and the bounty of God; it comes from the breath of the Holy Spirit, and by the divine power it becomes the cause of eternal life. It is the power which makes the earthly man heavenly, and the imperfect man perfect. It makes the impure to be pure, the silent eloquent; it purifies and sanctifies those made captive by carnal desires; it makes the ignorant wise.

The fifth spirit is the **Holy Spirit**. This Holy Spirit is the mediator between God and His creatures. It is like a mirror facing the sun. As the pure mirror receives light from the sun and transmits this bounty to others, so the Holy Spirit is the mediator of the Holy Light from the Sun of Reality, which it gives to the sanctified realities. It is adorned with all the divine perfections. Every time it appears, the world is renewed, and a new cycle is founded. The body of the world of humanity puts on a new garment. It can be compared to the spring; whenever it comes, the world passes from one condition to another. Through the advent of the season of spring the black earth and the fields and wildernesses will become verdant and blooming, and all sorts of flowers and sweet-scented herbs will grow; the trees will have new life, and new fruits will appear, and a new cycle is founded. The appearance of the Holy Spirit is like this. Whenever it appears, it renews the world of humanity and gives a new spirit to the human realities: it arrays the world of existence in a praiseworthy garment, dispels the darkness of ignorance, and causes the radiation of the light of perfections. Christ with this power has renewed this cycle; the heavenly spring with the utmost freshness and sweetness spread its tent in the world of humanity, and the life-giving breeze perfumed the nostrils of the enlightened ones."



**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 198-199**

“It has been before explained that spirit is universally divided into five categories: the vegetable spirit, the animal spirit, the human spirit, the spirit of faith, and the Holy Spirit.

The **vegetable spirit** is the power of growth which is brought about in the seed through the influence of other existences.

The **animal spirit** is the power of all the senses, which is realized from the composition and mingling of elements; when this composition decomposes, the power also perishes and becomes annihilated. It may be likened to this lamp: when the oil, wick and fire are combined, it is lighted; and when this combination is dissolved - that is to say, when the combined parts are separated from one another - the lamp also is extinguished.

The **human spirit** which distinguishes man from the animal is the rational soul, and these two names - the human spirit and the rational soul - designate one thing. This spirit, which in the terminology of the philosophers is the rational soul, embraces all beings, and as far as human ability permits discovers the realities of things and becomes cognizant of their peculiarities and effects, and of the qualities and properties of beings. But the human spirit, unless assisted by the spirit of faith, does not become acquainted with the divine secrets and the heavenly realities. It is like a mirror which, although clear, polished and brilliant, is still in need of light. Until a ray of the sun reflects upon it, it cannot discover the heavenly secrets.

But the mind is the power of the human spirit. Spirit is the lamp; mind is the light which shines from the lamp. Spirit is the tree, and the mind is the fruit. Mind is the perfection of the spirit and is its essential quality, as the sun's rays are the essential necessity of the sun.

This explanation, though short, is complete; therefore, reflect upon it, and if God wills, you may become acquainted with the details.”

**'Abdu'l-Bahá, Some Answered Questions, pgs. 208-211**

THE PHYSICAL POWERS AND THE INTELLECTUAL POWERS

“In man five outer powers exist, which are the agents of perception - that is to say, through these five powers man perceives material beings. These are sight, which perceives visible forms; hearing, which perceives audible sounds; smell, which perceives odors; taste, which perceives foods; and feeling, which is in all parts of the body and perceives tangible things. These five powers perceive outward existences.

Man has also spiritual powers: imagination, which conceives things; thought, which reflects upon realities; comprehension, which comprehends realities; memory, which retains whatever man imagines, thinks and comprehends. The intermediary between the five outward powers and the inward powers is the sense which they possess in common - that is to say, the sense which acts between the outer and inner powers, conveys to the inward powers whatever the outer powers

discern. It is termed the common faculty, because it communicates between the outward and inward powers and thus is common to the outward and inward powers.

For instance, sight is one of the outer powers; it sees and perceives this flower, and conveys this perception to the inner power - the common faculty - which transmits this perception to the power of imagination, which in its turn conceives and forms this image and transmits it to the power of thought; the power of thought reflects and, having grasped the reality, conveys it to the power of comprehension; the comprehension, when it has comprehended it, delivers the image of the object perceived to the memory, and the memory keeps it in its repository.

The outward powers are five: the power of sight, of hearing, of taste, of smell and of feeling.

The inner powers are also five: the common faculty, and the powers of imagination, thought, comprehension and memory.

### **Bahá'u'lláh, Bahá'í Prayers, pgs. 117**

“I bear witness, O my God, that Thou hast created me to know Thee and to worship Thee.”

### **Bahá'u'lláh, Gleanings, CIX, pgs. 214-5**

“O Kamal! The heights which, through the most gracious favor of God, mortal man can attain, in this Day, are as yet unrevealed to his sight. The world of being hath never had, nor doth it yet possess the capacity for such a revelation. The day, however, is approaching when the potentialities of so great a favor will, by virtue of His behest, be manifested unto men. Though the forces of the nations be arrayed against Him, though the kings of the earth be leagued to undermine His Cause, the power of His might shall stand unshaken. He, verily, speaketh the truth, and summoneth all mankind to the way of Him Who is the Incomparable, the All-Knowing.

All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. The Almighty beareth Me witness: To act like the beasts of the field is unworthy of man. Those virtues that befit his dignity are forbearance, mercy, compassion and loving-kindness towards all the peoples and kindreds of the earth. Say: O friends! Drink your fill from this crystal stream that floweth through the heavenly grace of Him Who is the Lord of Names. Let others partake of its waters in My name, that the leaders of men in every land may fully recognize the purpose for which the Eternal Truth hath been revealed, and the reason for which they themselves have been created.”