From Duality to Oneness

A Baha’i Perspective
On Humanity’s Conscious Evolution

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THE STORY OF OUR TIME

FROM DUALITY TO INTERCONNECTEDNESS TO ONENESS

Robert Atkinson

“...A must-read by the widest of global audiences...”
- Michael Bernard Beckwith, author of Life Visioning

~ A Baha’i Perspective on the Unifying Principles at the Mystic Heart of the World’s Sacred Traditions That are Guiding Humanity’s Conscious Evolution

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Ground yourself, strip yourself down, to loving silence. Stay there until you see you are gazing at the Light with its own ageless eyes.”

~ Rumi
The formative experiences and events that lead me to an understanding of the Baha’i perspective ~
Overview

~ A Big-Picture Perspective
~ Consciousness as a Potentiality
~ Love as the Underlying Force of Evolution
~ Justice as the Unifying Force of Creation
~ Consciousness Evolves Toward Unity and Oneness
~ Reflection & Dialogue
All Things are Subject to One Universal Law

“NATURE IS... subject to a sound organization, to inviolable laws, to a perfect order, and to a consummate design... all things... are subject to one universal law from which they never depart.”

~ Abdu’l-Baha, SAQ, 1
Cycles of Spiritual Epochs ~

Prehistory ~ The Indigenous Traditions Era
c. 1800 BCE ~ The Hebrew/Judaic Era
c. 1500 BCE ~ The Vedic/Hindu Era
c. 1000 BCE ~ The Zoroastrian Era
c. 560 BCE ~ The Buddhist Era

1 CE ~ The Christian Era
622 ~ The Islamic Era
1852 ~ The Baha’i Era
Evolution in all realms is tied together, including the realm of religion.

“Just as the solar cycle has its four seasons, the cycle of the Sun of Reality has its distinct and successive periods. Each brings its springtime. When the Sun of Reality returns to quicken the world of mankind, a divine bounty descends from the heaven of generosity... with new life. Minds are developed, aspirations become spiritual... it is the springtime of the inner world.”

~ Abdu’l-Baha
We Live in a Time of Spiritual Renewal

With Spiritual Epochs lasting anywhere from five to twelve centuries, we are only a century and three-quarters into the Baha’i Era and have already seen a leap of consciousness ~ from the previous norm of nation-building to the new vision of an emerging global community. The spiritual energies of the Baha’i Era are still in their early days, just beginning to blossom, changing this world into another world.
A Big-Picture Perspective of Humanity’s Evolution

“Globalization, it seems to me, has been in the cards not just since the invention of the telegraph or the steamship, or even the written word or the wheel, but since the invention of life.” ~ Robert Wright

Our entire cultural, spiritual, and conscious evolution has been a three-step process:

1) starting out with an inherent consciousness of oneness;
2) adopting a consciousness of duality; and, at some point, 3) reclaiming our intended consciousness of oneness.
The Most Challenging Global Issue of Our Time

Moving beyond the dualities that separate us and toward the oneness that embraces all is the greatest task at hand:

“World order can be founded only on an unshakable consciousness of the oneness of mankind... Recognition of this truth requires the abandonment of prejudice of every kind – race, class, color, creed, nation, sex, degree of material civilization, everything which enables people to consider themselves superior to others.”

~ UHJ, The Promise of World Peace
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

1) Consciousness is a potentiality set in motion by an organic process. Now, more than ever, the independent investigation of reality will unleash our full potential.

“We must investigate reality in order that by its light the clouds and darkness may be dispelled...
If the nations of the world investigate reality, they will agree and become united.”

~Abdu’l-Baha, *PUP*, 180
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

2) Love is the underlying force of evolution. Love is the unifying force meant to evolve personal and collective potential to its highest degree.

“Love is... the Holy Spirit’s eternal breath... the vital bond inherent... in the realities of things... the living link that uniteth God with man... the most great law... the supreme magnetic force that directeth the movements of the spheres...”

~ Abdu’l-Baha, SWAB, 27
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

3) Justice maintains the inherent balance of life. Equitable and just relationships on all levels evolve with the increase of social complexity over time.

“Justice... is the standard-bearer of love and bounty...
No radiance can compare with that of justice.”

~ Baha’u’llah, TB,66-8
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

4) **Opposition is a catalyst for transformation.** Opposing forces are necessary for growth, progress, and evolution, and exist to take us beyond their duality to a deeper unity.

“Know ye that trials and tribulations have, from time immemorial, been the lot of the chosen Ones of God and His beloved…”

~ Baha’u’llah, *GI*, 129
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

5) *Reality is one, and global harmony is inevitable.* World peace is a promise waiting to be fulfilled; how we get there is up to us to determine.

“Reality is one; and when found, it will unify all mankind...”

~ Abdu’l-Baha, *PUP*, 372
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

6) *Revelation is continuous and progressive.* The release of spiritual energies always have been, and will be, the inspiration for the evolution of civilization.

“The organization of God is one; the evolution of existence is one; the divine system is one.”

~ Abdu’l-Baha, SAQ, 199
7 Unifying Principles of Our Time:

7) **Consciousness evolves toward wholeness and unity.** Science and religion, as two knowledge systems within the same whole, cannot be in opposition to one another.

“This endless universe is like the human body... all its parts are connected one with another and are linked together in the utmost perfection.”

~ Abdu’l-Baha, SAQ, Sec.69
The Nature of Consciousness

“Only when our consciousness passes from its present dualistic mode conditioned by time and space will the new creation appear, which is the eternal reality of which our world is a mirror”

~ Bede Griffiths

Principle 1

Consciousness is a potentiality set in motion by an organic process:

Our evolving consciousness is designed to unfold by degrees and stages, ever transcending its own seeming limits.

Yet the fulfillment of consciousness is not guaranteed; its potentiality is wholly dependent upon the initiative we take to actively investigate reality.
How Our Inherent Urge to Understand Reality Fulfills Our Potential

Afoot and light-hearted I take to the open road, healthy, free, the world before me, the long brown path leading wherever I choose.

~ Walt Whitman

We are born into a mystery, one designed to pull at our heart-strings...
As Elizabeth Gilbert puts it, perhaps somewhere within us is “the itch, the mad and relentless urge to want to understand the workings of existence.”
Consciousness in the Realm of Dualities

Living within the world of dualities creates opposing forces in our lives, causing us to develop multiple identities – and to be pulled in multiple directions.

The longer our multiple identities stay separate and in opposition to one another, the longer will we stay in the world of dualities. Merging our multiple identities becomes a crucial part of our quest for a consciousness of oneness. If we could strip away all of our temporal identities, what would remain?
Our physical, genetic, social, and psychological identities are who we are, but only for the limited time we are on this earth. If we took a more farsighted view, what remains after we continue our eternal journey is our soul. Our true nature, our lasting identity, does not change. Taking on this holistic, unified identity tells us who we are in both the temporal and eternal realms.
Consciousness Expands With Experience:

Consciousness is a gift designed to help us see beyond what is evident, delve into the hidden meanings of the obvious, and extract the essence of what lies beneath the surface.

The power of our own consciousness, reflecting upon itself, reveals how connected we all are, and brings us closer to the Creator at the same time. As the world’s religions agree, “Seek – and ye shall find” even more than you thought. Seeking truth facilitates our own – as well as society’s – transformation.
Attraction Alters the Course of Civilizations

“All because of love when it arrived
my temporal life from then on
changed to eternal.”

~ Rumi

Principle 2

Love is the underlying force of evolution

The direction of evolution’s arrow has given life a trajectory that builds complex systems of cooperation and harmony out of simple and random interactions. Supporting this eternal process is the organic, organizing force of love. Daily circumstances bring to light spontaneous expressions of empathy, compassion, altruistic care, and service to humanity. We can feel this divine force meant to evolve potential in our own lives.
The Love Ethic

Love is the most powerful attractive force in the universe. 
Love binds together all the natural elements. 
Love is the magnetic force that directs the movement of the planets.

We are made for transcending the illusion of separation ~ in fact, we’re hardwired to connect, cooperate, and be empathic. 
Our greatest act in this world is to express love, compassion, caring, and charity in all things we do. 
All we have to do is bring to the surface what has been buried within us to fulfill our potential.
Love ~ and Science ~
Can Eliminate All Forms of Prejudice

The discovery of DNA has confirmed that there is only one human race, that we are among the most genetically similar of all species, ~ and that no one is more than 50th cousin to anyone else!

The idea that there are human “races” is an illusion.
Race is a biological fiction;
yet it is a social fact with very real social consequences.
Race as a plurality, and a social construction, was learned;
we can unlearn this and replace it with the reality that race, too, is a unified whole.
Love is the Safeguard for Human Diversity

Close your eyes to racial differences, and welcome all with the light of oneness.
~ Baha’u’llah

With this as our modus operandi, conflict, disunity, or estrangement between people would simply not be possible. The realization of the oneness of the human race eliminates the notion that any one group is in some way more entitled than any other group.
Love is a Transformative Power

Mystics and saints have long known that Love is the highest truth, that the universe comes from Love, and that the universe is sustained by Love.

The power of love unveils the illusion of the physical world and takes us to the world of spiritual wonderment.

Love is the living link that unites God with humanity... the supreme magnetic force that directs the movements of the spheres in the celestial realms... ~ Abdu’l-Baha
Culture and the Evolution of Justice

“More souls are crammed onto this planet than ever, and there is the real prospect of great peril... winning will depend on not wanting other peoples to lose.”

~ Robert Wright

Principle 3

Justice maintains the inherent balance of life

Justice is the embodiment of divine order on earth, a supreme force for moral rightness, equality, and harmony. Since antiquity, justice has been the cornerstone for the protection of human rights. Now, global justice is needed to harness the potentialities of globalization for the betterment of humanity. The challenge for achieving justice in our time is to turn toward oneness, to allow justice to become a force for unity.
Cultural Growth Toward Oneness

Whenever we pray we always pray “mitakuye oyasin” for all our relations. We pray for all of the black people, all the yellow people, all the white people, and all the red people. We pray for all our relations.

~ a traditional Lakota belief

The intended unity we are at the threshold of is a deep understanding, acceptance, and putting into action of the concept of unity in diversity on its largest scale.

Unity in diversity is not just a slogan, but a way of explaining the principle of the oneness of humanity; it honors all the natural and unique forms of diversity that exist within the human family, and calls for a wider loyalty, putting the interests of a unified world first.
Justice as the Cornerstone for Building a Culture of Oneness

“A world, growing to maturity, must... recognize the oneness and wholeness of human relationships, and establish once and for all the machinery that can best incarnate this fundamental principle of its life.”

~ Shoghi Effendi, WOB, 202

We are now in the midst of the slow but inevitable process of reclaiming our consciousness of oneness. This transformation is evident in notions such as global consciousness, global economy, and world citizenship. These are the natural outcomes of our evolutionary process. Living with the realization of our interdependency as one human community with one common heritage and destiny is the only sustainable worldview left to embrace ~ and a system of global justice is a most-needed building block.
A common thread of unity running throughout the world’s sacred traditions is some form of the Golden Rule.

With literally hundreds of versions of the Golden Rule across time, each one a basic human value, and core ethical and moral injunction, all reflecting a universal expression of our interconnectedness, such as, “Do unto others as you would have them do unto you,” it is not clear until the most recent spiritual epoch, the Baha’i era, what the real context of the Golden Rule is ~
The Golden Rule is justice in action, a sign of compassion in the world, finding its fulfillment in a standard of unconditional love; it is the foundation and framework for a principle of justice that evolves as social actions become more complex, and the basis for a system of global justice.

If thine eyes be turned towards justice, choose thou for thy neighbor that which thou choosest for thyself.

~ Baha’u’llah
Fulfilling the purpose of justice

Justice is the equalizer in human affairs; it can moderate the extremes of wealth and poverty, create equality between women and men, and remove the hurdles of national rivalries, prejudice, religious strife, economic barriers, and class distinctions.

This would require nothing less than the transformation of society, and this is the most-needed form of community building in our time. Also required is a fundamental change of consciousness, which would include the wholehearted embrace of the principle of the oneness of humanity, laying aside self-interests, serving the common good, and contributing to the advancement of oppressed peoples.
The light of men is justice, quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny.
Justice is a powerful force. It is the standard-bearer of love and bounty... The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men.” ~ Baha’u’llah

Justice is the unifying force expressed in every dimension of reality.
This is the promise of justice ~ the wholeness and unity that evolution has been leading us toward.
As our circles of unity widen, the effects of justice deepen.
Building a Unitive System of Justice

Earlier in its evolution, justice could be characterized as a punitive system, utilizing an “eye for an eye” approach, which created the need for restorative justice.

Indigenous communities, however, living in a web of interconnections, have always had a unitive system of justice with restorative justice built right into it because it simultaneously offered meaningful support to victims and helped perpetrators restore harmony in the community.
Building a Unitive System of Justice

A universal system of global justice is required that includes the built-in ability to restore harmony by seeing through the eye of oneness, and shifting our consciousness to see the whole first.

Love and justice combined means unity right away, rather than needing more energy later to restore another injustice.

An inclusive system of unitive justice is necessary for our very survival.
Building a Unitive System of Justice

The 1993 Parliament of the World’s Religions declared that “We commit ourselves to a culture of non-violence, respect, justice, and peace... there is no global justice without truthfulness and humanness.”

To this, must be added: there can be no global justice without the recognition of the oneness of humanity.
The Path to Oneness

All separation is an illusion; all the diverse and counter-balancing parts that characterize all of life make up one unified reality. They are all held together by the same force that organizes and sustains the entire universe.

This connective, creative energy, known as Love, the divine Spirit, or Grace, is the underlying force expressed in every dimension of reality.
As Brother Wayne Teasdale put it, “Unity is the heart of all mysticisms. It is awareness of nonduality and non-separation.” Knowing that our life is connected to all living things means that we have no need to create opposition, to conquer, or to destroy.
Consciousness Evolves Toward Oneness

As one universal law governs all,
the multitude of ways of seeing the universe
eventually come together in one reality, one organic whole.

As we approach fulfilling our potential,
we witness the Divine in everything,
the wholeness and unity beyond all boundaries,
and the veils of illusion burn away
as a single glance reveals one Creation.
“In all my thoughts and actions, I pledge to look on all things with the eye of oneness.”
~ A Baha’i Perspective on the Unifying Principles at the Mystic Heart of the World’s Sacred Traditions That are Guiding Humanity’s Conscious Evolution

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