Contributing to the Advancement of Civilization
TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

UNIT 1

Justice and the Oneness of Humankind

By Farzam Arbab and Haleh Arbab

FUNDAEC
Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias

Contributing to the Advancement of Civilization

TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK

UNIT 1

Justice and the Oneness of Humankind

By Farzam Arbab and Haleh Arbab

FUNDAEC

Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias

ISBN 978-958-8938-37-0

The notation "MD" above indicates that, although the content of this unit is well advanced, it is still considered material in development.

FUNDAEC
Apartado Aéreo 26540
Cali, Colombia
Tel: 57-2-3316001
Email: info@fundaec.org
Website: www.fundaec.org

Contents

Introduction to the Series

FUNDAEC is a non-profit organization in Colombia that has been working in the field of social and economic development since the early 1970s. Agriculture, economics, and community organization are among the areas in which we have engaged in action-research. Our most extensive experience, however, has been in the area of education. *Sistema de Aprendizaje Tutorial* (SAT), a program that offers high school education with a curriculum aimed at empowering rural youth, is the result of our initial endeavors in this area. Reaching thousands of students, SAT is being implemented in Colombia, where it is recognized and accredited by the Ministry of Education, and in several other South and Central American countries, some of whose governments have also recognized it. On the basis of this experience, another program, *Preparation for Social Action* (PSA), eventually emerged that focuses specifically on the capabilities of promoters of community well-being—individuals who, independent of their fields of study, wish to contribute to the spiritual and material progress of their communities. This program is being implemented in an increasing number of countries in various continents. Over the years, other educational programs were also developed and offered to students from a number of Latin American countries, particularly *Licenciatura en educación rural*, leading to a bachelor's degree in education, and a graduate program in *Education for Development*, which, in the Colombian context, falls in a category referred to as specialization. Some of the modules of the latter have been used worldwide for almost a decade. We have recently decided to revise this material and organize it in a series of units, which we are making available to a wider public under the title *Contributing to the Advancement of Civilization: Towards a Framework*.

A few words about the content of the units included in these series, and the manner in which we expect participants to study them, are in order. We take it for granted that those who find these units attractive are motivated by the desire to attend to their own intellectual and spiritual growth and to enhance their participation in processes that lead to the transformation of society and the emergence of a world civilization in which the material and the spiritual join. The programs we offer are all built on the assumption that the student is, in the final analysis, in charge of his or her education and growth; our task is to accompany our students as they walk their own path of learning. We see ourselves as partners in an educational process with a group of motivated individuals whose purpose is to increase their capabilities to serve humanity through meaningful social action with a strong educational component.

The development of such capabilities requires far more than the acquisition of a set of skills. When one is engaged in a complex educational process that advances over a long period of time, terms such as "beginning" and "end" have little use. We hope, then, that all of the members of your group will come to see their studies with us as a means of

accelerating their progress on a path which they will walk as new opportunities to serve humanity continually present themselves.

It is in this context that we ask each one of you to approach the evaluation of your work. We envision that your group will study the material with the help of a tutor. It should be clear to the members of the group that they are making certain commitments. They agree to read a predetermined number of pages every week, to carry out the corresponding assignments, to participate in group discussions, and to write their reflections as requested in the text. They are committed to perform all these tasks with the utmost care and diligence. The group is also to realize that it is in charge of the evaluation of its own progress. You will be the best judge of how you are advancing. This educational process is one in which, as suggested earlier, you are active agents. No one else can learn for you, and no one else is responsible for your growth. Each of you should see yourself as the principal actor, as the evaluator of your own actions.

Effective participation in a program with the approach being described here demands certain qualities and attitudes. For example, we all have to be patient and, particularly, you have to be patient with yourselves. While some of the material you will study will be easy for you, other material will be extremely difficult. The topics being treated are from various fields of knowledge, in many of which you will have little or no background. Give yourselves time, then, to grasp and integrate what you will be learning from chapter to chapter.

Beyond the need for patience, we encourage you to learn not to measure things in terms of success versus failure, of perfect versus imperfect. At times, you may find your performance wanting. It is important to be aware of such shortcomings but it is useless to focus on them. What you are being asked to consider as you each evaluate your own performance is movement. Are your understanding, your powers of expression and your ability to act greater today than yesterday? It is also essential that, as a group, you show patience towards one another. Belittling and criticizing one another is not conducive to progress. And no one needs to impress his or her fellow students.

There is another attitude that will help you advance in these studies, that is, tolerance for a reasonable degree of ambiguity. So much of the educational process in the world has been reduced to mechanical questions and answers. What you will be trying to explore is too complex to admit simple algorithms. Most issues we will consider have several competing solutions. In fact, sometimes, “there is no answer for the time being” is the best answer, and willingness to live with the ambiguity that results from such a position the only way to learn. In this connection, we should comment on the nature of the discussions in which you will engage as a group in the sections in each chapter called “reflections”. These are seldom exercises, the answers to which you will find in the text. They are meant, rather, to help you reflect on the implications of the material presented and to cover new ground.

Yet another attitude we need to mention here has to do with excessive criticism. One of the capabilities these units are to enhance is that of thinking critically, a capability which will involve reading the material we present to you with a questioning mind, analyzing its assumptions, its approach and methods, and the conclusions it draws. It is precisely with this thought in mind that we quote extensively from a few specific books rather than simply making passing reference to all the relevant literature one can find on a given theme. The development of the capability of reading a book, identifying those ideas that you can incorporate in your thinking and those that you will necessarily need to reject is essential to the purposes of this series. But there is always a danger of becoming too critical and negative. We do not wish to teach you to approach everything with the intention of criticizing it. Your purpose, as well as ours, is to become agents of positive change. We need

to be hopeful, optimistic, and capable of building on strength rather than dwelling on weakness.

Finally, we would like to say a few words about the origins of our convictions, which will be strongly reflected in the units you will be studying. FUNDAEC is a Bahá'í-inspired organization. It is not administered by Bahá'í institutions and not dedicated to the propagation of the Bahá'í Faith per se. Its purpose is not to convert people. Many of our fundamental beliefs are, nonetheless, shaped by the Bahá'í teachings, and you should be aware of this fact from the outset. In a spirit of openness, we will refer to the Bahá'í writings as the source of certain ideas. It is natural that the adherence to these ideas by participants will vary depending on whether they are members of the Bahá'í community or not. Yet this is entirely immaterial, for the units do not address the specific issue of religious belief. As you will see, however, we do take a strong stand against rampant materialism, but this is a position shared by the vast majority of the inhabitants of the planet who are spiritually inclined, independent of the particular religion to which they adhere.

Introduction to the Unit

This first unit of the series consists of three chapters. In Chapter 1, we set out to examine the nature of the evolving conceptual framework that we believe governs our thought and action as we strive to contribute to the advancement of civilization. We will continue with this type of exploration in the first chapter of every subsequent unit. The next two chapters are dedicated, each in turn, to one of two fundamental elements of the framework: the principle of the oneness of humankind is addressed in Chapter 2, followed by a discussion in Chapter 3 of justice as an essential attribute of the individual and of social structures and processes. It is clear that, no matter how much we try, we will not be able to deal with these themes at the level of depth they deserve. Here, then, we take solace in the knowledge that we will come back to both themes time and again in future units, which will provide us with an opportunity to delve deeper into the profound implications of each.

Indeed, our framework for thought and action is engendered by certain conceptions, which can, for the purpose of discussion, be grouped into various categories. Among them are a number of interrelated principles that, as an integral part of our belief system, can never be abandoned. So vast are the implications of these principles that it would be impossible to fully grasp them at any given moment. Deliberations on their manifold meanings never come to an end. All that we can hope to do in this unit, then, is to achieve some preliminary agreement on how two of these principles—the oneness of humankind, the very bedrock of our belief system, and justice, considered indispensable to the unification of the human race—give shape to the entire framework we are striving to elaborate.

UNIT 1

Justice and the Oneness of Humankind

1

The first chapter of each of the units in this series is dedicated to a discussion of one or another feature of the evolving conceptual framework we seek to elaborate. In the ensuing two or three chapters a few interrelated elements of the framework are examined in some detail. In this chapter we explore the idea of an evolving conceptual framework itself, a framework within which one studies, acts, reflects on one's actions, and learns how to contribute to the transformation of society. What does it mean to carry out study, action and reflection within a given conceptual framework? What does it mean for it to be evolving?

There are numerous people in this world who cherish the ideals of a good society—peaceful, just, and conducive to prosperity for all. The majority, however, never succeed in translating their ideals into action in a meaningful way. Many are those who take note of the negative forces working within society but never go beyond criticizing them. They dream of a better world, yet go about the business of life as any conformist, simply trying their best not to commit that which brings harm to others. There are, of course, a significant number of people who are not content with passive criticism. Of these, some fall into frantic activism, participate in any project that seems to address one or another of the ills of society, and affiliate themselves with any group whose ideas they find attractive. Others join the social or political movement that, for the moment, shows the greatest promise. The majority of these gradually adopt, in its totality, the platform for change promoted by the movement, and accept and become staunch defenders of its ideology. While there is nothing wrong with having a consistent ideology, those who follow this path often become close-minded and tend to forget the very purpose for which they initially joined the movement. Victory over other ideologies becomes an end in itself. Fanaticism takes over and the very ideals of peace, justice and prosperity for all end up being sacrificed in the struggle for power. Yet another sizable group of people find themselves incapable of commitment to action and dedicate themselves to endless study. They study competing ideological positions, become engaged in the intellectual advancement and promotion of one, or take the rather cynical stance of analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of all, ever ready to expose the reasons for the failure of every plan of action.

Any position we adopt towards social transformation would, of course, have many of the above elements. We must dream of a better world, we must assume a critical posture when we examine the systems and processes of today's society, we must study, we must collaborate with movements that try to improve the human condition, and we must act energetically and with diligence. Our dreams about humanity's future are extremely optimistic. Our convictions about the nature of the society we wish to build are strong, and we see no need to hide the elements of our belief system, our principles and ideals, which

are all explicitly expressed and promoted. Yet, when it comes to plans and projects, in spite of profound faith in the efficacy of the principles we have embraced, we do not feel that we have a simple formula for action. To translate our principles into action and make our ideals a reality is something we have to learn. We exert our utmost, then, to approach our endeavors to transform society with a learning attitude. We try to study, to act, and to reflect on our action within a framework which, itself, is gradually constructed. As we advance in this learning process we need to ensure that each of the following occurs:

- Our perception of the reality with which we interact should become more and more accurate and well founded.
- Our vision of the opportunities before us, of the goals and objectives we set for ourselves, and of how to go about achieving them, should become broader and sharper.
- Our resolve to pursue our goals should become stronger and stronger.
- The framework within which we act should become more elaborate and more consistent.
- The way we approach action should become better defined and more realistic, and the methods we use to pursue our aims should become increasingly more effective.

We have described these points in another one of our texts, unit 2 of *A Discourse on Social Action*, with which you may be familiar. It is worthwhile to examine a couple of paragraphs from that text about the concept of an evolving framework, which are reproduced here for the sake of convenience:

> To create his work of art, the artist first sets up a frame and defines the space within which his brush can move, translating his vision into reality. An edifice is erected within a frame which defines the available space and indicates how the envisioned parts of the edifice can be built. As a tree grows, a clear frame appears upon which the leaves, blossoms, and fruits are to flourish. Life manifests itself through numerous species, the members of each of which grow and develop according to a pattern that has evolved over millions of years. Leading a creative life of initiative, too, implies that we work within a framework which defines the social and mental space available and permissible to us and which disciplines our movements.
>
> The concept of framework . . . does not refer to a rigid and fixed structure like the framework of an edifice. The images that serve us more come from nature itself, for, our endeavors must grow organically as we learn and gain experience. . . .
>
> The projects we undertake, particularly to contribute to social transformation, should grow organically as we learn and gain experience. The framework of our initiatives must evolve over the years, but even when it is incomplete it must hold our actions together and give our movements direction. We cannot believe in one thing and do the opposite. We cannot sacrifice our ideals in the name of practicality. We cannot abandon our purpose to serve humankind whenever it appears profitable to do so. We cannot cherish freedom and engage in initiatives that enslave others, utilize unjust means presumably to bring about justice, believe in cooperation yet foster competition, or be a defender of family values and promote promiscuity in a business with which we are associated. We should be consistent in our ways and ensure that the elements of our belief system are consistent.[1]

The elements of a conceptual framework that would guide thought and action, as was mentioned in that same text, fall into several categories, including the following:

1. Our beliefs about fundamental issues of existence constitute one category of elements of our framework. Our beliefs related to the nature of man, the nature of society, the purpose of life, the way God guides humanity, and the evolution of humanity are examples of such elements.

2. Closely related to the above are our views on the role knowledge plays both in the life of the individual and in the development of society. Elements in this category include the following: our views on science and religion and their contributions to human progress, our outlook on education, our criteria for determining the validity of the constant stream of information we receive from varied sources, the degree of objectivity we seek in ascertaining facts, our attitude towards technology, and the way we go about familiarizing ourselves with new technologies and making decisions about their use.

3. The principles that govern our lives constitute another component of the framework of our endeavors. A similar category consists of our values. What we consider most important to seek in life—comfort, money, adventure, tranquility, a good family life, knowledge, opportunities to serve others, prestige, power, excellence; the value we place on such attributes as justice, love, generosity, and sincerity; the significance we attach to friendship; the degree to which service to humanity motivates our lives—these are just a few examples of a large set of beliefs and attitudes that form our system of values, a significant aspect of the framework that guides our actions.

4. A more subtle aspect of the framework within which we act has to do with the approaches and methods we are likely to adopt for our actions. Whether we seek to be the center of all activities in which we participate or devote our energies to facilitating harmonious group action, whether we work alone or tend to collaborate with others, whether we need to be in control of everything or are willing to bow to group decisions, whether we create around us an atmosphere of competition or foster cooperation, whether we set rigid goals and drive ourselves to achieve them or allow our actions to benefit from constant and systematic reflection, whether we keep repeating the same mistakes or learn from experience—these are important factors that not only determine how effective we are in what we do, but also affect the very nature of the initiatives we are willing to undertake in life.[2]

Reflections (1.1)

If we observe carefully the trends of thought and action that shape society, we easily reach the conclusion that, for the past few decades, a particular culture or worldview has become increasingly more dominant and is gaining momentum as it expands. This culture of consumerism, as many have called it, is centered on the individual, placing great emphasis on the satisfaction of personal needs and desires. It perceives the acquisition of goods and material benefits as almost synonymous to happiness. It deifies the market and sees its invisible hand in all aspects of life, to the point that every relationship is reduced to a contractual one revolving around the buying and selling of things, ideas, and feelings, including a special brand of transcendence.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that this worldview cannot be idealistic. Its proponents are most concerned with the pursuit of happiness, happiness that they sincerely wish to extend to the whole of humankind. It is not difficult, then, to imagine a highly altruistic person, whose ideas are largely shaped by this culture, some explicitly and some in more subtle ways. Let us consider such a person of noble aspirations who greatly desires the welfare of humanity and explore some of the elements of his or her conceptual framework. Together as a group, try to describe briefly the views of this person on each of the following and point to some of the contradictions to which they give rise:

- The nature of man
- The nature of society
- The purpose of life
- The way humanity has evolved
- World economy
- The relationship between science and religion
- The meaning and purpose of education
- The role of technology in the future of humanity
- Family life
- Community
- Work
- Privacy
- Freedom

2

We labor to contribute to the advancement of civilization convinced that we live in a special time, a time in which humanity is undergoing fundamental transformation. This conviction permeates our conceptual framework and affects every one of its elements. The following passage from *The Prosperity of Humankind* explains the nature of such an outlook:

> Throughout the world, immense intellectual and spiritual energies are seeking expression, energies whose gathering pressure is in direct proportion to the frustrations of recent decades. Everywhere the signs multiply that the earth's peoples yearn for an end to conflict and to the suffering and ruin from which no land is any longer immune. These rising impulses for change must be seized upon and channeled into overcoming the remaining barriers that block realization of the age-old dream of global peace. The effort of will required for such a task cannot be summoned up merely by appeals for action against the countless ills afflicting society. It must be galvanized by a vision of human prosperity in the fullest sense of the term—an awakening to the possibilities of the spiritual and material well-being now brought within grasp. Its beneficiaries must be all of the planet's inhabitants, without distinction, without the imposition of conditions unrelated to the fundamental goals of such a reorganization of human affairs.
>
> History has thus far recorded principally the experience of tribes, cultures, classes, and nations. With the physical unification of the planet in this century and acknowledgement of the interdependence of all who live on it, the history of humanity as one people is now beginning. The long, slow civilizing of human character has been a sporadic development, uneven and admittedly inequitable in the material advantages it has conferred. Nevertheless, endowed with the wealth of all the genetic and cultural diversity that has evolved through past ages, the earth's inhabitants are now challenged to draw on their collective inheritance to take up, consciously and systematically, the responsibility for the design of their future.[1]

The evolving framework on which this series focuses, then, is to help us become more effective protagonists—each within his or her own sphere of thought and action—of a civilization-building process that we believe is gathering momentum day by day. This framework rests on a foundation of immutable beliefs, without which it would collapse, as have disintegrated so many systems of thought in recent history. Two distinct yet highly interconnected sets of beliefs—those related to the principle of the oneness of humankind, and those grouped together as principles of justice—require our attention in this and the next chapter.

Let us first consider the question of oneness. *The Prosperity of Humankind,* the document we have already quoted above, has the following to say about this principle:

> The bedrock of a strategy that can engage the world's population in assuming responsibility for its collective destiny must be the consciousness of the oneness of humankind. Deceptively simple in popular discourse, the concept that humanity constitutes a single people presents fundamental challenges to the way that most of the institutions of contemporary society carry out their functions. Whether in the form of the adversarial structure of civil government, the advocacy principle informing most of civil law, a glorification of the struggle between classes and other social groups, or the competitive spirit dominating so much of modern life, conflict is accepted as the mainspring of human interaction. It represents yet another expression in social organization of the materialistic interpretation of life that has progressively consolidated itself over the past two centuries.
>
> In a letter addressed to Queen Victoria over a century ago, and employing an analogy that points to the one model holding convincing promise for the organization of a planetary society, Bahá'u'lláh compared the world to the human body. There is, indeed, no other model in phenomenal existence to which we can reasonably look. Human society is composed not of a mass of merely differentiated cells but of associations of individuals, each one of whom is endowed with intelligence and will; nevertheless, the modes of operation that characterize man's biological nature illustrate fundamental principles of existence. Chief among these is that of unity in diversity. Paradoxically, it is precisely the wholeness and complexity of the order constituting the human body—and the perfect integration into it of the body's cells—that permit the full realization of the distinctive capacities inherent in each of these component elements. No cell lives apart from the body, whether in contributing to its functioning or in deriving its share from the well-being of the whole. The physical well-being thus achieved finds its purpose in making possible the expression of human consciousness; that is to say, the purpose of biological development transcends the mere existence of the body and its parts.
>
> What is true of the life of the individual has its parallels in human society. The human species is an organic whole, the leading edge of the evolutionary process. That human consciousness necessarily operates through an infinite diversity of individual minds and motivations detracts in no way from its essential unity. Indeed, it is precisely an inhering diversity that distinguishes unity from homogeneity or uniformity. What the peoples of the world are today experiencing, Bahá'u'lláh said, is their collective coming-of-age, and it is through this emerging maturity of the race that the principle of unity in diversity will find full expression. From its earliest beginnings in the consolidation of family life, the process of social organization has successively moved from the simple structures of clan and tribe, through multitudinous forms of urban society, to the eventual emergence of the nation-state, each stage opening up a wealth of new opportunities for the exercise of human capacity.
>
> Clearly, the advancement of the race has not occurred at the expense of human individuality. As social organization has increased, the scope for the expression of the capacities latent in each human being has correspondingly expanded. Because the relationship between the individual and society is a reciprocal one, the transformation now required must occur simultaneously within human consciousness and the structure of social institutions. It is in the opportunities afforded by this twofold process of change that a strategy of global development will find its purpose. At this crucial stage of history, that purpose must be to establish enduring foundations on which planetary civilization can gradually take shape.

> Laying the groundwork for global civilization calls for the creation of laws and institutions that are universal in both character and authority. The effort can begin only when the concept of the oneness of humanity has been wholeheartedly embraced by those in whose hands the responsibility for decision making rests, and when the related principles are propagated through both educational systems and the media of mass communication. Once this threshold is crossed, a process will have been set in motion through which the peoples of the world can be drawn into the task of formulating common goals and committing themselves to their attainment. Only so fundamental a reorientation can protect them, too, from the age-old demons of ethnic and religious strife. Only through the dawning consciousness that they constitute a single people will the inhabitants of the planet be enabled to turn away from the patterns of conflict that have dominated social organization in the past and begin to learn the ways of collaboration and conciliation. "The well-being of mankind," Bahá'u'lláh writes, "its peace and security, are unattainable unless and until its unity is firmly established."[2]

Reflections (2.1)

The paragraphs quoted above, although brief, touch upon a number of important concepts. Reflecting on the following issues and questions as a group will help you appreciate some of the implications of the principle of oneness:

- What does it mean to refer to the human race as an "organic whole"? To answer this question, you may find it useful to compare the analogy of the human body with other visions of society, for example, as a conglomeration of colliding atoms each representing an individual, or as a huge machine made up of many parts, operated by the State.
- What does unity in diversity mean? Why is it that whenever one speaks of unity, voices are raised warning against the evils of uniformity?
- Is there a connection between belief in the principle of the oneness of humankind and the statement that every human being should become—and allowed to act as—a protagonist in the building of a new civilization? Can you describe the relation between the two beliefs?

The universe in which we live contains innumerable systems, each of which is organized around certain fundamental laws and principles in accordance with the purpose of the system's existence and its evolution. When we examine the present organization of human society, we find to our distress that many of its structures and processes are shaped after patterns more aptly suited to animal existence. The similarities between modern society and the jungle—with struggle for survival as the primary occupation of its inhabitants—are all too apparent. What is disquieting is that an increasing number of people, from among the masses and their leaders, tend to consider the situation normal, accepting competition for survival and advancement as the ideal organizing principle of social existence.

Needless to say, we are in total disagreement with theories based on such an acceptance—every one of them materialistic to its core—no matter how much ascendance they may enjoy for the time being. As the passage from *The Prosperity of Humankind* suggests,

from among the systems of the world, it is the human body, and not the jungle, that we choose as the source of analogy when we try to envision society. "Regarding reciprocity and cooperation," are the words of 'Abdu'l-Bahá, "each member of the body politic should live in the utmost comfort and welfare because each individual member of humanity is a member of the body politic and if one member of the members be in distress or be afflicted with some disease all the other members must necessarily suffer. For example, a member of the human organism is the eye. If the eye should be affected that affliction would affect the whole nervous system. Hence, if a member of the body politic becomes afflicted, in reality, from the standpoint of sympathetic connection, all will share that affliction since this is a member of the group of members, a part of the whole. Is it possible for one member or part to be in distress and the other members to be at ease? It is impossible! Hence God has desired that in the body politic of humanity each one shall enjoy perfect welfare and comfort."[3]

It is one of our basic convictions that society should be organized according to the principles of reciprocity, cooperation and interconnectedness, so that through the arteries of the body of humankind can flow the spirit that empowers it to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. This conviction has numerous implications which will gradually become apparent to each of you as you elaborate your conceptual framework for action. There is one set of issues centered around the relationship between the individual and society that merits consideration at an early stage of the formulation of this framework. In general we believe that the civilization-building process to which we refer has three interacting protagonists: the individual, the institutions, and the community. Let us focus for a while on the first. Who is this individual? What role does he or she play in the formation and organization of society? What is his or her relationship to the collectivity? How has the concept of the individual evolved throughout history? What kind of an individual does the building of an ever-advancing civilization require? What is the relationship between this individual and society? These are the types of questions to which we now call your attention.

Even a cursory survey of the world today reveals the central role that the individual assumes in modern society. In certain cultures the individual has been awarded so much importance that society is seen only as the means through which its members can achieve personal satisfaction. The individual has thus become the end and society the instrument. Given that these cultures are forcefully and successfully promoting themselves, we could easily claim that a particular cult of the individual is being propagated in every corner of the planet with what can only be described as religious devotion**.** What are the origins of this brand of individualism? In what kind of a system is it embedded? How modern is it? What kinds of values does it disseminate? In our attempt to find answers to these questions, we will follow some of the arguments presented by Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill and Bryan S. Turner in a book called *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. In doing so, we should remind ourselves, we do not propose adherence to the views being discussed. The approach we adopt throughout the series is to examine in some detail the position of very few authors rather than quoting from many. As mentioned in our introductory remarks, this will contribute to the much-needed capability of reading the literature in a field in a mode that is both critical and constructive.

The first point the authors make—a point crucial to our understanding of the theme we are studying—is that there is a distinction between individuality and individualism. Individuality, according to them, is concerned with the expression of inner feelings and subjectivity. Individualism they define as a political and economic doctrine relating to the rights and obligations of persons, a doctrine that was associated with the English political

theory of the seventeenth century and that later greatly influenced the British and American cultures.

They point out that the notion of the individual as conceived by us is a modern concept. Today, in spite of all the ties of love or loyalty that may bind us to other people, we are aware that we are individuals with inner beings of our own, separate from others. But in diverse cultures and at various stages of history, the word "individual" has taken on different meanings; the individual has played different roles and has had distinct relations with society. It is possible for a person to be conscious of himself or herself only as member of a race, people, party, family or corporation—that is, only through some general category. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner demonstrate that our modern notion of the individual as a significant entity separate from the collectivity is the outcome of an evolutionary process that has its roots in Western civilization:

> It is a commonplace observation that the history of the West has involved a greater and greater emphasis on the individual. In the modern world, indeed, we take the importance of the individual so much for granted that certain features, individual names for example, are treated as if they were almost part of human nature. To forget someone's name is a source of great social embarrassment, at least in part because it appears to deny their individuality. Over time, European societies have gradually developed a way of treating, and thinking about, the human condition, which stresses the importance of individuals in relation to collectivities such as the tribe, the nation, the state, church or family. Not only is this a long-drawn-out process, with its origins at least in the twelfth century, but it is also pervasive and covers all aspects of human existence, from attitudes to death to the appearance of the novel form as a distinctive literary genre, from representations of the individual in painting and sculpture to religious experience.[4]

Reflections (2.2)

Most of the planet's inhabitants do not belong to the West. Yet, it would be difficult to deny the influence the West has exerted in recent centuries in defining human identity. Today, the majority of the people of the world live with baffling contradictions, not the least of which is between their traditional conception of the individual and the "sovereign individual of capitalism" being promoted by the media and the market and through political, social and cultural institutions.

Without necessarily making value judgments at this point, you may wish to examine in a society with which you all are well familiar some of the traditional views on subjects having to do with the conception of the individual that conflict with the one being promoted worldwide. First, together make a list of several such subjects. Examples are solidarity, the role of elders, family bonds, loyalty to the tribe or community, the needs of the individual, and satisfaction of desire. For each item, describe the two views and determine if they are actually in conflict. Finally discuss as a group how people live with such contradictions and what they do to resolve them.

In their analysis of the manner in which the modern notion of the self and the individual has developed in Western thought, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner weigh the contribution of Christianity:

> Our argument is that through Christianity, there has been in the West a long-term emphasis on the individual, but that Christianity is not an individualistic ideology or a version of individualism, because it gives prominence to collectivist norms (such as the Church as the body of Christ) and emphasizes altruistic morality. Individualism was a new system of belief and practice emerging in the seventeenth century and was classically formulated as a secular view of the political and economic rights of the propertied.[5]

But what precisely is the contribution of Christianity to the modern notion of the individual? Another author, Talcott Parsons, argues that Christianity substituted faith for kinship. Thus, individuals were bound together not by their blood but by personal choice. In such a condition, emphasis on community as God's chosen people by right of birth, as perceived in Judaism, shifted to salvation of the individual who now belonged to a community of faith. Clearly, this notion of salvation implies a consciousness of individuality that includes accountability for one's actions. Parsons traces the development of this conception of individuality through the various stages of Christian history. He notes specially that Protestantism created a framework of rights and responsibilities within which the individual could function effectively.

Following Parsons' line of reasoning, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner examine Christianity's confessional character. They argue that what is known as the Christian confessional "played an important role in the historic emergence of the individual, self-conscious person equipped with subjectivity and moral standards."[6] Here is how they develop this idea:

> The notion here is that wherever there exists a moral norm (that is in all societies) and wherever there is deviation from such norms, then we would expect the operation of guilt to drive a person to self-criticism. This view of the universality of the need to confess guilt is simplistic and unconvincing, and so, following the anthropological perspective, we would wish to distinguish between what are called guilt and shame cultures. In guilt cultures, social control is exercised as it were internally in the conscience of the individual, and behavior is monitored by these forms of guilt reaction. By contrast, in shame cultures, social control is exercised through mechanisms such as public confrontation of the sinner, gossip and more public and overt forms of moral restraint. We also need to distinguish between spontaneous everyday confessions of guilt, as when people 'confess' to have forgotten to pay their bus fare, and institutionalized forms of confession, which are highly ritualized, publicly controlled and organized in very formal ways. In other words, we need to distinguish between everyday speech acts, which involve a form of self-criticism, and institutionalized arrangements, whereby individuals are organized into confessing activities. Thus, the question of the universality of confession will obviously depend on what definition we give to it.[7]

Having argued against the claim that confession of guilt is a natural human need, the authors distinguish between everyday speech acts that involve self-criticism and the Christian confessional as an institution that was developed in Western cultures as part of the sacrament of penance. The Christian confessional is seen as an institution that contributed to the creation of a system in which individual conscience and social control began to interact with one another. It is this system, they claim, that has helped give rise to the emergence of today's notion of a self-conscious individual:

> In Western cultures, the confession that emerged out of the Christian tradition was part of a sacramental system, that is, part of the sacrament of penance whereby sinners were regularly brought before the authority of the church to confess their misdemeanors. The question therefore comes to hinge on the existence of institutionalized practices of self-criticism, self-doubt and absolution. We may define confession, therefore, as an institution which establishes expectations that persons who have infringed norms will confess fully their misdemeanors to a person in authority, who has the power to absolve them of their guilt. The institution of confession presupposes the existence of a doctrine of personal guilt, a moral order against which the individual can sin, a system of pastoral authority which can receive and remove misdemeanor and, finally, a variety of techniques for speaking about and hearing such confessional statements. The emergence of such a system, namely a system in which conscience is a public form of social control, is particularly important for understanding the long-term historical emergence of a moral personality and of the self-conscious individual.[8]

The authors feel that a system of control through the unfolding of the inner conscience is a development peculiar to Western society. In other societies, they argue, analogous institutions never developed to the extent that the sacrament of penance grew in the West. To support this claim, they examine several systems of belief and practice throughout human history.

In the anthropological descriptions of numerous cultures—for example, in relation to the institutions of magic and sorcery—they find many instances of confessional activity, but they note that these normally assume "a collective, group nature, that is, the confession is a reflection not of the state of the mind of the individual but a reflection of the character of social structure."[9] Further, they observe that "within such societies there can be relatively little differentiation between the notion of health and the notion of morality."[10] Confessions of sin are part of a therapeutic technique for curing illness. In certain shamanistic cultures, women would confess to having broken a tribal custom such as entering an igloo during menstruation. This, the authors state, was a physical sin. Confession was performed in public before the tribe and involved "an expurgation of such physical manifestations of group deviance."[11] No inquisition into the interior consciousness and subjectivity of the women was involved. Rather it was an acclamation of group practices and tradition. In contrast to such public and conventional forms, confession in Western Christianity assumed an interior private and subjective direction.

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner do not present, of course, the Christian confessional as an invention of Christianity free from historical influences:

> There is clear evidence inside the Judaic tradition of a confessional practice. Jewish rituals that focused on the new year and renewal typically involved some statement of personal guilt and a request for forgiveness from sins. These confessional rituals in Judaism clearly laid the foundation for subsequent Christian developments, but they tended to assume a highly ritualistic and group nature. During the formation of early Christianity other influences from the Jewish environment came to bear. In particular, the Essene sects contributed significantly to the idea of confession of sins.[12]

They also see a possible influence of Zoroastrianism through the notion of individual consciousness as the manifestation of a conflict between good and evil. In the case of Islam, however, they note that the confessional tradition observed in Islamic cultures appears to have had its origin in Christian missionary work.

On the basis of all these observations, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner conclude that although Christianity acquired a confessional tradition as a result of a number of interactions, the development of the confession of the interior soul as we know it today was unique to Christianity itself. In tracing this development, they note that in early Christianity, confessions were irregular and could be made for a limited number of sins. Such testimonies were done in public before the whole congregation. The idea of private confession before a priest emerged over a very long period. During this period, the priest slowly came to assume the authority to absolve sins in the name of the Church. "The notion grew that the church was a treasury of merit, a storehouse of the charismatic powers of Christ, which could be released through the hands of bishops: the notion of the keys of the confessional."[13] The confessional as we know it took shape in the thirteenth century when, as a result of the Lateran canon of 1216, it was declared obligatory for all lay persons. It could be argued that the aim of this declaration was greater social control. Yet Abercrombie, Hill and Turner do not see the institution of the confessional solely in these terms. For them, it is a component of a much wider movement in the emergence of conscience:

> The confession was part of a new logic of personhood, organized around the key concepts of conscience, consciousness, feeling and sentiment. The re-deployment of the confessional in the thirteenth century has also to be connected with the new emergence of a culture of conscience through the development of casuistical morality, the norms of contrition and new sentiments relating to love and emotion. It has been suggested that the courtly love poetry and the tradition of the troubadours were important stages in the emergence of human sentiment. There is evidence that interior conscience, personal emotion, subjectivity and feeling were becoming more significant in the culture and everyday life of the upper classes.
>
> These changes were also bound up with new attitudes towards women, at least in the upper circles of society. Controversially, it has been suggested that Christianity had always regarded women as persons. Jack Goody (1983) argues that the need of the early Church both to gain converts and to benefit from bequests of property reinforced the religious doctrine that all persons are equal in the sight of God, leading it to treat women as individuals endowed with reason, will and independence. Although women could still be part of the property settlement of families, some women were able to assert a role of cultural leadership within the upper class. Women came to play an important part in the refined cultural existence of the court. The argument is that, while the confessional was part of a fairly brutal apparatus of social control, it also played an important role in the civilization of society by encouraging the emergence of a new set of norms and practices which emphasized the emotional and personal life of the subject. Human beings became differentiated and their differentiation was signaled by the emergence of new forms of sentiment and emotion. These changes were reflected in new attitudes towards the spiritual life, and also in new attitudes towards sexuality, family and women. At least in the courts, women began to emerge as no longer merely sex objects or aspects of family property but as human beings with particular and unique personalities. The uniqueness of the confessional in the West is thus bound up with a more general problem concerning the nature of subjectivity and the person in Western society. These arguments therefore tend to run together, into questions about the uniqueness of Western subjectivity and emotional feeling.[14]

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner are aware of a conceptual problem that, if not addressed, could diminish the credibility of their treatment of the Christian confessional in the development of the individual in the West. A study of the individual in Christianity cannot ignore the rise of Protestantism and the role it played in defining individuality and individualism. Yet, Protestantism did away with the specific practice of confession so essential to the Catholic Church. Abercrombie, Hill and Turner acknowledge the undeniable relationship between "the Protestant emphasis on the individual, the capitalist emphasis on economic man, and the emergence of utilitarian ideologies stressing the autonomy of the individual."[15] But they argue against the commonly held view that confession disappears in the Protestant Churches. "Lutheranism and Calvinism did not so much destroy the traditional Catholic confessional system as redeploy the confessional in new forms of belief and practice,"[16] they write. "Protestantism encouraged the individual to plead with God for the forgiveness of sins. In addition, Protestantism tended to encourage the development of the confessional diary, personal reminiscences and other forms of literary confession."[17]

> In Protestantism, therefore, the confessional became less a ritualized practice between priest and lay person and more a practice direct between God and the believer. In Protestantism, the confession of sin tended to become more diffuse and personalized. This involved a new conception of the nature of sin. In Catholicism, sins tended to be individualized so that they could be confessed in a statistical manner; the individual committed acts that were judged good or bad and these acts did not necessarily reflect on the essential character of the believer. In Protestantism, it was the total personality that was either saved or not saved, good or bad, evil or saintly. Because Protestantism emphasized the notion of man fallen from grace, sin was totalized and generalized. The personality became unified around principles of total evil and total holiness. Yet, even in Protestantism, regularized practices of confession tended to be quite common. For example, in the early Methodist sects it was common for the laity to meet regularly in class meetings, where individual members confessed their sins and the work of the Lord in their lives before their fellow lay people. The class meeting in Methodism was therefore a genuine form of confessional activity, involving public confession of interior guilt and sin. We might say, following the view of Weber, that the Protestant Reformation had the consequence of taking confession out of the confessional box and putting it in the family around the hearth. Confession became, as it were, democratized as a universal and regular practice of the believer, but it also became spontaneous and less organized around regular institutional assumptions. Protestantism placed much greater weight on conversion, and conversion was normally accompanied by confession. Emotional conversion inside the Protestant sect consequently came to replace the traditional institutionalized confession, and conversion involved the total personality in a reformation of life.[18]

We have presented to you the above treatment of the Christian confessional in considerable detail to help you see the complexity of the concept of the individual and its historical evolution. You all realize, of course, that the Christian confessional is not being singled out by Abercrombie, Hill and Truner as the sole cause for the emergence of individuality. What they ably describe are the many undeniable connections that exist between the two developments. Further, there are other accounts of the conception of the individual and its evolution, and we have no reason to believe that the one presented here is necessarily the best. The question you need to ask yourselves at this point is whether you are able to learn important lessons from the above presentation without fully adopting the position set forth by the authors. One lesson we hope you will learn is that the concept of

individuality that each of you holds, which will enter into the definition of certain elements of your conceptual framework, has been influenced by numerous factors. The ability to examine such influences will be crucial as you face the challenge of building a framework that is internally consistent. And the above provides you with an example of how such examination can be carried out.

Reflections (2.3)

Here is a good opportunity for you to begin what has been suggested above. Discuss in your group the various conceptions of individuality that you each hold. Together try to identify some of the factors that have influenced these conceptions. Is religion one of these factors? What are its contributions?

We know that Western societies did not stop at a well-developed concept of individuality and went on to create a cult of individualism that has come increasingly into conflict with acceptable norms of the societal dimension of human life. Are there factors in your belief system that could resist the onward march of extreme individualism—which would not allow individuality to become distorted?

So important is an understanding of the theme "individual and society" to the development of a consistent conceptual framework that we feel you would benefit from another look at the evolution of the Western notion of individual as described by Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, now in relation to the representation of the human face in painting. The authors of *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism* claim that portraiture as accepted by us today as a means of conveying the sitter's individuality is, like the Christian confessional, a relatively recent phenomenon. Quoting a number of art historians, they demonstrate that in the Middle Ages "portraiture, in the accepted sense, did not form part of the repertoire of the majority of medieval artists. What we sometimes think of as the characteristic face of a period or century is fairly often the common reduction of human features to a type, or norm, which was acceptable to a particular generation—how it liked to see itself."[19] They show how the main goal of artists living in the period AD 500 to 1000 was the depiction of office, of religious symbolism, or of pattern and color rather than individual likeness. In the case of illuminated manuscripts, such depictions did not look quite like human figures but rather like strange patterns made of human forms. One example of a manuscript sponsored by King Otto (973–1002) illustrates their point. The artist drew a portrait of the king, who died before the completion of the manuscript. He then changed the name beneath the portrait to that of Otto's successor, "graphically illustrating that his intention was not to depict Otto's individual features but to display kingship."[20] It is important to note that, according to the authors, the lack of individual likeness in these manuscripts does not stem from a failure of technique on the part of the artists:

> Medieval artists in Western Europe were well acquainted with the methods needed to show drapery clinging to the human body, to represent shadow, and to foreshorten figures. If, to modern eyes, their pictures have a certain simple and 'unreal' quality in which individual likenesses do not appear, it is because their priorities were such that the person as an individual was not especially important. They wanted, among other things, to tell a story as clearly and

> simply as possible or to show the glory and splendor of kings and religious figures.[21]

"This medieval lack of interest in representing individuals," the authors continue, "has often been contrasted with the way in which the Renaissance is said to have discovered not only the importance of individuals but also the significance of representing nature."[22] "At the close of the thirteenth century," they quote a historian, "Italy began to swarm with individuality; the charm laid upon human personality was dissolved, and a thousand figures meet us each in its own special shape and dress."[23] And quoting another historian regarding the Renaissance: "The originality of its greatest artists lies not in the virtuosity of their technical experiments, or in the boldness with which they explored landscape and the naked body, but in their concentration on the uniqueness of the human temperament and the significance of individual experience."[24] "There was a unique quality of personal destiny," they conclude, "and man could be what he chose. Artists owed little to the past or traditional models, but were able to follow their own genius in the choice of subject or technique. The result was that the faces that artists painted had individualized qualities."[25]

According to Abercrombie, Hill and Turner, the emphasis on the individual during the Renaissance was reflected not only in the representation of the face in painting but also in the social position of the artist. For example,

> Giotto's personal fame initiated a tendency to consider artists as individual creators. It was significant that he painted his pictures. He was not a simple craftsman who made things which he did not sign and whose personal contribution did not therefore outlast his lifetime. As Gombrich says, "From his day onwards the history of art, first in Italy and then in other countries also, is the history of the great artists". Later, Renaissance artists developed the spirit of independence, eccentricity, personal fame and egotism to new heights. A century before Cellini wrote his autobiography celebrating his own heroic virtues, Ghiberti was boasting that he had entirely transformed Florence single-handed. Michelangelo was the perfect example of the personal fame of an artist who was so sure of his social position that he could be rude to the Pope. At the same time he was the first example of the modern, lonely, demonically impelled artist—"the first to be completely possessed by his idea and for whom nothing exists but his idea—who feels a deep sense of responsibility towards his gifts and sees a higher and superhuman power in his own artistic genius". The importance of the artist as an individual creative personality was thus clearly recognized in the Renaissance. Not only was the notion of artistic genius developed, but work was now signed and biographies and even autobiographies of artists were written. There was considerable interest in fragments of sculpture and sketches which became just as important as the expression of the artist at work as the finished piece.
>
> As both artists and their subjects became individuals the economic position of painters changed. In the early fourteenth century, artists, that is, painters and sculptors, were essentially craftsmen and were treated as such . . . Artists were also members of a craft guild, which controlled techniques and conditions of work and also provided a supervised apprenticeship system. Artists' earnings were relatively low and the relationship between artist and patron might well be unfamiliar to twentieth-century sensibilities. For example, when giving a commission to an artist, the collector or patron would not only specify the exact subject in the greatest possible detail but also the colours to be used and their prices.

> From the middle of the fourteenth century onwards, a number of factors began to change the artist's position. Manual crafts gradually became separated from 'fine arts' and works of art became thought of not as objects of practical utility but as intrinsically beautiful. Gradually artists won emancipation from guild control, their earnings increased rapidly and, what is more, they were able to charge greatly varying fees according to their popularity. Artists might still work to commission, but their relationship to the people and institutions that paid them was changing. As Blunt says: "In his new freedom the artist was no longer a purveyor of goods which every one needed and which could be ordered like any other material goods, but an individual facing a public."[26]

Reflections (2.4)

In reflecting on some of the ideas in this chapter, you chose a society with which you are all familiar and examined contradictions arising from conflicting views of the individual within it. Examine now, in that same society, various forms of the arts. First select one or two art forms about which most of you are reasonably knowledgeable. Then bring to mind specific works of art and determine if they say something about the concept of individuality. For example, a painting depicting community life or an individual at work may express certain views of individuality and society. A poem about the virtues of a hero may do the same. Drama and songs most often carry within them profound beliefs about the nature of the individual.

We hope that these two examples—the development of the confessional and the shift in emphasis to the individual in the arts—have helped you gain insight into the manner in which the individual gradually attained such a prominent status in present-day Western societies, at least according to one group of authors. Our chief interest in presenting these examples was to assist you in formulating a conception of the individual and society that is in consonance with the analogy of the human body, an analogy that is crucial to the conceptual framework that should govern our efforts to contribute to the advancement of civilization. In this regard, you should be aware that the rise of the individual in the West did not result in a uniform discourse on the subject. The phenomenon was interpreted by a number of competing theories and in fact led to fierce ideological battles that continue to be fought even today, particularly in relation to the question of individual freedom and collective interests. In their treatment of the subject, Abercrombie, Hill and Turner analyze the "discourses" of four different social theories on the conception of the individual, namely: anarchism, socialism, individuality and individualism. On anarchism they write:

> The social and political theories of anarchism are popularly thought to celebrate the untrammelled rights of the individual above all else. This is an image that is, perhaps, derived from the alleged prominence of anarchist terrorism in the earlier part of this century. In this view, anarchy is a synonym for individuals creating disorder in society by doing what they like. There is, indeed, a streak of egoism in some anarchist doctrine, which can make the primacy of individual desires the foundation of a political philosophy. Max Stirner (1907), particularly, exalted the idea of the unique individual. For him, social rules and moral principles are only valuable to the extent that they do not repress the individual, which leaves them very little scope. Each person is the

only rightful judge of his or her behaviour. "You have the right to be whatever you have the strength to be." Stirner is not, however, typical of anarchist theory and practice. . . .

The general drift of . . . anarchist thought . . . is not individual-ist but collective. The prevailing source of inspiration is not individual but social. In as much as anarchists stress freedom, it is not freedom for individuals, but freedom for the community. . . .

There is a strong sense, therefore, that the basic unit in an anarchist theory of society is not the egoistic individual but the commune. 'Freedom' is, of course, an anarchist slogan, but this is a freedom for the *people* from oppression by the *state*. The enemy is not social organization as such, but the imposition of political authority. The early anarchists saw the state as increasing in its power with increasing budgets, great armies, and a formidable bureaucracy . . . The state destroyed the natural energies of the people. . . .

The anarchist view of freedom is not, it should be said, entirely one of the freedom of the people, with their common interests, from the state. It also involves an interest in individual freedom, although, as we have already argued, this is subordinated to the self-regulation of the community. Individual freedom and the requirements of the community may clearly conflict. . . . That [no] anarchist theorists could provide a coherent answer to this difficulty is not surprising; it remains a problem in a wider range of political theory.[27]

Their analysis of the conception of the individual in socialist theory is as follows:

Naturally, socialism's main target is capitalist society, one of whose prominent vices is egoism and the anarchy that the relentless pursuit of self-interest brings. Individuals treat each other instrumentally, creating disorder. Socialism, by contrast, restores unity and order, substituting collective action and an ideal of service to the community for individualized anarchy and desire for personal gain. H. G. Wells, in discussing the fundamental ideas of socialism, suggests that socialism is "the denial that chance impulse and individual will and happening constitute the only possible methods by which things may be done in the world". Socialism "has grown out of men's courageous confidence in the superiority of order to muddle" and is united with science in the demand for "men to become less egotistical and isolated". "In place of disorderly individual effort, each man doing what he pleases, the Socialist wants organized effort and a plan".

For socialists, the individualism of capitalist society is fundamentally damaging to liberty, equality and fraternity. It is also theoretically illusory. In no human society can individuals have the qualities that bourgeois social theory attaches to them. The notion of the unfettered individual free to act is mythical, because no individual can be free of social ties. Marx was himself particularly critical of those political economists who tried to derive the characteristics of society from those of individuals. The notion of a Robinson Crusoe—free and almost asocial—as the model of the individual in capitalist society struck Marx as absurd. Individuals are not free to construct their lives. To the contrary, individuals appear in society as *personifications* of social relations: a capitalist is not to be treated as a self-motivating human actor but as a representative of capital. This view of Marx has provided the basis for the even stronger doctrines of some recent Marxists. Louis Althusser (1970) holds that not only are human beings the effects of social structures but also that there is no such thing as human nature.

> Socialism represents an emphasis on collective virtues and has, moreover, been implemented by means of a strong state apparatus. Within socialist theory, however, there has been some room for accounts of the appropriate place of individuals within society, not the least because socialism not only permits greater equality and fraternity but also encourages the active and real liberty of the subject. Socialists have seen capitalism as an unjust society and as repressive of freedom, especially that of the working class. Laborers are oppressed because they are forced by capitalist social relations to labor in order to live, and they may also be denied the freedoms of the liberal state because of the grip that capital has over the machinery of the state. In another and perhaps more fundamental sense, capitalist societies deny freedom. In this sense, capitalism prevents individuals from using and realizing their full powers as human beings. In reducing everything to commodities, people cannot exploit their particular gifts and talents. In this concern with the way in which particular societies may make life one-dimensional, socialists propose a view of the individual that has affinities with the discourse that we call individuality.[28]

Abercrombie, Hill and Turner define doctrines of "individuality," a trait specially apparent in the Romantic movements of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as well as some of the present-day approaches to psychology, in the following way:

> The central point in doctrines of individuality is the need for the expression of each person's uniqueness. Individuality is concerned with the interior qualities of the person, with expressivity, and subjective conscience, and the development of sensibility, consciousness, personality and will. The cultivation of these qualities marks one person off from the next. For doctrines of this kind, society should be arranged so that individual qualities and differences can be recognized and individual talents developed. Self-development is a prime virtue. Further, the development of one's own talents, one's own unique qualities, is not necessarily rational or moral. On the contrary, cultivation of uniqueness might well lead to eccentricity or even socially destructive behaviour; the best way to stand out from the crowd might well be to be decidedly irrational. The importance of self-development and the cultivation of special and unique qualities of personality are well illustrated by the Romantic movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.
>
> Many people associate European Romanticism with an absorption with oneself and the significance of individuality. As R. Furst says: "It is a fundamental trait of the Romantic that he invariably apprehends the outer world through the mirror of his ego as against the objective approach of the Realist. What matters to the Romantic is not what is but how it *seems* to him" (1969). Such a view of the creative powers of the individual produces a new attitude to art.
>
> > "Whereas previously art had been regarded as a skill, a proficiency in the manipulation of certain exacting rules . . . it now became an experience surrounded by a kind of mystique because it sprang from a very special sensitivity, the artist's inspiration. This change obviously stems from the new vision of the artist, no longer a propagator of knowledge, one who *does,* but a poetic soul, one who *is.* What matters, in other words, is the artist's individuality, of which the work of art is a direct expression, without the intervention of any conventions whatsoever."
>
> This concern with the significance of individual experience and inspiration can lead to an interest in the idea of genius and the creation of Romantic heroes, like Byron's Childe Harold or Goethe's Werther, for example, or even Byron

himself. It also leads to a belief that individuals are incomparable. Each person has unique qualities and talents given by Nature, and it is supremely important not to impose any measure of uniformity. Such a conception appears in a number of fields. Education, for example, should be tailored to the individual needs and requirements of each child. Rousseau in *Émile* argued that each stage in a child's development was unique and hence demanded its own appropriate educational technique. The Romantic interest in singularity, applied most obviously to individuals, can also be applied to nations as H. G. Schenk (1966) points out. Nations were also seen as having their own unique inner essences and this variety was a source of pleasure rather than of fear. Romanticism coincided with an upsurge in European nationalism, particularly Slav nationalism, and the use of partly forgotten regional languages for literary purposes. In sum, European Romanticism, whatever differences there were between its English, French and German varieties, had individuality, the celebration of individual uniqueness, as its centrepiece. Other conceptions of importance to the Romantics flow from this: for example, imagination and feeling only make sense as the legitimate expressions of the inner states of individuals.

The capacity to sustain and develop each individual's unique qualities implies a certain conception of freedom, one that is roughly described by Isaiah Berlin's notion of positive liberty (1969). To be able to cultivate one's personality means being left alone, in control of one's own destiny. Liberty in the positive sense is involved in the answer to the question, "What, or who, controls what I do?" Negative liberty, by contrast, is expressed in the answer to the question, "What is the area within which people can do what they like?" Positive liberty, then, is concerned not with the area of freedom or control but with its source. The source, in turn, is the individual:

> "I wish my life and decisions to depend on myself, not on external forces of whatever kind. I wish to be the instrument of my own, not of other mens', acts of will. I wish to be a subject, not an object; to be moved by reasons, by conscious purposes, which are my own, not by causes which affect me, as it were, from outside . . . I wish, above all, to be conscious of myself as a thinking, willing, active being, bearing responsibility for my choices and able to explain them by references to my own ideas and purposes."[29]

The fourth discourse Abercrombie, Hill and Turner address is the doctrine of "individualism":

> Individualism is the discourse of the individual which has the widest currency and greatest importance in the history of capitalist societies in Europe and the United States. Like the other views of the individual, individualism is essentially a doctrine of human nature. It has four major features. First of all, individualism consists of a conception of human liberty. Individuals should be as free from interference in their activities as it is possible to be. Law, custom, and social pressure should be minimized. Individuals should, for example, be free to sell property or labour to anyone without legal or customary impediment. Such freedom is the natural state of mankind and is only not achieved because of pressures from repressive institutions, such as those of the state or church. Naturally, it is recognized that there have to be some limitations on this freedom, and theorists of individualism debate on where to draw the line. None the less, the essence of the position is that there should be a sphere of thought or action that is free from interference. . . .

The second theme is that individuals have the capacity for *action* in the transformation of their environment, natural and social. There is in this rather a clear contrast with individuality, where the emphasis is on being and not doing. Robinson Crusoe is the archetype of the value of activity and the importance of being able to control nature. He is devastatingly single-minded in the improvement of his island, in the bending of his environment to his will and, incidentally, to his advantage. This impulse to activity is seen, indeed is accentuated, in the quality of restlessness and the pursuit of novelty that so many commentators have detected in the culture of capitalist societies. For example, the American historian Draper writes of the northern United States, that its "population was in a state of unceasing activity; there was a corporeal and mental restlessness . . . This wonderful spectacle of social development was the result of INDIVIDUALISM, operating in an unbounded theatre of action. Everyone was seeking to do all that he could for himself". . . .

The activity, even restlessness of individualism, it should be stressed, is not random or irrational in the way of some of the Romantic proponents of individuality. Quite the reverse, individualism advocates *rationality* in activity in the world. Free activity is not irrational but is planned and calculating and is the more effective for being so. An obvious illustration of this point is Weber's contention (1930) that Calvinism created isolated individuals whose conduct was highly rational, because rationality ensured worldly success, which was in turn a sign of election to a state of grace.

We have defined individualism as incorporating a concept of freedom, an emphasis on the capacity to act and to transform the natural world, and a stress on planned and calculating action. The last element concerns responsibility and motivation. The notion is that, if individuals act freely and rationally, they do so by virtue of some inner drive and they take responsibility for their actions. Individuals are self-actualizing. The energy that there is in society, on this view, comes from individuals, and society or the state perpetually threaten to block this energy by controlling individuals. Motivational energy belongs to individuals, who can transform nature through work. As one advocate of an individualistic way of life argues:

> "The Americans have never accepted the 'hair-shirt' theory of work. Work for them, rather, is essential to self-development and personal achievement . . . Work, for the American, means striving for excellence in performance, which requires putting one's self into it. Only by freely assenting to his work can a man claim the performance as his, and it can improve the self only because it belongs to the self."

One way of representing this aspect of individualism is to use D. C. McClelland's phrasing and to talk of achievement motivation (1961). In the discourse of individualism, high levels of achievement motivation are positively valued. The impulse to achieve, it should be stressed, is therefore a motivational issue: it is an inner drive. It should not be confused with blindly taking risks, for high achievers calculate the possibilities and will take only those risks that are necessary to achieve the goals. Neither should the inner drive for achievement be confused with ambition. In many ways, the outcome, or reward, is not the important thing; it is the successful fulfillment of the task that pushes individuals onwards. As D. C. McClelland says: "achievement satisfaction arises from having initiated the action that is successful, rather than from public recognition for an individual accomplishment". Such a conception of achievement also implies that individuals take responsibility for their

actions. If an inner drive rather than external constraint compels individuals to carry out tasks successfully, they also bear responsibility for these.

From these four connected aspects of individualism—freedom, activity, rationality, and self-motivation—a number of corollaries flow. Individuals have the capacity and the freedom to rise out of their social status at birth, for example. More significantly, these motivated and restless individuals, free to act energetically on the world, are likely to *compete* with one another. This signifies a major difficulty inherent in the notion of negative liberty: one person's freedom impinges on another's.[30]

In the following paragraph Abercrombie, Hill and Turner present a useful summary of what they have called the doctrine of individualism:

Individualistic doctrine as an elaborated and coherent theoretical discourse, whose core is the individual, is associated with the philosophical and normative revolutions that occurred in seventeenth-century England. At this time, the notion of individual rights was developed as a systematic alternative to political obligations founded in scriptural prescriptions and the natural law of hierarchy and to social obligations deriving from an organic and collectivist Christian tradition. Charles Taylor describes the essence of this new discourse thus: "The central doctrine of this tradition is an affirmation of what we would call the primacy of rights" (1979), which ascribes rights to individuals and denies the centrality of the principle of belonging. Social and political obligations, indeed the very existence of social and political communities, are secondary and derivative, because they are conditional on an individual's consent or because they promote individual interest. Individualistic social theory as it developed at this time is seen as laying the intellectual foundations of later British and American liberalism, indeed of the whole genus of modern atomistic conceptions of society.[31]

Reflections (2.5)

What we have quoted above represents a very brief analysis of the conception of the individual in four major theoretical positions. As before, we need not judge the validity of every statement but should rather seek insights from what is being said. To begin, you may find it useful to make a list together of the major features of the individual in relation to society in each of the four theoretical elaborations. Once you have done so and discussed these features among yourselves, look at some of the processes that have gained prominence in recent times, say, globalization in the social and economic life of humanity, or the rise of postmodernism in philosophical outlooks, and explain how some of the features identified are manifesting themselves in each.

Next, you should each consider your own views on the subject. Can you detect in your conception of the "individual and society" traces of the four discourses mentioned above? For example, how attracted are you to romantic statements about the individual? How do you view the State? How do you define freedom, and how much importance do you attach to solidarity? You may find it extremely useful to go back over the above passages and identify those elements in your thinking that could easily fall in one or another of the four categories of anarchism, socialism, and the doctrines of individuality and individualism.

The analogy of the human body as used in our discussions up to now helps us visualize the nature of social relationships. It is important to remind ourselves at this point that our belief in the oneness of humankind does not represent a mere plea for tolerance or a romantic dream of brotherhood. It stands at the center of a conception of existence within which we define the nature of the fundamental processes and structures of our collective life on the planet. If our understanding of these processes and structures is to be sound, the expression of the principle of oneness must include an interpretation of history that can withstand critical analysis in light of the data available about humanity's past. Here is, then, an outline of what we may call our perspective on history:

1. Every created being evolves towards its stage of maturity. For example, to reach maturity, the human being develops first as an embryo, and then passes through infancy, childhood, adolescence and youth. With each stage of the evolution are associated certain powers and capacities, and each presents a new set of requirements and challenges.

> All created things have their degree, or stage, of maturity. The period of maturity in the life of a tree is the time of its fruit bearing. The maturity of a plant is the time of its blossoming and flower. The animal attains a stage of full growth and completeness, and in the human kingdom man reaches his maturity when the lights of intelligence have their greatest power and development.
>
> From the beginning to the end of his life man passes through certain periods, or stages, each of which is marked by certain conditions peculiar to itself. For instance, during the period of childhood his conditions and requirements are characteristic of that degree of intelligence and capacity. After a time he enters the period of youth, in which his former conditions and needs are superseded by new requirements applicable to the advance in his degree. His faculties of observation are broadened and deepened; his intelligent capacities are trained and awakened; the limitations and environment of childhood no longer restrict his energies and accomplishments. At last he passes out of the period of youth and enters the stage, or station, of maturity, which necessitates another transformation and corresponding advance in his sphere of life activity. New powers and perceptions clothe him, teaching and training commensurate with his progression occupy his mind, special bounties and bestowals descend in proportion to his increased capacities, and his former period of youth and its conditions will no longer satisfy his matured view and vision.[32]

2. Humanity, too, is an organic entity that, in its collective life, undergoes evolution towards maturity. This evolution does not follow a simple linear course. Rather, history progresses through numerous cycles, filled with advances and setbacks, tragedies and triumphs. Each stage in the development of humankind brings new challenges and is characterized by the appearance of new powers and capacities.

> Similarly, there are periods and stages in the life of the aggregate world of humanity, which at one time was passing through its degree of childhood, at another its time of youth but now has entered its long presaged period of maturity, the evidences of which are everywhere visible and apparent.[33]

3. We live at a time in history when the childhood of humankind has come to an end; humanity now stands at the threshold of maturity. Ours is an age of transition not unlike adolescence, during which the practices of childhood are shed and the ways of the adult are gradually adopted. The approaching stage of maturity is bringing with it new capacities and powers, the evidences of which are apparent everywhere but specially in the phenomenal expansion of human knowledge.

> . . . the requirements and conditions of former periods have changed and merged into exigencies which distinctly characterize the present age of the world of mankind. That which was applicable to human needs during the early history of the race could neither meet nor satisfy the demands of this day and period of newness and consummation. Humanity has emerged from its former degrees of limitation and preliminary training. Man must now become imbued with new virtues and powers, new moralities, new capacities. New bounties, bestowals and perfections are awaiting and already descending upon him. The gifts and graces of the period of youth, although timely and sufficient during the adolescence of the world of mankind, are now incapable of meeting the requirements of its maturity. The playthings of childhood and infancy no longer satisfy or interest the adult mind.[34]

> In this present cycle there will be an evolution in civilization unparalleled in the history of the world. The world of humanity has, heretofore, been in the stage of infancy; now it is approaching maturity. Just as the individual human organism, having attained the period of maturity, reaches its fullest degree of physical strength and ripened intellectual faculties so that in one year of this ripened period there is witnessed an unprecedented measure of development, likewise the world of humanity in this cycle of its completeness and consummation will realize an immeasurable upward progress, and that power of accomplishment whereof each individual human reality is the depository of God—that outworking Universal Spirit—like the intellectual faculty, will reveal itself in infinite degrees of perfection.[35]

4. The hallmark of the age of maturity is the unification of the human race. Far from being a utopian dream, this unification is an organic process, required by the very stage of the collective evolution into which humanity has entered. Its realization involves the complete reordering of the life of the individual, the life of the community, and the structure of society.

> The principle of the Oneness of Mankind . . . is no mere outburst of ignorant emotionalism or an expression of vague and pious hope. Its appeal is not to be merely identified with a reawakening of the spirit of brotherhood and good will among men, nor does it aim solely at the fostering of harmonious cooperation among individual peoples and nations. . . . Its message is applicable not only to the individual, but concerns itself primarily with the nature of those essential relationships that must bind all the states and nations as members of one human family. It does not constitute merely the enunciation of an ideal, but stands inseparably associated with an institution adequate to embody its truth, demonstrate its validity, and perpetuate its influence. It implies an organic change in the structure of present-day society, a change such as the world has not yet experienced. It constitutes a challenge, at once bold and universal, to outworn shibboleths of national creeds—creeds that have had their day and which must, in the ordinary course of events as shaped and controlled by Providence, give way to a new gospel, fundamentally different

> from, and infinitely superior to, what the world has already conceived. It calls for no less than the reconstruction and the demilitarization of the whole civilized world—a world organically unified in all the essential aspects of its life, its political machinery, its spiritual aspiration, its trade and finance, its script and language, and yet infinite in the diversity of the national characteristics of its federated units.
>
> It represents the consummation of human evolution—an evolution that has had its earliest beginnings in the birth of family life, its subsequent development in the achievement of tribal solidarity, leading in turn to the constitution of the city-state, and expanding later into the institution of independent and sovereign nations.[36]

5. In the constructive and destructive processes of this age of transition to maturity, we see the interplay of two sets of forces. The forces of disintegration, responsible for unprecedented turmoil in society, bring enormous suffering to untold numbers, but at the same time break down the barriers that hinder the unification of the human race. Conversely, the forces of integration give rise to a new and steadily growing system, founded on the principles of oneness and justice.

> A twofold process, however, can be distinguished, each tending, in its own way and with an accelerated momentum, to bring to a climax the forces that are transforming the face of our planet. The first is essentially an integrating process, while the second is fundamentally disruptive. The former, as it steadily evolves, unfolds a System which may well serve as a pattern for that world polity towards which a strangely-disordered world is continually advancing; while the latter, as its disintegrating influence deepens, tends to tear down, with increasing violence, the antiquated barriers that seek to block humanity's progress towards its destined goal.[37]

> How long will humanity persist in its waywardness? How long will injustice continue? How long is chaos and confusion to reign amongst men? How long will discord agitate the face of society? The winds of despair are, alas, blowing from every direction, and the strife that divideth and afflicteth the human race is daily increasing. The signs of impending convulsions and chaos can now be discerned, inasmuch as the prevailing order appeareth to be lamentably defective.[38]

> Soon will the present-day order be rolled up, and a new one spread out in its stead.[39]

6. There is purpose in the creation of the universe. The purpose of life for the individual is to develop spiritual qualities and perfections, and to advance towards God. Such development does not take place through idle worship. Nor can it be achieved in a life dedicated to the pursuit of worldly desire. Fulfilling the purpose of one's life—which is to know and to worship God—requires activity in the arena of the collective life of humanity; it calls for selfless service to society.

> . . . man must acquire heavenly qualities and attain divine attributes. He must become the image and likeness of God. He must seek the bounty of the eternal, become the manifestor of the love of God, the light of guidance, the tree of life and the depository of the bounties of God. That is to say, man must sacrifice the qualities and attributes of the world of nature for the qualities and attributes of the world of God. For instance, consider the substance we call iron. Observe its

qualities; it is solid, black, cold. These are the characteristics of iron. When the same iron absorbs heat from the fire, it sacrifices its attribute of solidity for the attribute of fluidity. It sacrifices its attribute of darkness for the attribute of light, which is a quality of the fire. It sacrifices its attribute of coldness to the quality of heat which the fire possesses so that in the iron there remains no solidity, darkness or cold. It becomes illumined and transformed, having sacrificed its qualities to the qualities and attributes of the fire.[40]

. . . all effort and exertion put forth by man from the fullness of his heart is worship, if it is prompted by the highest motives and the will to do service to humanity. This is worship: to serve mankind and to minister to the needs of the people. Service is prayer.[41]

7. The purpose of the collective life of humankind is to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization. Civilization has two essential components, material and spiritual. Both of these have to advance simultaneously if humanity is to achieve prosperity and true happiness.

All men have been created to carry forward an ever-advancing civilization.[42]

. . . the world of existence is progressive. It is subject to development and growth. Consider how great has been the progress in this radiant century. Civilization has unfolded. Nations have developed. Industrialism and jurisprudence have expanded. Sciences, inventions and discoveries have increased. All of these show that the world of existence is continuously progressing and developing; and therefore, assuredly, the virtues characterizing the maturity of man must, likewise, expand and grow.[43]

Material civilization is like unto the lamp, while spiritual civilization is the light in that lamp. If the material and spiritual civilization become united, then we will have the light and the lamp together, and the outcome will be perfect. For material civilization is like unto a beautiful body, and spiritual civilization is like unto the spirit of life. If that wondrous spirit of life enters this beautiful body, the body will become a channel for the distribution and development of the perfections of humanity.[44]

8. The ultimate cause for the advancement of the civilization is the education of humanity by the Manifestations of God. This education is progressive; each Manifestation of God brings teachings in accordance to the requirements of a particular stage in the development of humanity, and expands the provisions of the previous set of teachings.

But education is of three kinds: material, human, and spiritual. Material education aims at the growth and development of the body, and consists in securing its sustenance and obtaining the means of its ease and comfort. This education is common to both man and animal.

Human education, however, consists in civilization and progress, that is, sound governance, social order, human welfare, commerce and industry, arts and sciences, momentous discoveries, and great undertakings, which are the central features distinguishing man from the animal.

As to divine education, it is the education of the Kingdom and consists in acquiring divine perfections. This is indeed true education . . .

Now, we need an educator who can be at the same time a material, a human, and a spiritual educator, that his authority may have effect at every degree of existence. . . .

. . . This educator must undeniably be perfect in every way and distinguished above all men. For if he were like others he could never be their educator, particularly since he must at once be their material, human, and spiritual educator. That is, he must organize and administer their material affairs and establish a social order, that they may aid and assist each other in securing the means of livelihood and that their material affairs may be ordered and arranged in every respect.

He must likewise lay the foundations of human education—that is, he must so educate human minds and thoughts that they may become capable of substantive progress; that science and knowledge may expand; that the realities of things, the mysteries of the universe, and the properties of all that exists may be revealed . . .

He must also impart spiritual education, so that minds may apprehend the metaphysical world, breathe the sanctified breaths of the Holy Spirit, and enter into relationship with the Concourse on high, and that human realities may become the manifestations of divine blessings, that perchance all the names and attributes of God may be reflected in the mirror of the human reality and the meaning of the blessed verse "Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness" may be realized.[45]

9. The two knowledge systems that propel the progress of civilization are science and religion. Both are necessary for its proper unfoldment. Science in the absence of religion becomes the victim of materialism and generates tools of destruction. Religion without the light of science and reason gradually degenerates into superstition.

> It is evident that prejudices arising from adherence to religious forms and imitation of ancestral beliefs have hindered the progress of humanity thousands of years. How many wars and battles have been fought, how much division, discord and hatred have been caused by this form of prejudice! But inasmuch as this century is a century of the revelation of reality—praise be to God!—the thoughts of men are being directed toward the welfare and unity of humanity . . . All the existing nations had a divine foundation of truth or reality originally, which was intended to be conducive to the unity and accord of mankind, but the light of that reality gradually became obscured. The darkness of superstitions and imitations came and took its place, binding the world of humanity in the chains and fetters of ignorance. Enmity arose among men, increasing to such an extent that nation strove against nation in hatred and violence. War has been a religious and political human heritage.[46]
>
> . . . Religion and Science are inter-twined with each other and cannot be separated. These are the two wings with which humanity must fly. One wing is not enough. Every religion which does not concern itself with science is mere tradition, and that is not the essential. Therefore science, education and civilization are most important necessities for the full religious life.[47]

10. Like the planets that move in cycles, human history experiences periods of great regeneration, marked by spiritual vigor. The present age is one such period.

> At the time of the vernal equinox in the material world a wonderful vibrant energy and new life-quickening is observed everywhere in the

> vegetable kingdom; the animal and human kingdoms are resuscitated and move forward with a new impulse. The whole world is born anew, resurrected. Gentle zephyrs are set in motion, wafting and fragrant; flowers bloom; the trees are in blossom, the air temperate and delightful; how pleasant and beautiful become the mountains, fields and meadows. Likewise, the spiritual bounty and springtime of God quicken the world of humanity with a new animus and vivification. All the virtues which have been deposited and potential in human hearts are being revealed from that Reality as flowers and blossoms from divine gardens. It is a day of joy, a time of happiness, a period of spiritual growth.[48]

11. The operation of organic evolution cannot be reduced to a set of mechanistic rules leading to a deterministic view of history akin to the ones that have caused havoc in the twentieth century. Within purposeful evolutionary processes, there is ample room for the will of the individual and of the collectivity. Much of the outcome depends on the way knowledge is generated and used. Indeed, at the center stage in the unfolding drama of history is a continual battle between the forces of knowledge and blind imitation, between moral courage and vain desire.

> God has given man the eye of investigation by which he may see and recognize truth. He has endowed man with ears that he may hear the message of reality and conferred upon him the gift of reason by which he may discover things for himself. This is his endowment and equipment for the investigation of reality. Man is not intended to see through the eyes of another, hear through another's ears nor comprehend with another's brain. Each human creature has individual endowment, power and responsibility in the creative plan of God.[49]

The above set of statements and the accompanying passages constitute a point of view which is internally consistent. As we have mentioned before, this is one of the characteristics we demand from our conceptual framework, for only a consistent framework permits both freedom and assurance. A problem each of you will often face, however, is that while the core of your beliefs may be highly consistent, the way you apply them may result in contradictory conclusions. To avoid this danger, you must be willing to approach matters with a disciplined mind and with painstaking care. In the case of your understanding of history, the statements presented here actually constitute a general outline and by no means explain every important historical development and its causes.

In order to arrive at a comprehensive theory of history, one would have to examine scores of factors and describe their operation in various realms of social existence—religious, political, economic, and cultural. This is clearly not the place to undertake such a gigantic task, but we should bring to your attention a few significant issues with the hope that, by analyzing them, you will become aware of the intricacies of a consistent perspective on history.

Accordingly, we ask you to reflect on a series of descriptions of three well-known interpretations of history. The presentations, extremely brief, are based largely on a book edited by Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah called *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians: Perspectives on Individual, Social, and Civilizational Change*. Whenever one tries to describe a complex set of arguments in a few paragraphs, one is bound to simplify and even distort the original ideas. Therefore, you should not take our statements as precise expressions of the scholars' views. All we are doing is to bring to your attention certain issues that you can analyze within the framework you are building to guide your actions.

Reflections (2.6)

One view of history, which has greatly influenced human existence for nearly two millennia, is intimately connected with what may be termed the Christian belief system. As a system of thought, of course, Christian belief lends itself to many interpretations. The brief explanation below follows some of the arguments of the great fourth-century Christian thinker Saint Augustine. Although extremely sketchy, it brings out several issues that merit your consideration.

> History unfolds between two definite points in time, a beginning and an end. The beginning is the expulsion of humanity from the Garden of Eden. Prior to this expulsion, man had been living eternally, without a past or a future. He was expelled because he succumbed to deception, and as a result, became subject to the conditions of contingent life such as death, change and error.
>
> History consists of the struggle of human beings to free themselves from error and find Truth, which is changeless. But man can never arrive at the Truth by himself, for he inherits deception and his claim to having a will is only an illusion. What makes salvation possible, however, is that God, in the person of Christ, allowed Himself to be crucified and thus took the punishment for man's sin. This was a one-time occurrence never to be repeated again. But once it occurred, it became possible for man to free himself from error through Christianity, the true religion. To overcome sin, he has to let himself be guided by God in his innermost thoughts and highest aspirations. A Christian, who accepts God's guidance, returns to the condition of humanity before its expulsion—a life in Paradise—only now he has a body that, because of the Original Sin, always tries to lead him to error.
>
> This state of existence, however, finally comes to an end. The end of history is the Final Judgment, at which point all deception and the capacity to err will cease and time will stop. On the Day of Judgment, the doers of good will enter God's paradise—the City of God; but entry will be denied to the others.[50]

Whether the ideas expressed here are to be taken literally or be studied for inner meaning is a matter to be treated in Christian discourse. What we would like you to discuss together are three sets of questions:

1. What is the nature of time in the conception you each hold of history? Does it have a beginning and an end? What are some of the major events that mark the flow of history?

2. How do you define salvation? Is it an event in the life a person or is it a process? Is there such a thing as collective salvation?

3. How would you describe human capacity for error? Can humanity learn not to err? What are its sources of guidance?

Reflections (2.7)

Ibn Khaldun, a great thinker of the fourteenth century, wrote at a time when the world of Islam had fallen into deep crisis. What interests us in the following short account is his endeavor to understand the causes of the rise and fall of civilizations. The story, according to him, begins with humanity's living in close relation with nature.

> Man seeks first the bare necessities. Only after he has obtained them does he get to comforts and luxuries. The toughness of nomadic life precedes the softness of sedentary life. In a nomadic group there is much unity and cohesion among the members, both because of the ties to kinship and because of loyalty to a leader. Once a superior solidarity emerges within a group, it tends to subdue lesser solidarities and brings them under its control. The result is a greater solidarity that unites the conflicting factions and that directs their efforts to fight and subdue other groups. This process of expansion and unification continues until a point is reached when the newly formed solidarity is able to conquer the dominions of a civilized state or to establish new cities and the institutions characteristic of a civilized culture. A new civilization now begins to prosper under the authority of a king.
>
> The king, especially if compassionate and just, serves as a tool for social cohesion, keeping various tribes from fighting. Another source of cohesion is religion, which creates both unity and a common sense of purpose. Thus, the highest form of civilization is when religion, kinship, and a just royal authority combine to create a very strong sense of unity and common purpose.
>
> Such a state of unity, of course, does not last forever. The biological stages of birth, growth, adulthood, decline and death are also found in such entities as the family, the city and civilization. The life of a dynasty, for example, consists of a few clear stages. During the first stage a united tribe defeats other tribes, consolidates power and wealth, and establishes a dynasty. The members of the dynasty at this time are accustomed to a harsh environment and have a natural vigor. The second stage is characterized by the king taking all authority and becoming the absolute monarch, removing all threats, and at the same time, remaining compassionate to his subjects. This stage is also characterized by a transition to an urban lifestyle, where the members of the dynasty lose their ability to deal with hardship, although, imitating their forebears, they retain some positive qualities such as courage. In the third stage, the king becomes attached to the luxuries associated with power, causing among other things a steady rise in state expenditures. In this stage, all the original qualities of the dynasty such as unity and courage begin to disappear. Yet, the kingdom itself continues to be prosperous. In the fourth stage, the king, following the pattern of the previous stage, increases the use of material resources, raises taxes and inflicts severe strain on the population. This creates apathy and every aspect of life including production suffers. Finally, in the fifth stage, in the face of disunity within the dynasty and lethargy in the population, the state falls under the attacks of an emerging united and vigorous group, and a new dynasty is formed.[51]

Once again, we are not so much interested in the validity of Ibn Khaldun's vision of history. His arguments, however, bring out a number of important factors that every perspective on history must explain. For now, we ask you to focus on one such factor by analyzing the following questions as a group:

What is the source of vigor in a civilization according to your views of history? Why do civilizations seem to finally lose their vigor? What is the source of vigor for the global civilization we have said will emerge as a result of the fundamental transformations taking place in society today?

Reflections (2.8)

A useful tool for analyzing the workings of history is "dialectical progression". It was employed by Hegel, a German philosopher, to create a highly abstract theory of history. We mention it here only as a specific and well-known application of the concept of dialectic. One of the dictionary definitions of the word is "logical argumentation", and another "the juxtaposition or interaction of conflicting ideas or forces". Hegel used the idea of dialectic first in the realm of knowledge. He saw the forward movement of knowledge, something that he felt was inherent to knowledge itself, as a dialectical process. Simply put, this implies that in order to arrive at a more comprehensive level, a concept or "thesis" forms its negation—an "antithesis"—and through the synthesis of these two opposite concepts, a higher level of the original concept appears, which itself serves as the thesis for further development of the concept. On the cosmic level, an all-encompassing "Spirit" or "Idea", which is the ultimate reality of existence, also progresses through a dialectical resolution of theses and antitheses. The visible universe and everything that appears to happen within it are, then, the manifestations of the progression of this Spirit as it becomes that which it potentially is through a series of stages.

The first stage in this process is, according to Hegel, the "Oriental World", where the Spirit is in harmony with nature. Although society is well organized at this stage, individuals have little freedom. In the second, "Greek World" stage, however, the Spirit "emerges from a position of mere obedience and trust."[52] This stage is characterized as youthful, being the negation of the childlike obedience of the first stage. The third, "Roman World" or adulthood stage, which is a synthesis of the first two stages, is characterized by the ability of the individual to act for himself, although one achieves this only in service to the State. In the fourth, the "Christian World" or the "German" stage, the divine Spirit takes up its abode in the individual who is now endowed with considerable freedom. Hegel postulates that history will end with a final synthesis between the Idea and the complex of human passions. In this final stage, people will live in complete liberty in the ideal State.

There is really little reason for you to try to fathom the complexities of Hegelian dialectics. What will be useful, however, is to see if on a smaller scale some of the processes you can identify in history are indeed dialectical in nature. In the life of the individual, for example, there is definitely a dialectic of joy and pain that propels the process of growth. Are there similar processes in the collective life of humanity?

These three examples, though brief and far from comprehensive, are sufficient for the purposes of this chapter. We hope that from now on, when you come across views of history, you will be able to use each view to generate a series of questions that will help you make this component of your conceptual framework more complete. For instance, if you study Max Weber's analysis of the interplay between charismatic leadership and

rationalization, you may add to your perspective on history an understanding of the role of leadership and social organization in the advancement of civilization. If you are exposed to Teihard de Chardin's ideas on evolution, you may look more closely at your views on how human society, and in general the universe, move from one level to another of higher complexity. And if you are introduced to Arnold Toynbee's thesis that civilizations emerge as the result of the response to challenges by creative minorities, you will naturally examine your ideas about the protagonists of the great transformation that you believe is taking place in the world today.

There are a number of questions that you must examine early in your studies as you think about social change. These have to do with the role that economic processes, specially the process of production and reproduction of the means of production, plays in human history. One does not have to be a materialist to accept the importance of this aspect of human life in each stage of historical development. A discussion of this topic, however, would take us into an examination of the debate between capitalism and Marxism, a debate that dominated so much of the political life of the past century. Unfortunately this is not something we can do in a few paragraphs here, and we will have to leave a more thorough exploration of the subject to some other unit. For the time being, however, you should come to some conclusions among yourselves as to the contribution of economic activity to the shaping of society and the dynamic of its transformation.

Finally, it will be worth your while to deliberate with your group on some of the ideas developed by Antonio Gramsci. He was a Marxist who opposed Stalin's version of communism. Although we would not endorse some of his materialistic assumptions, we admire the extraordinary insights he had into the life and culture of the masses of humanity. Many of these insights can be of great value to you. From Gramsci's perspective, the superstructure of society could be divided into two parts: the civil society and the State. Civil society is made up of institutions, such as schools, churches, mass media, and political parties, which form the worldview of a people. The State, on the other hand, constitutes the coercive powers of government such as the police, army and legal courts. The ruling class uses the civil society to legitimize its power by giving the populace a worldview where the status quo is presented as being natural. Gramsci calls this feature of the civil society "hegemony" and considers it to be much more powerful than the State. He then argues that for historical change to occur, ethical individuals have to systematically work to raise the consciousness of the populace and give them a more just worldview. Economic crises serve to facilitate this process. As cultural hegemony is replaced, fundamental change takes place, and history progresses.

Reflections (2.9)

Should the opportunity ever arise for you to read some of Gramsci's works, we recommend that you take advantage of it. For now think of the fact that many of your contributions to the building of a new civilization will be made in the context of civil society.

- Does the concept of hegemony help you understand its operation better?
- Can you think of strategies that could be used by the organizations of civil society to offer the populations they serve a worldview more than just the one which the dominant culture is disseminating through its elaborate propaganda machine?

Our belief in the principle of the oneness of humankind—with the accompanying views on the individual, society, and history—has implications for the way we see the present challenges facing humanity. The most notable is the emphasis we place on the urgency of establishing world peace. Our position in this respect is expressed fully in the document entitled *The Promise of World Peace*. In general, while we recognize the grave dangers that threaten society in the years immediately ahead, our long-term vision of humanity's future is most optimistic. It is our conviction that peace is not only possible but inevitable:

> The Great Peace towards which people of good will throughout the centuries have inclined their hearts, of which seers and poets for countless generations have expressed their vision, and for which from age to age the sacred scriptures of mankind have constantly held the promise, is now at long last within the reach of the nations. For the first time in history it is possible for everyone to view the entire planet, with all its myriad diversified peoples, in one perspective. World peace is not only possible but inevitable. It is the next stage in the evolution of this planet—in the words of one great thinker, the "planetization of mankind."[53]

The establishment of world peace is hampered, according to the document, by the paralyzing effects of the view that aggression and conflict are "intrinsic to human nature and therefore ineradicable."[54]

> With the entrenchment of this view, a paralyzing contradiction has developed in human affairs. On the one hand, people of all nations proclaim not only their readiness but their longing for peace and harmony, for an end to the harrowing apprehensions tormenting their daily lives. On the other, uncritical assent is given to the proposition that human beings are incorrigibly selfish and aggressive and thus incapable of erecting a social system at once progressive and peaceful, dynamic and harmonious, a system giving free play to individual creativity and initiative but based on co-operation and reciprocity.
>
> As the need for peace becomes more urgent, this fundamental contradiction, which hinders its realization, demands a reassessment of the assumptions upon which the commonly held view of mankind's historical predicament is based. Dispassionately examined, the evidence reveals that such conduct, far from expressing man's true self, represents a distortion of the human spirit. Satisfaction on this point will enable all people to set in motion constructive social forces which, because they are consistent with human nature, will encourage harmony and co-operation instead of war and conflict.
>
> To choose such a course is not to deny humanity's past but to understand it . . .[55]

Peace for us is not just the absence of war but a state of being governed by spiritual principles, particularly those of unity and justice. The causes of war, therefore, are to be found in the structures and processes of an unjust society that refuses to consider its members as belonging to one family. A comprehensive program to bring about peace must, on the one hand, include measures to abolish structures, attitudes and habits that encourage such social ills as racism, unrestrained nationalism, religious prejudice, and discrimination against women, and on the other, promote the creation and maintenance of institutions that uphold justice and guarantee all members of society equitable access to its resources.

> Banning nuclear weapons, prohibiting the use of poison gases, or outlawing germ warfare will not remove the root causes of war. However

important such practical measures obviously are as elements of the peace process, they are in themselves too superficial to exert enduring influence. Peoples are ingenious enough to invent yet other forms of warfare, and to use food, raw materials, finance, industrial power, ideology, and terrorism to subvert one another in an endless quest for supremacy and dominion. Nor can the present massive dislocation in the affairs of humanity be resolved through the settlement of specific conflicts or disagreements among nations. A genuine universal framework must be adopted . . .

Despite the obvious shortcomings of the United Nations, the more than two score declarations and conventions adopted by that organization, even where governments have not been enthusiastic in their commitment, have given ordinary people a sense of a new lease on life. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, and the similar measures concerned with eliminating all forms of discrimination based on race, sex or religious belief; upholding the rights of the child; protecting all persons against being subjected to torture; eradicating hunger and malnutrition; using scientific and technological progress in the interest of peace and the benefit of mankind—all such measures, if courageously enforced and expanded, will advance the day when the specter of war will have lost its power to dominate international relations. There is no need to stress the significance of the issues addressed by these declarations and conventions. However, a few such issues, because of their immediate relevance to establishing world peace, deserve additional comment.

Racism, one of the most baneful and persistent evils, is a major barrier to peace. Its practice perpetrates too outrageous a violation of the dignity of human beings to be countenanced under any pretext. Racism retards the unfoldment of the boundless potentialities of its victims, corrupts its perpetrators, and blights human progress. Recognition of the oneness of mankind, implemented by appropriate legal measures, must be universally upheld if this problem is to be overcome.

The inordinate disparity between rich and poor, a source of acute suffering, keeps the world in a state of instability, virtually on the brink of war. Few societies have dealt effectively with this situation. The solution calls for the combined application of spiritual, moral and practical approaches. A fresh look at the problem is required, entailing consultation with experts from a wide spectrum of disciplines, devoid of economic and ideological polemics, and involving the people directly affected in the decisions that must urgently be made. It is an issue that is bound up not only with the necessity for eliminating extremes of wealth and poverty but also with those spiritual verities the understanding of which can produce a new universal attitude. Fostering such an attitude is itself a major part of the solution.

Unbridled nationalism, as distinguished from a sane and legitimate patriotism, must give way to a wider loyalty, to the love of humanity as a whole. Bahá'u'lláh's statement is: "The earth is but one country, and mankind its citizens." The concept of world citizenship is a direct result of the contraction of the world into a single neighborhood through scientific advances and of the indisputable interdependence of nations. Love of all the world's peoples does not exclude love of one's country. The advantage of the part in a world society is best served by promoting the advantage of the whole. Current international activities in various fields which nurture mutual affection and a sense of solidarity among peoples need greatly to be increased.

Religious strife, throughout history, has been the cause of innumerable wars and conflicts, a major blight to progress, and is increasingly abhorrent to the people of all faiths and no faith. Followers of all religions must be willing to face the basic questions which this strife raises, and to arrive at clear answers. How are the differences between them to be resolved, both in theory and in practice? The challenge facing the religious leaders of mankind is to contemplate, with hearts filled with the spirit of compassion and a desire for truth, the plight of humanity, and to ask themselves whether they cannot, in humility before their Almighty Creator, submerge their theological differences in a great spirit of mutual forbearance that will enable them to work together for the advancement of human understanding and peace.

The emancipation of women, the achievement of full equality between the sexes, is one of the most important, though less acknowledged prerequisites of peace. The denial of such equality perpetrates an injustice against one half of the world's population and promotes in men harmful attitudes and habits that are carried from the family to the workplace, to political life, and ultimately to international relations. There are no grounds, moral, practical, or biological, upon which such denial can be justified. Only as women are welcomed into full partnership in all fields of human endeavor will the moral and psychological climate be created in which international peace can emerge.

The cause of universal education, which has already enlisted in its service an army of dedicated people from every faith and nation, deserves the utmost support that the governments of the world can lend it. For ignorance is indisputably the principal reason for the decline and fall of peoples and the perpetuation of prejudice. No nation can achieve success unless education is accorded all its citizens. Lack of resources limits the ability of many nations to fulfil this necessity, imposing a certain ordering of priorities. The decision-making agencies involved would do well to consider giving first priority to the education of women and girls, since it is through educated mothers that the benefits of knowledge can be most effectively and rapidly diffused throughout society. In keeping with the requirements of the times, consideration should also be given to teaching the concept of world citizenship as part of the standard education of every child.

A fundamental lack of communication between peoples seriously undermines efforts towards world peace. Adopting an international auxiliary language would go far to resolving this problem and necessitates the most urgent attention.

Two points bear emphasizing in all these issues. One is that the abolition of war is not simply a matter of signing treaties and protocols; it is a complex task requiring a new level of commitment to resolving issues not customarily associated with the pursuit of peace. Based on political agreements alone, the idea of collective security is a chimera. The other point is that the primary challenge in dealing with issues of peace is to raise the context to the level of principle, as distinct from pure pragmatism. For, in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a spiritual or moral attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of enduring solutions can be found.

There are spiritual principles, or what some call human values, by which solutions can be found for every social problem. Any well-intentioned group can in a general sense devise practical solutions to its problems, but good intentions and practical knowledge are usually not enough. The essential merit of spiritual principle is that it not only presents a perspective which harmonizes with that which is immanent in human nature, it also induces an

attitude, a dynamic, a will, an aspiration, which facilitate the discovery and implementation of practical measures. Leaders of governments and all in authority would be well served in their efforts to solve problems if they would first seek to identify the principles involved and then be guided by them.[56]

Reflections (2.10)

It is not unreasonable to assume that the establishment of peace in the world will entail several stages. The initial stages will involve agreements among governments to avoid war and resolve problems peacefully. The role of a world organization such as the United Nations, no matter how imperfect, will naturally take on greater and greater importance. Later stages of peace will have to address the need for a world police and finally a world government. But all of this does not imply peace in the most profound sense. Enduring peace will be the fruit of the process of maturation of the human race, in which the above developments are important steps. Of this lasting peace it can be said that it will not be attained unless and until the unity of humankind is firmly established. In the light of the passages you read above, discuss among yourselves why this is so and in what way unity is the prerequisite of peace.

Reflections (2.11)

You may find it interesting to choose an article in the press describing one of the many conflicts that exist today among the nations of the world and to compare the ideas it promotes with your expressed beliefs about peace.

This brings to an end our discussion of certain issues related to the principle of the oneness of humankind. As mentioned in the introduction to this unit, the unification of the human race and the firm establishment of principles of justice are closely connected. We should, therefore, turn now to an examination of our conception of justice as a fundamental element of the framework we are trying to elaborate.

3

The second set of beliefs that we must make explicit in order to advance towards a conceptual framework that is to govern our efforts to contribute to the advancement of civilization has to do with justice. We begin our exploration of this theme by quoting another passage from *The Prosperity of Humankind:*

> Justice is the one power that can translate the dawning consciousness of humanity's oneness into a collective will through which the necessary structures of global community life can be confidently erected. An age that sees the people of the world increasingly gaining access to information of every kind and to a diversity of ideas will find justice asserting itself as the ruling principle of successful social organization. With ever-greater frequency, proposals aiming at the development of the planet will have to submit to the candid light of the standards it requires.
>
> At the individual level, justice is that faculty of the human soul that enables each person to distinguish truth from falsehood. In the sight of God, Bahá'u'lláh avers, justice is "the best beloved of all things" since it permits each individual to see with his own eyes rather than the eyes of others, to know through his own knowledge rather than the knowledge of his neighbor or his group. It calls for fair-mindedness in one's judgments, for equity in one's treatment of others, and is thus a constant if demanding companion in the daily occasions of life.
>
> At the group level, a concern for justice is the indispensable compass in collective decision making, because it is the only means by which unity of thought and action can be achieved. Far from encouraging the punitive spirit that has often masqueraded under its name in past ages, justice is the practical expression of awareness that, in the achievement of human progress, the interests of the individual and those of society are inextricably linked. To the extent that justice becomes a guiding concern of human interaction, a consultative climate is encouraged that permits options to be examined dispassionately and appropriate courses of action selected. In such a climate the perennial tendencies toward manipulation and partisanship are far less likely to deflect the decision-making process.
>
> The implications for social and economic development are profound. Concern for justice protects the task of defining progress from the temptation to sacrifice the well-being of the generality of humankind—and even of the planet itself—to the advantages which technological breakthroughs can make

> available to privileged minorities. In design and planning, it ensures that limited resources are not diverted to the pursuit of projects extraneous to a community's essential social or economic priorities. Above all, only development programs that are perceived as meeting their needs and as being just and equitable in objective can hope to engage the commitment of the masses of humanity, upon whom implementation depends. The relevant human qualities such as honesty, a willingness to work, and a spirit of cooperation are successfully harnessed to the accomplishment of enormously demanding collective goals when every member of society—indeed every component group within society—can trust that they are protected by standards and assured of benefits that apply equally to all.[1]

Reflections (3.1)

The above treatment of justice, although brief, reveals much about the way we approach this vital concept. It indicates that, for us, justice is not a mere construct of human society but has its roots in the qualities of the human soul. This implies that the principles of justice represent spiritual truths that already exist and must be discovered and understood; they are not something invented to ensure the survival of society. One of the results we expect from your study of this chapter is an appreciation of the difference between this and a purely secular view of justice. We hope, too, that you will gain a good understanding of the practical implications of each. It may be useful for you to begin by discussing among yourselves some of the implications your group is able to identify at this point.

Reflections (3.2)

If justice has its roots in the spiritual realm, then, as with all spiritual truths, we are to look for explanations about its nature and operation in religious text. The allusions to seeing with one's own eyes and hearing with one's own ears are references to the words of Bahá'u'lláh:

> O SON OF SPIRIT! The best beloved of all things in My sight is Justice; turn not away therefrom if thou desirest Me, and neglect it not that I may confide in thee. By its aid thou shalt see with thine own eyes and not through the eyes of others, and shalt know of thine own knowledge and not through the knowledge of thy neighbor. Ponder this in thy heart; how it behooveth thee to be. Verily justice is My gift to thee and the sign of My loving-kindness. Set it then before thine eyes.[2]

This passage refers primarily to the operation of justice at the level of the individual. At this level, justice clearly implies treating others with fairness. But fairness is more than a facet of behavior; it is a quality of the mind and the heart that enables one to discern truth, to distinguish truth from falsehood. This concept is so fundamental to the framework governing our action that it deserves close and continual attention by each one of you. For now, you may wish to address some of the following issues in your reflections as a group:

- Justice as a central quality in the investigation of reality
- Justice as the quality that protects us from blind imitation
- Justice as the destroyer of religious prejudice and intolerance
- The intimate connection between fair-mindedness in one's judgments and equity in one's treatment of others
- The role of justice in scientific inquiry

Reflections (3.3)

When we think of justice as an attribute of the soul, we must remember that spiritual qualities do not work in isolation but interact with each other. The individual who is just but has no compassion, who feels no love, and who is not adorned with patience will lack fundamental spiritual attributes. The passages below from the writings of various religions offer us insight into the qualities that define a just and fair-minded person. You may wish to meditate on their significance.

> Fearless, pure of heart, cultivating spiritual knowledge; charitable, self-controlled, performing sacrifice; studying the scriptures, austere and upright, non-violent, truthful, free from anger; renouncing all, tranquil, averse to fault-finding, compassionate towards all beings, free from covetousness, gentle, modest, steadfast; never fickle; ardent, patient, enduring, pure, and free from malice and pride—such are the virtues of one who is born for heaven.
>
> *Bhagavad Gita*

> Only by Love can men see me, and know me, and come to me.
>
> *Bhagavad Gita*

> Therefore dedicate thyself to thy work, with no thought as to its reward. For by working with no thought of reward, one attains to the Supreme.
>
> *Bhagavad Gita*

> I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.
>
> Thou shalt have no other gods before me.
>
> Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.
>
> Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me;
>
> And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.
>
> Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy.

Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work:

But the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates:

For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it.

Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

Thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery.

Thou shalt not steal.

Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's.

Deuteronomy

Let us embrace and propagate the good thoughts, good words and good deeds that have been done and that will be done here and elsewhere, that we may be in the number of the good.

Zend-Avesta

Lord of broad vision, disclose to me for support the safeguards of your rule, those which are the reward for good thinking. Reveal to me, by reason of my virtuous piety, those conceptions in harmony with truth.

Gathas

"May the Wise Lord, who rules at will, grant wishes to him, to the person whosoever has wishes." I therefore wish enduring strength to come, in order to uphold the truth. By reason of my piety, grant this to me: the rewards of wealth and a life of good thinking.

Moreover, I wish for this person the best of all things, that by which a man might place a person of good purpose in happiness: to be understanding all his days, with the joy of long life, understanding through Thy most virtuous spirit, Wise One, by reason of which Thou didst create the wondrous powers of good thinking allied with truth.

Gathas

The man of faith is revered wherever he goes:
he has virtue and fame, he prospers.

Good men shine, even from a distance,
like the Himalaya mountains,
but the wicked, like arrows shot in the night, fade away.

Dhammapada

Victory breeds hate; the defeated will grieve.
Who goes beyond victory and defeat is happy.

No fire like passion,
no sickness like hate,
no grief like the ego's
and no joy like peace.

No disease like greed,
no sorrow like desire.
He who knows this
is fit for Nirvana.

No gift like health
no wealth like calm of mind,
no faith like trust,
no peace like Nirvana.

Dhammapada

We are what we think,
having become what we thought,
Like the wheel that follows the cart-pulling ox,
Sorrow follows an evil thought.

And joy follows a pure thought,
like a shadow faithfully tailing a man.
We are what we think,
having become what we thought. . . .

There is only one eternal law:
Hate never destroys hate; only love does.

Dhammapada

Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.

Rejoice, and be exceedingly glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.

Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Matthew

God is the light of the Heavens and of the Earth. His Light is like a niche in which is a lamp—the lamp encased in glass—the glass, as it were, a glistening star. From a blessed tree it is lighted, the olive neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil would well nigh shine out, even though fire touched it not! It is light upon light. God guideth whom He will to His light, and God setteth forth parables to men, for God knoweth all things.

In the temples which God hath allowed to be reared, that His name may therein be remembered, do men praise Him morn and even.

Men whom neither merchandise nor traffic beguile from the remembrance of God, and from the observance of prayer, and the payment of the stated alms, through fear of the day when hearts shall throb and eyes shall roll:

That for their most excellent works may God recompense them, and of His bounty increase it to them more and more: for God maketh provision for whom He pleaseth without measure.

But as to the infidels, their works are like the vapour in a plain which the thirsty dreameth to be water, until when he cometh unto it, he findeth it not aught, but findeth that God is with him; and He fully payeth him his account: for swift to take account is God:

Or like the darkness on the deep sea when covered by billows riding upon billows, above which are clouds: darkness upon darkness. When a man reacheth forth his hand, he cannot nearly see it! He to whom God shall not give light, no light at all hath he!

Qur'án

Be generous in prosperity, and thankful in adversity. Be worthy of the trust of thy neighbor, and look upon him with a bright and friendly face. Be a treasure to the poor, an admonisher to the rich, an answerer of the cry of the needy, a preserver of the sanctity of thy pledge. Be fair in thy judgment, and guarded in thy speech. Be unjust to no man, and show all meekness to all men. Be as a lamp unto them that walk in darkness, a joy to the sorrowful, a sea for the thirsty, a haven for the distressed, an upholder and defender of the victim of oppression. Let integrity and uprightness distinguish all thine acts. Be a home for the stranger, a balm to the suffering, a tower of strength for the fugitive. Be eyes to the blind, and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring. Be an ornament to the countenance of truth, a crown to the brow of fidelity, a pillar of the temple of righteousness, a breath of life to the body of mankind, an ensign of the hosts of justice, a luminary above the horizon of virtue, a dew to the soil of the human heart, an ark on the ocean of knowledge, a sun in the heaven of bounty, a gem on the diadem of wisdom, a shining light in the firmament of thy generation, a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Bahá'í Text

Reflections (3.4)

The passage from *The Prosperity of Humankind* also underscores the centrality of justice to group decision making and action. The statements contained in the two short paragraphs on this theme are not simple, and their implications need to be explored with care. It will

become increasingly clear to you as we advance in this unit that the kind of decision making with which we are concerned is one that leads to unity of thought and action. That reaching unity should be a fundamental value for us is, of course, apparent from our discussion of the principle of oneness in the previous chapter. What deserves your reflection now as a group is the relationship that exists between unity and justice.

Why is justice so essential in a decision-making process that seeks to build unity rather than to impose, through contentious negotiation, a set of ideas held by one group on others? In answering this question, try to explain the connection between justice and the dispassionate examination of options and to determine how justice can curb tendencies towards manipulation and partisanship. You will no doubt find it necessary to explore these issues with the aid of concrete examples.

Reflections (3.5)

The passage suggests that concern for justice prevents those who define goals for social and economic development from sacrificing the well-being of the generality of humankind to a vision of technological advance experienced only by the privileged few. Implicit in this statement is the claim that those who are making decisions crucial to the well-being of the great masses of humanity do so according to a vision defined by their own technologically privileged positions. This is certainly a claim that you need to examine with fair-mindedness. Questions such as these may help you in your deliberations:

- Who sets the priorities of social and economic programs for governments?
- Who sets these priorities for organizations of civil society?
- Do most so-called development policies reflect the needs of the generality of humankind, or do they emerge from the experiences of the privileged few?
- Is the vision of technological advance experienced by the privileged few the correct one for the progress of humankind?
- What are the causes of the paucity of resources dedicated to the alleviation of poverty?
- Is the present widespread neglect of justice in social and economic policy deliberate?

Having answered these and other related questions, you may wish to discuss how, by clinging to justice, efforts to transform society will elicit the commitment of the masses of humanity, upon whose participation the success of these efforts depends.

To regard justice, along with oneness, essential to religious discourse—a question to be pondered upon in the depths of our souls—does not deny the necessity of an ongoing exploration of the subject in moral philosophy, in law, in the many fields of the social sciences, and in the conversation of everyday life. Specifically, the principles of justice must govern the way the structure of society is erected and the processes of social and economic life of humanity are organized. In our endeavors to transform society, and in the reflection

that accompanies these efforts, justice is an ever-present theme that is to be explored at increasingly more profound levels. But how do we make sure that our growing understanding of social justice is consistent with the entirety of our evolving conceptual framework?

The question is not a trivial one. To answer it satisfactorily, we need to ensure that we develop fully the ability to read and examine what other people say on a given subject with fairness, and then reach proper conclusions. In this respect, there are two extreme positions, both preposterous and to be completely avoided. The first is to accept everything one reads—to be an easy prey to the eloquence and the elaborate argumentation of those who know more than one does in a given field. The second is to criticize pointlessly and reject everything that contradicts one's own narrowly defined set of beliefs. Neither of these extremes is in accordance with the principles of justice as discussed here.

To help you each develop further your ability to refine your own conceptual framework by examining the arguments of brilliant thinkers—this irrespective of whether you agree with all of their premises or not—we will present to you some of the ideas set forth by John Rawls, a moral philosopher well known for his writings on justice. Our purpose in taking you through these arguments is threefold. First, we wish you to see how subtle and profound the discussion of justice can be and how much there is to learn from theories such as the one elaborated by this author. Second, we expect you to discover how numerous truths are lost when one insists on keeping references to God and Revelation out of the discussion of justice. And third, we hope that reflections on Rawls' ideas will help you learn how to avoid the two extremes we have just mentioned in relation to one's exposure to the ideas of great social thinkers.

In his outstanding work *A Theory of Justice,* Rawls treats the subject of social justice, which he characterizes as the first virtue of social institutions:

> Justice is the first virtue of social institutions, as truth is of systems of thought. A theory however elegant and economical must be rejected or revised if it is untrue; likewise laws and institutions no matter how efficient and well-arranged must be reformed or abolished if they are unjust. Each person possesses an inviolability founded on justice that even the welfare of society as a whole cannot override. For this reason justice denies that the loss of freedom for some is made right by a greater good shared by others. It does not allow that the sacrifices imposed on a few are outweighed by the larger sum of advantages enjoyed by many. Therefore in a just society the liberties of equal citizenship are taken as settled; the rights secured by justice are not subject to political bargaining or to the calculus of social interests. The only thing that permits us to acquiesce in an erroneous theory is the lack of a better one; analogously, an injustice is tolerable only when it is necessary to avoid an even greater injustice. Being first virtues of human activities, truth and justice are uncompromising.[3]

Reflections (3.6)

That truth is the first virtue of systems of thought and justice the first virtue of social institutions is a proposition which deserves a good deal of reflection, particularly if we accept that an essential attribute of a "first virtue" is to be uncompromising. "What is truth" and "what is justice" are still open questions at this point. What we assume none of you will find difficult to endorse is that, being a first virtue, justice would not allow the rights and

responsibilities of some to be sacrificed in order to bring greater good to others—of course, once the validity of these rights and responsibilities has been established for all. Adherence to such a premise condemns more than a few social and economic policies at work in the world today. You have examined some of the ideas relevant to this issue in your earlier reflections, but it would be worthwhile to take a closer look at the subject. Among the most infamous of all economic policies, appearing time and again even though their falsehood has been irrefutably demonstrated, are those that in pursuit of a growing gross national product explicitly induce poverty and bring misery to countless groups already living under precarious conditions. If you try hard, you will probably be able to identify among yourselves dozens of such policies in many areas of human endeavor. The exercise may prove useful to you in your effort to understand issues related to social justice.

Rawls continues:

> I shall begin by considering the role of the principles of justice. Let us assume, to fix ideas, that a society is a more or less self-sufficient association of persons who in their relations to one another recognize certain rules of conduct as binding and who for the most part act in accordance with them. Suppose further that these rules specify a system of cooperation designed to advance the good of those taking part in it. Then, although a society is a cooperative venture for mutual advantage, it is typically marked by a conflict as well as by an identity of interests. There is an identity of interests since social cooperation makes possible a better life for all than any would have if each were to live solely by his own efforts. There is a conflict of interests since persons are not indifferent as to how the greater benefits produced by their collaboration are distributed, for in order to pursue their ends they each prefer a larger to a lesser share. A set of principles is required for choosing among the various social arrangements which determine this division of advantages and for underwriting an agreement on the proper distributive shares. These principles are the principles of social justice: they provide a way of assigning rights and duties in the basic institutions of society and they define the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social cooperation.
>
> Now let us say that a society is well-ordered when it is not only designed to advance the good of its members but when it is also effectively regulated by a public conception of justice. That is, it is a society in which (1) everyone accepts and knows that the others accept the same principles of justice, and (2) the basic social institutions generally satisfy and are generally known to satisfy these principles. In this case while men may put forth excessive demands on one another, they nevertheless acknowledge a common point of view from which their claims may be adjudicated. If men's inclination to self-interest makes their vigilance against one another necessary, their public sense of justice makes their secure association together possible. Among individuals with disparate aims and purposes a shared conception of justice establishes the bonds of civic friendship; the general desire for justice limits the pursuit of other ends. One may think of a public conception of justice as constituting the fundamental charter of a well-ordered human association.[4]

Reflections (3.7)

Rawls is looking at society as an association of individuals whose cooperation increases the well-being of all participants. Potentially—and in reality—there can be conflict among the interests of individuals as to how the fruits of this cooperation are distributed. The principles of justice provide a way of assigning "rights and duties to the basic institutions of society" and of defining the proper "distribution of the benefits and burden" of collaboration. For this to be the case, there has to be a shared conception of justice. Do you all agree that the principles of justice play the role Rawls assigns to them? If you do, are there other functions you can assign to principles of justice in a society? Think of a few such functions and add them to the two examples we have given below. It may be that the functions you have defined are actually performed through the "appropriate distribution of benefits and burdens". Do you agree? Or do other mechanisms have to come into play?

- Upholding human dignity
- Building unity
-
-
-
-
-

Now let us examine how Rawls defines the subject of his inquiry:

> Many different kinds of things are said to be just and unjust: not only laws, institutions, and social systems, but also particular actions of many kinds, including decisions, judgments, and imputations. We also call the attitudes and dispositions of persons, and persons themselves, just and unjust. Our topic, however, is that of social justice. For us the primary subject of justice is the basic structure of society, or more exactly, the way in which the major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. By major institutions I understand the political constitution and the principal economic and social arrangements. Thus the legal protection of freedom of thought and liberty of conscience, competitive markets, private property in the means of production, and the monogamous family are examples of major social institutions. Taken together as one scheme, the major institutions define men's rights and duties and influence their life prospects, what they can expect to be and how well they can hope to do. The basic structure is the primary subject of justice because its effects are so profound and present from the start. The intuitive notion here is that this structure contains various social positions and that men born into different positions have different expectations of life determined, in part, by the political system as well as by economic and social circumstances. In this way the institutions of society favor certain starting places over others. These are especially deep inequalities. Not only are they pervasive, but they affect men's

> initial chances in life; yet they cannot possibly be justified by an appeal to the notions of merit or desert. It is these inequalities, presumably inevitable in the basic structure of any society, to which the principles of social justice must in the first instance apply. These principles, then, regulate the choice of a political constitution and the main elements of the economic and social system. The justice of a social scheme depends essentially on how fundamental rights and duties are assigned and on the economic opportunities and social conditions in the various sectors of society.[5]

The same ideas are explained further in the following passage:

> The primary subject of the principles of social justice is the basic structure of society, the arrangement of major social institutions into one scheme of cooperation. We have seen that these principles are to govern the assignment of rights and duties in these institutions and they are to determine the appropriate distribution of the benefits and burdens of social life. The principles of justice for institutions must not be confused with the principles which apply to individuals and their actions in particular circumstances. These two kinds of principles apply to different subjects and must be discussed separately.
>
> Now by an institution I shall understand a public system of rules which defines offices and positions with their rights and duties, powers and immunities, and the like. These rules specify certain forms of action as permissible, others as forbidden; and they provide for certain penalties and defenses, and so on, when violations occur. As examples of institutions, or more generally social practices, we may think of games and rituals, trials and parliaments, markets and systems of property. . . .
>
> In saying that an institution, and therefore the basic structure of society, is a public system of rules, I mean then that everyone engaged in it knows what he would know if these rules and his participation in the activity they define were the result of an agreement. A person taking part in an institution knows what the rules demand of him and of the others. He also knows that the others know this and that they know that he knows this, and so on. To be sure, this condition is not always fulfilled in the case of actual institutions, but it is a reasonable simplifying assumption. The principles of justice are to apply to social arrangements understood to be public in this sense. . . .[6]

Reflections (3.8)

An understanding of such phrases as "the structure of society" and "social institutions" is essential to the examination of Rawls' ideas, indeed to any exploration of social justice. We suggest, then, that you discuss among yourselves your understanding of these two terms. Do they in fact refer to the same concept? You may wish to apply the definition provided by Rawls to come up with a more extensive list of institutions than the ones mentioned by him as examples.

Reflections (3.9)

Rawls is too profound a thinker to mistake justice for equality. In fact, one of his demands on the principles of justice is that they apply to certain "deep inequalities" which are "presumably inevitable in the basic structure of any society". There is so much confusion about the notions of justice and equality in human discourse that we recommend that you pause here and discuss the relation between the two. In doing so, you need to carefully separate the two concepts without losing sight of certain fundamental links that connect them. Such an exercise will prepare you to examine Rawls' clever way of establishing these links.

The principles of justice as conceived by Rawls are the content of a social contract created in an "original position of equality".[7] This original position is not an actual historical circumstance but a hypothetical situation in which a given conception of justice is agreed upon:

> My aim is to present a conception of justice which generalizes and carries to a higher level of abstraction the familiar theory of the social contract as found, say, in Locke, Rousseau, and Kant. In order to do this we are not to think of the original contract as one to enter a particular society or to set up a particular form of government. Rather, the guiding idea is that the principles of justice for the basic structure of society are the object of the original agreement. They are the principles that free and rational persons concerned to further their own interests would accept in an initial position of equality as defining the fundamental terms of their association. These principles are to regulate all further agreements; they specify the kinds of social cooperation that can be entered into and the forms of government that can be established. This way of regarding the principles of justice I shall call justice as fairness.
>
> Thus we are to imagine that those who engage in social cooperation choose together, in one joint act, the principles which are to assign basic rights and duties and to determine the division of social benefits. Men are to decide in advance how they are to regulate their claims against one another and what is to be the foundation charter of their society. Just as each person must decide by rational reflection what constitutes his good, that is, the system of ends which it is rational for him to pursue, so a group of persons must decide once and for all what is to count among them as just and unjust. The choice which rational men would make in this hypothetical situation of equal liberty, assuming for the present that this choice problem has a solution, determines the principles of justice.
>
> In justice as fairness the original position of equality corresponds to the state of nature in the traditional theory of the social contract. This original position is not, of course, thought of as an actual historical state of affairs, much less as a primitive condition of culture. It is understood as a purely hypothetical situation characterized so as to lead to a certain conception of justice. Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are

chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain. For given the circumstances of the original position, the symmetry of everyone's relations to each other, this initial situation is fair between individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings with their own ends and capable, I shall assume, of a sense of justice. The original position is, one might say, the appropriate initial status quo, and thus the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This explains the propriety of the name "justice as fairness": it conveys the idea that the principles of justice are agreed to in an initial situation that is fair. The name does not mean that the concepts of justice and fairness are the same, any more than the phrase "poetry as metaphor" means that the concepts of poetry and metaphor are the same.

Justice as fairness begins, as I have said, with one of the most general of all choices which persons might make together, namely, with the choice of the first principles of a conception of justice which is to regulate all subsequent criticism and reform of institutions. Then, having chosen a conception of justice, we can suppose that they are to choose a constitution and a legislature to enact laws, and so on, all in accordance with the principles of justice initially agreed upon. . . . No society can, of course, be a scheme of cooperation which men enter voluntarily in a literal sense; each person finds himself placed at birth in some particular position in some particular society, and the nature of this position materially affects his life prospects. Yet a society satisfying the principles of justice as fairness comes as close as a society can to being a voluntary scheme, for it meets the principles which free and equal persons would assent to under circumstances that are fair. In this sense its members are autonomous and the obligations they recognize self-imposed.

One feature of justice as fairness is to think of the parties in the initial situation as rational and mutually disinterested. This does not mean that the parties are egoists, that is, individuals with only certain kinds of interests, say in wealth, prestige, and domination. But they are conceived as not taking an interest in one another's interests. They are to presume that even their spiritual aims may be opposed, in the way that the aims of those of different religions may be opposed. Moreover, the concept of rationality must be interpreted as far as possible in the narrow sense, standard in economic theory, of taking the most effective means to given ends. I shall modify this concept to some extent . . . , but one must try to avoid introducing into it any controversial ethical elements. The initial situation must be characterized by stipulations that are widely accepted.

In working out the conception of justice as fairness one main task clearly is to determine which principles of justice would be chosen in the original position. To do this we must describe this situation in some detail and formulate with care the problem of choice which it presents. . . .[8]

Reflections (3.10)

The people gathered behind Rawls' curtain of ignorance do not need to agree on any set of ideals and may only be concerned with getting for themselves the greatest share of the fruits of cooperation. What forces them to be fair, however, is that they do not know their

own condition in society and therefore have to establish rules that would not affect them adversely if they were born into a vulnerable position. There is no doubt that such a curtain of ignorance is an ingenious and subtle device. To examine its subtleties, you may ask yourselves how the belief system of each participant in this initial deliberation would affect the principles of justice they will agree on. For example, consider a group of people for whom the natural state of existence is one of war. True joy comes from fighting with vigor; victory and defeat are of secondary importance. Further, there is no need for ethics in war. Deceit is deemed to be a most effective weapon and concern with truth a terrible weakness. Can such a group actually build a society and will the principles of justice formulated by it be acceptable to Rawls?

Having defined an initial position—not real but imaginable—Rawls is in need of some way of thinking that will allow the necessary comparison between alternative formulations of principles of justice and that will lead to a final judgment as to which is to be adopted. The central concept around which he defines this way of thinking is "rationality".

> I have said that the original position is the appropriate initial status quo which insures that the fundamental agreements reached in it are fair. This fact yields the name "justice as fairness." It is clear, then, that I want to say that one conception of justice is more reasonable than another, or justifiable with respect to it, if rational persons in the initial situation would choose its principles over those of the other for the role of justice. Conceptions of justice are to be ranked by their acceptability to persons so circumstanced. Understood in this way the question of justification is settled by working out a problem of deliberation: we have to ascertain which principles it would be rational to adopt given the contractual situation. This connects the theory of justice with the theory of rational choice. . . .
>
> . . . The idea here is simply to make vivid to ourselves the restrictions that it seems reasonable to impose on arguments for principles of justice, and therefore on these principles themselves. Thus it seems reasonable and generally acceptable that no one should be advantaged or disadvantaged by natural fortune or social circumstances in the choice of principles. It also seems widely agreed that it should be impossible to tailor principles to the circumstances of one's own case. We should insure further that particular inclinations and aspirations, and persons' conceptions of their good do not affect the principles adopted. The aim is to rule out those principles that it would be rational to propose for acceptance, however little the chance of success only if one knew certain things that are irrelevant from the standpoint of justice. For example, if a man knew that he was wealthy, he might find it rational to advance the principle that various taxes for welfare measures be counted unjust; if he knew that he was poor, he would most likely propose the contrary principle. To represent the desired restrictions one imagines a situation in which everyone is deprived of this sort of information. One excludes the knowledge of those contingencies which sets men at odds and allows them to be guided by their prejudices. In this manner the veil of ignorance is arrived at in a natural way. This concept should cause no difficulty if we keep in mind the constraints on arguments that it is meant to express. At any time we can enter the original position, so to speak, simply by following a certain procedure, namely, by arguing for principles of justice in accordance with these restrictions.

> It seems reasonable to suppose that the parties in the original position are equal. That is, all have the same rights in the procedure for choosing principles; each can make proposals, submit reasons for their acceptance, and so on. Obviously the purpose of these conditions is to represent equality between human beings as moral persons, as creatures having a conception of their good and capable of a sense of justice. The basis of equality is taken to be similarity in these two respects. Systems of ends are not ranked in value; and each man is presumed to have the requisite ability to understand and to act upon whatever principles are adopted. Together with the veil of ignorance, these conditions define the principles of justice as those which rational persons concerned to advance their interests would consent to as equals when none are known to be advantaged or disadvantaged by social and natural contingencies.
>
> There is, however, another side to justifying a particular description of the original position. This is to see if the principles which would be chosen match our considered convictions of justice or extend them in an acceptable way. We can note whether applying these principles would lead us to make the same judgments about the basic structure of society which we now make intuitively and in which we have the greatest confidence; or whether, in cases where our present judgments are in doubt and given with hesitation, these principles offer a resolution which we can affirm on reflection. There are questions which we feel sure must be answered in a certain way. For example, we are confident that religious intolerance and racial discrimination are unjust. We think that we have examined these things with care and have reached what we believe is an impartial judgment not likely to be distorted by an excessive attention to our own interests. These convictions are provisional fixed points which we presume any conception of justice must fit. But we have much less assurance as to what is the correct distribution of wealth and authority. Here we may be looking for a way to remove our doubts. We can check an interpretation of the initial situation, then, by the capacity of its principles to accommodate our firmest convictions and to provide guidance where guidance is needed.[9]

Here is, then, an elaborate and ingenious scheme to determine which set of principles of justice is to be preferred to another. The scheme is based on an implicit faith in the power of rationality. If certain conditions are fulfilled, human beings will make decisions that are rational, in this case, decisions about the principles of justice that must govern the society in which they live. In order to find out what these principles are, one would need to define certain conditions of equality and then ask oneself how people would think under such circumstances. In real societies, of course, people never find themselves in a condition of equality. Yet it is possible to ask how they would think if they did. Which principles of justice would they choose—or at least place in some order of desirability—if they did not know how these would affect them because their own real situation would be hidden behind a veil of ignorance. The success of the scheme, of course, hinges on the assumption that there is a way of thinking we all accept as "rational" that enables us to figure out what these choices will be.

Before entering into a series of reflections on the above explanation of rationality and its role in defining the principles of justice, let us examine briefly how Rawls begins his formulation of these principles:

> I shall now state in a provisional form the two principles of justice that I believe would be agreed to in the original position. The first formulation of these principles is tentative. As we go on I shall consider several formulations

and approximate step by step the final statement to be given much later. I believe that doing this allows the exposition to proceed in a natural way.

The first statement of the two principles reads as follows.

> First: each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive scheme of equal basic liberties compatible with a similar scheme of liberties for others.
>
> Second: social and economic inequalities are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all. . . .

These principles primarily apply, as I have said, to the basic structure of society and govern the assignment of rights and duties and regulate the distribution of social and economic advantages. Their formulation presupposes that, for the purposes of a theory of justice, the social structure may be viewed as having two more or less distinct parts, the first principle applying to the one, the second principle to the other. Thus we distinguish between the aspects of the social system that define and secure the equal basic liberties and the aspects that specify and establish social and economic inequalities. Now it is essential to observe that the basic liberties are given by a list of such liberties. Important among these are political liberty (the right to vote and to hold public office) and freedom of speech and assembly; liberty of conscience and freedom of thought; freedom of the person, which includes freedom from psychological oppression and physical assault and dismemberment (integrity of the person); the right to hold personal property and freedom from arbitrary arrest and seizure as defined by the concept of the rule of law. These liberties are to be equal by the first principle.

The second principle applies, in the first approximation, to the distribution of income and wealth and to the design of organizations that make use of differences in authority and responsibility. While the distribution of wealth and income need not be equal, it must be to everyone's advantage, and at the same time, positions of authority and responsibility must be accessible to all. One applies the second principle by holding positions open, and then, subject to this constraint, arranges social and economic inequalities so that everyone benefits.

These principles are to be arranged in a serial order with the first principle prior to the second. This ordering means that infringements of the basic equal liberties protected by the first principle cannot be justified, or compensated for, by greater social and economic advantages. . . . [T]he distribution of wealth and income, and positions of authority and responsibility, are to be consistent with both the basic liberties and equality of opportunity.

The two principles are rather specific in their content, and their acceptance rests on certain assumptions that I must eventually try to explain and justify. For the present, it should be observed that these principles are a special case of a more general conception of justice that can be expressed as follows.

> All social values—liberty and opportunity, income and wealth, and the social bases of self-respect—are to be distributed equally unless an unequal distribution of any, or all, of these values is to everyone's advantage.

Injustice, then, is simply inequalities that are not to the benefit of all. Of course, this conception is extremely vague and requires interpretation.[10]

From this beginning, Rawls goes on to discuss in detail the many implications of every aspect of the principles he has enunciated, progressively modifies them, and with admirable

care elaborates an impressive theory of justice. We, however, will end here our presentation of his arguments and recommend that sometime in your future deliberations you try to familiarize yourselves further with his treatment of the subject. What we ask you to do now is to analyze together your impressions of this brief introduction to Rawls' ideas. The question before you is not whether Rawls is correct in his arguments. Nor are you being asked to decide whether you agree with him or not. Questions of this kind would trivialize both his theory and the framework you are endeavoring to construct. Your analysis should result in your gaining insights into the subject of justice so that certain aspects of your framework become more substantive.

Reflections (3.11)

Consider Rawls' statement about the initial position of equality:

> Among the essential features of this situation is that no one knows his place in society, his class position or social status, nor does any one know his fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, his intelligence, strength, and the like. I shall even assume that the parties do not know their conceptions of the good or their special psychological propensities. The principles of justice are chosen behind a veil of ignorance. This ensures that no one is advantaged or disadvantaged in the choice of principles by the outcome of natural chance or the contingency of social circumstances. Since all are similarly situated and no one is able to design principles to favor his particular condition, the principles of justice are the result of a fair agreement or bargain. For given the circumstances of the original position, the symmetry of everyone's relations to each other, this initial situation is fair between individuals as moral persons, that is, as rational beings with their own ends and capable, I shall assume, of a sense of justice.[11]

You will have to agree, of course, that the task of choosing a set of principles of justice that will rule social institutions calls for a high degree of detachment on the part of those involved. But could it be that Rawls, in his attempt to ensure such a condition, ends up hiding too many things behind the "veil of ignorance"? In order to answer this question you will need to explore several sets of related issues.

The first set has to do with the "rationality" on which Rawls depends so heavily. What is the nature of this rationality that is now to dictate the choices the people will make? Is it innate or is it learned? If it is innate, then one has to enter into metaphysical explorations that most rationalists try to avoid. If learned, then will not the rationality of the participants of the contract have been shaped—at least partially—by the advantages and disadvantages of real life?

The second set of questions is in fact metaphysical. From where does the sense of justice on which Rawls' arguments depend come? Is the rationality of those illumined by divine teachings the same as the rationality of those whose worldview is fundamentally materialistic?

The third set of issues has to do with the comprehensiveness of Rawls' approach to choosing between competing conceptions of justice—an approach that is unquestionably valuable. Does this approach sufficiently take into account the principle of the interconnectedness of all things, specifically of human beings, and the spiritual truth that the

purpose of justice is the appearance of unity? The following quotation may help you in your deliberations on this subject:

> The light of men is Justice. Quench it not with the contrary winds of oppression and tyranny. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity among men. The ocean of divine wisdom surgeth within this exalted word, while the books of the world cannot contain its inner significance.[12]

Reflections (3.12)

Now consider the following passage:

> The second attribute of perfection is justice and impartiality. This means to have no regard for one's personal benefits and selfish advantages, and to carry out the laws of God without the slightest concern for anything else. It means to see one's self as only one of the servants of God, the All-possessing, and except for aspiring to spiritual distinction, never attempting to be singled out from the others. It means to consider the welfare of the community as one's own. It means, in brief, to regard humanity as a single individual, and one's own self as a member of that corporeal form, and to know of a certainty that if pain or injury afflicts any members of that body, it must inevitably result in suffering for all the rest.[13]

Would two groups of people, both working behind some kind of "veil of ignorance" of one's initial position as required by Rawls, but one trying to apply the above guidance and the other approaching the task from the angle of personal interest, come up with the same set of principles of justice? What would the main differences be?

Our understanding of the principles of justice—one of the two sets of beliefs upon which we are to construct a framework for social action—is intimately connected with our conception of human rights and responsibilities. *The Prosperity of Humankind* deals with the subject in the following manner:

> At the heart of the discussion of a strategy of social and economic development, therefore, lies the issue of human rights. The shaping of such a strategy calls for the promotion of human rights to be freed from the grip of the false dichotomies that have for so long held it hostage. Concern that each human being should enjoy the freedom of thought and action conducive to his or her personal growth does not justify devotion to the cult of individualism that so deeply corrupts many areas of contemporary life. Nor does concern to ensure the welfare of society as a whole require a deification of the state as the supposed source of humanity's well-being. Far otherwise: the history of the present century shows all too clearly that such ideologies and the partisan agendas to which they give rise have been themselves the principal enemies of the interests they purport to serve. Only in a consultative framework made possible by the consciousness of the organic unity of humankind can all aspects of the concern for human rights find legitimate and creative expression.

Today, the agency on whom has devolved the task of creating this framework and of liberating the promotion of human rights from those who would exploit it is the system of international institutions born out of the tragedies of two ruinous world wars and the experience of worldwide economic breakdown. Significantly, the term "human rights" has come into general use only since the promulgation of the United Nations Charter in l945 and the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights three years later. In these history-making documents, formal recognition has been given to respect for social justice as a correlative of the establishment of world peace. The fact that the Declaration passed without a dissenting vote in the General Assembly conferred on it from the outset an authority that has grown steadily in the intervening years.

The activity most intimately linked to the consciousness that distinguishes human nature is the individual's exploration of reality for himself or herself. The freedom to investigate the purpose of existence and to develop the endowments of human nature that make it achievable requires protection. Human beings must be free to know. That such freedom is often abused and such abuse grossly encouraged by features of contemporary society does not detract in any degree from the validity of the impulse itself.

It is this distinguishing impulse of human consciousness that provides the moral imperative for the enunciation of many of the rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration and the related Covenants. Universal education, freedom of movement, access to information, and the opportunity to participate in political life are all aspects of its operation that require explicit guarantee by the international community. The same is true of freedom of thought and belief, including religious liberty, along with the right to hold opinions and express these opinions appropriately.

Since the body of humankind is one and indivisible, each member of the race is born into the world as a trust of the whole. This trusteeship constitutes the moral foundation of most of the other rights—principally economic and social—which the instruments of the United Nations are attempting similarly to define. The security of the family and the home, the ownership of property, and the right to privacy are all implied in such a trusteeship. The obligations on the part of the community extend to the provision of employment, mental and physical health care, social security, fair wages, rest and recreation, and a host of other reasonable expectations on the part of the individual members of society.

The principle of collective trusteeship creates also the right of every person to expect that those cultural conditions essential to his or her identity enjoy the protection of national and international law. Much like the role played by the gene pool in the biological life of humankind and its environment, the immense wealth of cultural diversity achieved over thousands of years is vital to the social and economic development of a human race experiencing its collective coming-of-age. It represents a heritage that must be permitted to bear its fruit in a global civilization. On the one hand, cultural expressions need to be protected from suffocation by the materialistic influences currently holding sway. On the other, cultures must be enabled to interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization, free of manipulation for partisan political ends.[14]

Reflections (3.13)

In the previous chapter, you examined four discourses in Western thought related to the evolving conception of the individual: anarchism, socialism, individuality and individualism. Can you say a few words about the way each of these social theories would approach the question of human rights? Which rights would they emphasize and how would they define them? Having done your best to describe the views of these four theories on human rights, identify the main differences between each one and the approach promoted by *The Prosperity of Humankind*.

Your reflections on the subject of human rights thus far must have convinced every one of you that your conception of each of these rights does, indeed, constitute an important element of your framework for social action. We have chosen excerpts from a 1996 essay by Matthew Weinberg to help you give shape to these indispensable elements.

> As humanity comes to terms with the reality of an interdependent world and new avenues of rational inquiry and perception, many of the entrenched social inequities of the past are, for the first time, being systematically and directly confronted. On the eve of the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the creation of an international community bound by legal and moral norms can no longer be regarded as a passing idealistic exercise. The Declaration's promulgation of basic civil, political, economic, social, and cultural rights for "all members of the human family" has firmly established "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and nations." The efflorescence of the human rights movement portends a fundamental reshaping of human relations and suggests that "human beings have a substantial capacity for moral understanding and progress." . . .
>
> The seeds of present human rights thinking can be traced back to the egalitarian philosophies of antiquity, but it is only in the past few centuries that a clear formulation of human rights has emerged. In recent decades this formulation has been further refined and delineated. The central tenets of modern human rights law can be summarized as follows:
>
> - Every human being has certain rights that are inherent. Such rights can be enumerated or deduced; they are not earned or acquired but inhere in all people by virtue of their humanity alone.
> - Every human being's basic rights are indefeasible or inalienable—that is, such rights can never be annulled or denied by outside parties or even by the affected individuals themselves.
> - Conflicts between different rights must be resolved in accordance with just and impartial laws and procedures.
>
> Although the idea of universal human rights is being increasingly accepted on practical grounds, from a theoretical point of view there is not a universally shared justification for such rights. The ratification of international instruments, while significant, does not establish that there is a universal concept of human rights. A review of the literature quickly reveals that the philosophical foundations of human rights remain highly contested. The major international human rights documents ratified by the nations of the world

during the past fifty years do not address underlying philosophical issues. These documents have in some sense bypassed the philosophical debate by simply establishing a set of positive legal norms.

Because human rights proponents are confronted with a variety of obstacles in their efforts to preserve individual freedoms, including claims of state sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and collective rights, to have a clear theoretical foundation for human rights would be extremely helpful in overcoming such obstacles and implementing concrete legal instruments. Moreover, as the theorist Michael Freeman observes, "rights without reasons are vulnerable to denial and abuse. The human rights struggle is certainly motivated by passion, but it is also influenced by argument." For the moment anyway, regardless of the diverse and sometimes inconsistent reasons put forward for upholding certain human rights, the international community has been able to sustain a consensus on some basic rights and the commitment to safeguard them.[15]

Reflections (3.14)

Consider two extreme cases. In one country an authoritarian government pursues the single goal of abolishing poverty by redistributing wealth forcefully and then establishing a state machinery that will bring about economic growth under conditions of equality—at least in words if not in deeds. In another country, a democratically elected government is vigorously promoting a laissez-faire system in which everything is left to the market ruled by competition free from any kind of restraint. As a group, make a list of the human rights that each system would tend to deny its citizens.

As to the sources of human rights:

In general, philosophers tend to identify the following sources for human rights: divine authority, natural law, or considerations concerning human nature. As can well be imagined, the possibility of an objective, transcendent Source for human rights is readily dismissed by secular theorists. None of the major international human rights documents refers to God, presumably because the existence of a supernatural authority is not subject to objective proof. But interestingly, natural law—the system of moral imperatives allegedly accessible by human reason alone and championed by Enlightenment thinkers—is also dismissed by many human rights theorists. The use of reason, and particularly the methods of deduction and induction, it is argued, cannot escape the influence of particular cultural codes. Thus, natural law is generally regarded as a "nebulous" source that cannot ground any particular set of human rights, let alone a universal ensemble of rights.

The last major justification for human rights [i.e. human nature] essentially relies on intuition—that is, it is demonstrably apparent that certain actions are wrong because of widespread anthropological evidence that human beings have an aversion to violations of well being. Considerations of prudence lead rational individuals to embrace standards and social arrangements that promote their autonomy, security, and dignity. As purposive or volitional agents, human beings are entitled to certain minimum levels of physical and psychological well being as well as freedom of action. Hence, Ronald Dworkin

> sets forth the principle that each person has the right to "equal concern and respect." This, however, is simply an axiom—albeit a compelling moral axiom—that cannot be logically derived, and therefore, critics contend, it is subject to change depending on social, historical, and cultural context. Equality and dignity, for example, are highly elastic concepts . . .[16]

Reflections (3.15)

You should all pause here so that each of you can reflect on your own views on the sources of human rights. Consider a few rights you believe to be inalienable and universal and answer the following:

- Why do you hold such a belief?
- How did you develop this conviction?
- What is its source?

It should be clear to every one of you, even from this brief discussion of its sources, that the eternal tension between the absolute and the relative is ever present in the discourse on human rights.

> The challenge that relativism presents to the human rights movement is not only theoretical, but political and practical. It has been nearly fifty years since the American Anthropological Association issued its now famous and emphatic rejection of "the applicability of any Declaration of Human Rights to mankind as a whole." However, the contention "that other people's truths are contained in their own classifications and understanding," and that no one culture offers a "self-evidently privileged standard of verity" is now undergoing serious revision. The anthropologist Alison Dundes Renteln, for example, asserts that "relativism in no way precludes the possibility of cross-cultural universals discovered through empirical research," and that the "requirement of relativism that diversity be recognized in no way destroys the possibility of an international moral community."
>
> Contemporary anthropological research is revisiting the evidence supporting moral universalism. Richard Beis has identified some twenty moral precepts that appear to be transcultural. These include "the prohibition of murder or maiming without justification; economic justice; reciprocity and restitution; provision for the poor; the right to own property; and priority for immaterial goods [such as freedom]." The essence of the story here is that when researchers want to look for differences they will find differences, and if they search for cross-cultural similarities these can also be readily discovered.
>
> Robert Edgerton in his work *Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony* has offered compelling evidence refuting the anthropological dogma that distinct cultural practices and beliefs represent an inviolable set of diverse truths and consequently are immune to outside criticism. His research demonstrates that entire societies can be sick—a reference to the systematic and unjust treatment of certain of its members such as women—and that such dysfunctional societies inevitably perish. More often than not, their social and

decision-making structures serve no other purpose than to institutionalize inequality and injustice. Thus, the mere fact that differences across cultures exist does not mean that all variations in social and cultural practices are right or acceptable. On these grounds, relativism itself has been critiqued as immoral.

The relativist position is now being subjected to a number of other criticisms. Perhaps most importantly, relativism itself has to look beyond itself for its philosophical justification. In particular, the very claim of a right to difference, whether cultural or moral, implicitly appeals to the idea of universal principle. Moral relativism can be an accurate description of social reality only if notions such as mutual tolerance and noninterference are universally accepted. On a more practical level, even proponents of relativism condemn the morally egregious—slavery, genocide, torture, human sacrifice, ritualistic mutilation, and various forms of collective discrimination. That the relativist challenge to human rights is ultimately not plausible is affirmed by the 1993 Vienna Declaration—a consensus statement adopted by 171 nations: "Human rights and fundamental freedoms are the birthright of all human beings; their protection and promotion is the first responsibility of Governments . . . regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems." "The universal nature of these rights and freedoms is beyond question . . ."

Despite this recognition, relativism is still employed as a political device. For example, in the Bangkok Declaration of 1993, a coalition of Asian governments declared that human rights instruments must take account of "the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds." On the surface, this is a reasonable appeal in favor of pluralism—that there cannot be a single understanding of human well being or only one code of moral truth in a diverse world. In reality, such statements are often intended to insulate governments from international criticism regarding the treatment of their citizens. There is no real justification to the contention that the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is in conflict with Asian value systems. As the Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has noted, the Buddhist concept of authority entails very specific obligations: "The Ten Duties of Kings are liberality, morality, self-sacrifice, integrity, kindness, austerity, non-anger, nonviolence, forbearance and non-opposition to the will of the people."

Although existing international human rights instruments have an unmistakable Western imprint—both in terms of origin and methodology of implementation—this does not in any way invalidate the moral content that they embody. Wole Soyinka, the Nigerian writer and Nobel laureate, has rejected the assertion that Western human rights standards are inapplicable to other parts of the world: "Any suggestion that freedom of expression is a luxury of the West insults the historic struggles of individuals and communities . . . We are all agreed what torture is. What rape means. What child prostitution is. What genocide entails. Then let us not pretend not to know what human rights truly represent."

Yet it is important to acknowledge, as the German scholar Heiner Bielefeldt has emphasized, that human rights cannot be considered "a self-evident expression of Occidental culture" or modernity alone. Comparable concepts of human respect, dignity, and duty can be found in all parts of the world. The right to resist oppression can be found in the traditions of many cultures in Africa and Asia. The widespread cultural pattern of offering hospitality to strangers is perhaps evidence of a broad moral imperative in

which outsiders are viewed as being equally human. Some societies may in fact possess the concept of rights without having an explicit vocabulary that expresses or codifies it. In addition, the principle of the golden rule is common to the scriptures of all the major world religions and hence is given expression in many cultures. The injunction of Buddha to "act in a such a way, as if it were happening to yourself" and the oral statement of Muhammad that "kindness is a mark of faith, whoever hath not kindness hath not faith" are clear ethical precursors of modern human rights thinking.

In short, human rights are not arbitrary in nature because they are grounded in the universal realities of human experience and embody values presupposed by a wide range of cultures. As the philosopher Martha Nussbaum observes, there are "features of humanness that lie beneath all local traditions and are there to be seen whether or not they are in fact recognized in local traditions." Such "humanness" includes a set of potentialities, not wholly determinable, that are actualized differently by every human being. The logical extension of this point is that all human beings are entitled to flourish, if not as a claim on God or nature, then as a claim on each other. This implies a universal obligation to promote collective well being and suggests that human morality itself must be universal. Human rights can then be regarded as a vehicle for shaping social conditions "so as to realize the possibilities of human nature."[17]

Reflections (3.16)

There is no doubt that, among those who object to the prevalent formulation of human rights and accuse it of being a Western invention, there are numerous opportunists who do not want their arbitrary power to be curbed. But there are also highly moral thinkers who are bothered by the discourse of human rights as promoted by the West. Since these individuals do not disagree with human rights per se, or indeed with the validity of any one of the rights enumerated in the universal list, it is reasonable to ask what it is that they find objectionable. Is it the ideology of individualism that is explicitly or implicitly incorporated by many into the discourse? Is it the hypocrisy of some of the proponents who use the argument to defend their own interests and to hide the oppression inherent in their policies and actions?

Weinberg goes on to discuss some of the human rights themselves:

The human rights discourse over the past five decades has produced a gradual elaboration and expansion of the initial list of rights enumerated in the 1948 Universal Declaration. The European jurist Karel Vasak has provided one framework for describing this process with his notion of "three generations of human rights."

The first generation pertains to civil and political rights—those rights as found in Articles 2–21 of the Universal Declaration that address questions of liberty: the right to life, freedom of thought, expression, conscience, religion, and movement; the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association; the security of person; freedom from slavery, torture, and cruel or degrading punishment; the right to own property; the right to full equality and fair

treatment before the law. These rights generally reflect the philosophical doctrines of liberal political theory which place primacy on the individual and seek to limit the powers of a minimalist state.

The second generation pertains to economic, social, and cultural rights—those rights concerned with issues of equality that are promulgated in Articles 22–27 of the Universal Declaration and more specifically in the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights of 1966: the right to social security; the right to work and to protection against unemployment; the right to rest and leisure; the right to a standard of living adequate for health and well-being of self and family; the right to education; the right to protection of one's scientific, literary, and artistic production. While some theorists consider such rights as inseparable from rights relating to basic freedoms, others do not regard economic, social, and cultural rights as fundamental because they demand positive duties on the part of governments rather than straightforward duties of restraint.

The third generation pertains to the area of collective or solidarity rights. This category of rights was adumbrated in general terms in Article 28 of the Universal Declaration which declared: "Everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights set forth in the Declaration can be fully realized." At present, third generation rights include the following: the right to political, economic, social, and cultural self-determination; the right to economic and social development; the right to participate in and benefit from the "common heritage of mankind"—for example, the resources of earth and space; and scientific, technical, and other products of human progress; the right to peace; the right to a vital and healthy environment; the right to humanitarian assistance in times of emergency. Such collective rights reflect the idea that political, economic, and social rights are indivisible and are each integral aspects of development. They also imply a need for new forms of international collaboration.

These "three generations" of rights represent the varying perspectives of Western and non-Western countries, of developed and developing societies, and of democratic and non-democratic regimes. They reflect underlying tensions between those who place primacy on the rights of the individual versus those of the community. In many respects, the task of understanding the foundations of human rights and of developing and applying human rights standards is just beginning.

In a very real sense the international human rights regime is the fruit of an ongoing process of moral dialogue among diverse nations and peoples. More than establishing normative standards, the human rights discourse provides a mechanism for people of divergent convictions to learn about each other, resolve particular disagreements, and arrive at new understandings of what is possible for human beings. This cross-cultural enterprise, as evidenced by the increasing interaction among governments and organizations of civil society, has gradually given rise to a new ethos of human solidarity and collective responsibility. It has led to the adoption of new legal instruments that explicitly address the rights of women, children, and racial and religious minorities. Yet, if this global dialogue is to produce a "compelling core of shared values" and a further refined set of universally accepted moral norms, the "cooperative search for truth," as the philosopher Jurgen Habermas calls it, must be intensified. The establishment of peaceful and progressive patterns of living throughout the world will inevitably depend upon an open and sincere consultative process among all peoples. . . .[18]

Reflections (3.17)

It is clear that the process by which the peoples of the world and their institutions will arrive at consensus on issues related to human rights is lengthy and complex. Weinberg mentions an ideal "open and sincere consultative process". From your exposure to the subject, you must have each gained a perception of the process as it occurs in the world of today. Together try to describe this perception and identify its main characteristics.

While accepting the need for an open and sincere consultative process among the peoples of the world on issues related to the basic rights of all the planet's inhabitants, we must be aware of the limitations of such a dialogue if it is carried out in the context of Western secular liberalism. Weinberg comments on this point:

> However important the human rights discourse has been to securing basic human freedoms, if that discourse is to remain relevant to a world experiencing unprecedented political, social, and economic turmoil, it must respond to the deep-seated spiritual inclinations that guide and inspire its inhabitants. The basic processes of civilization can be reordered to embrace justice only if the spiritual dimension of human existence is fully recognized. For the vast majority of humankind, the perception that human reality is fundamentally spiritual in nature is a self-evident truth that finds expression in all spheres of life. To the extent that this understanding of human identity becomes a central feature of the discourse concerning human rights and social development, the upheavals now deranging human affairs will give way to new vistas of freedom and opportunity.[19]

He then goes on to define some of the characteristics of a way of thinking about human rights that does take into account the spiritual dimension of human existence. Below, we give a summary of his observations:

- Commitment to justice is an essential and tangible expression of faith. In contrast to the secular liberal theory that gave rise to the present human rights regime, a more spiritual approach would ground human rights in what is regarded as the objective spiritual nature of the human person. "I knew My love for thee," is the Divine assurance, "therefore I created thee, have engraved on thee Mine image and revealed to thee My beauty."[20] A loving Creator exists Who is the Source of all that is. It is not simply that human beings have the capacity for rational choice, and therefore they deserve moral protection, but that they are spiritual beings who have the capacity to reflect Divine attributes such as love, creativity, and charity.
- "The source of human rights is the endowment of qualities, virtues and powers which God has bestowed upon mankind without discrimination of sex, race, creed or nation. To fulfill the possibilities of this divine endowment is the purpose of existence."[21] In short, human beings must be free in order to discover and know God: ". . . to ascend unto the station conferred upon their own inmost being, the station of the knowledge of their own selves."[22] This process of spiritual discovery and development is the essence of life itself. The innate and fundamental aspiration to investigate reality is thus not only the right but the obligation of every human being.

- The establishment of justice is contingent upon a fundamental reformulation of all human relationships—among individuals themselves, between human society and the natural world, between the individual and the community, and between individual citizens and their governing institutions. It implies a basic reconceptualization of social reality; a reality that in spirit and practice reflects the principle of the oneness of humankind. To accept that "the body of humankind is one and indivisible" is to recognize that every human being is "born into the world as a trust of the whole".[23]

- From this basic principle of the unity of the human family is derived virtually all other concepts concerning human rights and freedoms. If the human race is one, any notion that a particular racial or ethnic group is in some way superior to the rest of humanity must be dismissed; society must reorganize its life to give practical expression to the principle of equality between women and men; each and every person must be enabled to "look into all things with a searching eye"[24] so that truth can be independently ascertained; and all individuals must be given the opportunity to realize their inherent potential and thereby contribute to "an ever-advancing civilization".[25]

- Even some of the more challenging rights claims such as the right to development, shelter, food, employment, and basic health services are subsumed by the principle of the oneness of humanity. Every human being has the right to live and achieve a level of well being. No one can be allowed to live in excess while another has no possible means of existence. If liberty truly involves a genuine opportunity to determine a way of life, then the set of rights necessary to achieve that way of life cannot be restricted to civil or political rights alone. Social and economic imperatives cannot be segregated from basic civil and political protections. While affirming private property rights and the value of individual economic initiative, the institutions of society should also ensure the right to a dignified livelihood for all human beings.

- The imperative of preserving cultural diversity is also implied by the principle of "the oneness and wholeness of human relationships".[26] If a peaceful international order is to emerge, then the complex and infinitely varied cultural expressions of humankind must be allowed to develop and flourish, as well as to "interact with one another in ever-changing patterns of civilization".[27] That there must be a cross-cultural basis for human rights is self-evident. The very diversity of the human race is, in fact, a means for creating a world based on unity rather than uniformity. Ultimately, the recognition of the unity of the human race suggests that the principle of unrestricted state sovereignty must give way to a true global system of law and order.

- At the heart of contemporary liberal philosophy is the notion that personal prerogative defines the structure of society and that "as free and independent selves"[28] individuals are entitled to remain "unencumbered by moral or civic ties they have not chosen".[29] Consequently, the institutions of civil society are viewed as necessary only because the separate interests of individuals inevitably interfere with each other. Government and community are thus regarded as "procedural" imperatives that must be lived with. There is no moral bond with others unless individuals choose to concern themselves with the interests of the community. Furthermore, current conceptions of liberal thought essentially view rights as being prior to and often unconnected to duties. The rights of individuals are often seen as rights that provide immunity from communal interests. Even though Article 29.1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights specifies that "everyone has duties to the community in which alone the free and full development of his personality is possible",[30] the brevity and less than prominent location of this statement hardly does justice to the notion that rights must correlate with obligations.

- The first duty of the individual is the recognition of the Divine Authority that is the foundation of all law; the second is observance of that law. To exercise these twin duties "may be regarded as the highest expression of free will with which every human being is endowed by an all-loving Creator".[31] From this perspective, the right to exercise freedom of conscience in the matter of religious belief comes into being so that one can fulfill the spiritual duty of observing the commandments of God. In short, it is the requirement of individuals' being able to meet fundamental spiritual and moral obligations that gives rise to human rights.

- A balance must be struck between the latitudes of individual freedom and the promotion of the collective good. True liberty can only be achieved by following the path of moderation. It is by relinquishing a degree of personal liberty to a commonly accepted set of laws and collective interests that the individual helps shape a social milieu that returns far greater benefits in terms of personal freedom than any sacrifice required. Individual well-being is intimately tied to the flourishing of the whole. It is thus a reciprocated benevolence and selflessness, rather than utilitarian self-interest that must lie at the foundation of human rights.

- The creation of an "equilibrium of responsibilities"[32] among all members of society has been a long sought-after and elusive goal. The establishment of laws and institutions has one primary purpose, the promotion of human happiness—happiness that comes from drawing closer to the Threshold of Almighty God and from dedication to the peace and well-being of every individual member, high and low alike, of the human race. A meaning of justice, then, is to "have no regard for one's own personal benefits and selfish advantages," and to "consider the welfare of the community as one's own".[33]

- Justice is not a static legalistic end or an unapproachable ideal; it is an evolving capacity that individuals, communities, and institutions must continually seek to develop. The realization of justice is dependent upon universal participation and action among all members and agencies of society. In essence, creating a "universal culture of human rights"[34] is bound up with a process of moral and spiritual development. As a moral capacity, justice is a vehicle that bonds the individual to the common weal. The purpose of justice is the appearance of unity. Individual rights must then be interpreted in light of the law of universal fellowship. Only in unity can human rights be secured and the release of the human spirit achieved. Unity must be the guiding concept of humanity's attempts to construct an international community that truly embraces the principles of justice.

- Inherent to belief in a deep and inseparable connection between the spiritual and practical dimensions of human existence is the idea that human rights and freedoms are not only necessary but sacred. The assurance that every human being is indelibly imprinted with the image of God affords the ultimate respect that all persons seek. Each individual has a unique destiny as bestowed by God—a destiny which unfolds in accordance with the free exercise of the choices and opportunities presented in life. The protection of human freedoms is part of a larger spiritual enterprise of fostering a set of attitudes and practices that truly release human potential. Genuine social progress can only flow from spiritual awareness and the inculcation of virtue.

- Universal recognition of the dignity of every person, without reference to the spiritual provenance of that dignity, will not guarantee the protection of basic human freedoms. Without a transcendent basis for rights—a power that reaches to the heart of human consciousness and motivation—humanity will not be able to develop an integrating moral framework that will secure the advancement of all peoples. Human rights

founded on materialistic criteria alone, no matter how logically compelling, are ultimately limited in their power to transform—to fuse diverse and contending peoples into a universal community. Without such a universal identity there can be no basis for universal moral action.

Reflections (3.18)

It is not unreasonable to expect that, throughout these deliberations on the principles of justice and issues of human rights, you have been aware of one of the most devastating results of the workings of an oppressive world order: the existence of extremes of wealth and poverty. This is a subject that we will treat in much more detail in future units. Nevertheless, you may wish to analyze the problem together as a group in view of what we have said thus far in this chapter.

We will end this chapter with a discussion of the principle of the equality of women and men. This is a core element of our conceptual framework and, given its paramount importance, we deal with it more than once in various contexts in a number of units. The reason we have included an initial brief discussion of it here is the intimate relation it has with both the principle of the oneness of humanity and the requirements of justice.

The relationship between men and women and the status of women in society are subjects that are being discussed in numerous circles and about which there is a growing volume of literature. This is, from our point of view, a most welcome development in recent decades. But, given that all throughout history men have dominated women, we cannot expect the road to equality to be an easy one. Translating such a fundamental principle into reality implies so many changes in the individual and in the structure of society that we must all be prepared to show forth enormous perseverance. What is essential is that in the midst of inevitable difficulties and confusion, we do not forget the essence of our conviction: that men and women are indeed equal. This equality is a fundamental truth about human nature and not just a desired condition to be achieved for the good of society. It stems from the fact that the reality of the human being is his or her soul and that this soul has no sex. Neither man nor woman can claim superiority over the other. "Women and men have been and will always be equal in the sight of God,"[35] and it is, therefore, indispensable that the equality already existing in the spiritual realm be expressed in practice, at a time when humanity stands at the threshold of maturity.

The establishment of the equality of women and men in the mind of the individual and in social realm requires far more than the concession of certain rights and the opening of certain opportunities to women. It implies that men and women, free from prejudice and discrimination, should be able to work shoulder to shoulder for the construction of an ever-advancing civilization.

In order to achieve this new condition, we need to recognize at least two basic facts. First, we must accept that women have historically been at a disadvantage, deprived of many of their basic rights, and at the mercy of men. And second, we must admit that in spite of all the efforts aimed at the liberation of women and the establishment of their rights, the equality of men and women has not yet been satisfactorily established in any society. Our actions must be informed by the truth that the subordination of women and discrimination against them are most prevalent in our world.

Over the centuries, the subordination of women has given rise to ideological and social structures, the function of which is to maintain women in a position of inferiority. It is no exaggeration to state, then, that the situation faced by women is one of oppression. The most fundamental way we know to define oppression is the use of power to deny access of some group of human beings to knowledge. In the case of women, not only have they been deprived of knowledge about the external world, but also of self-knowledge which is the basis for everyone's reaffirmation as a human being.

Having taken away from women the right to know themselves and the great potentials with which they have been endowed, society has perpetuated attitudes that have turned into norms and customs. For centuries women have been, and today they continue to be, objects of masculine conceptions; their real nature and being has been lost among the desires, the experiences and the fantasies of men. To be continually exposed to images of oneself that do not correspond to reality causes one to become a stranger to oneself. Women have lived to please men and to turn their speculations into reality. It is sufficient to look at history to see that very few women have been recognized for their own deeds, their own achievements, their own being. Rather have they been remembered as the mothers, the wives, the daughters or the lovers of famous men.

Understanding oppression in terms of depriving human beings of the right to have unimpeded access to knowledge helps us explain how, in spite of notable advance in establishing women's rights, oppression continues. This is not a simplistic statement that divides the world between women as the oppressed and men as the oppressors. We are concerned with a condition that permeates society. Overcoming this condition of oppression implies changes in structure—mental, social, economic and political. The principle of the equality of men and women as an element of our conceptual framework, then, demands among other things the abandonment, the reform, and the creation of institutions of all kinds. And, of institutions we have already said that their validity is determined by the principles of justice.

Reflections (3.19)

We have mentioned that one type of knowledge, namely one's understanding of one's own nature, is of special importance in the struggle against oppression. Consider then the question of human identity in general. In this respect, both men and women are offered entirely false definitions and are bombarded by harmful images of what a human being actually is. How are these false definitions and images propagated? How are they transmitted from generation to generation?

One of the positive features of society today is widespread concern to generate theoretical and practical tools to challenge established relations of dominance. It is important for you to be aware that, in these endeavors, feminist thought and action have played, and will continue to play, a significant role. Many feminist thinkers recognize, for example, that oppression will remain in a society even if action is taken against discriminatory practices. They take "feminist praxis", then, beyond questions of law, norms, and regulations for the elimination of discrimination, to a profound examination of the fundamental elements of social theory and methodology in the context of the status of women. The quality of these explorations varies from one thinker to the next. But some of the discourse clearly indicates

that the challenge is not simply to open room for women in the present social order but to create a new one which embodies, among other things, the equality of women and men. We definitely identify ourselves with such a position. One of the reasons we insist on relating the status of women with the principles of justice is that we are not satisfied to see some women liberated from that form of oppression that is based on sex only to join the institutions of oppression operating in the context of class, race, nationality and political and economic power. The challenge for us is to bring about the kind of change, both in people and in social structure, that turns relationships of domination into relationships of collaboration, cooperation, and reciprocity. We hope that, in the process of achieving the equality of men and women, humanity will be able to eliminate oppression and create a society that embodies the principles of justice.

To replace prevalent attitudes of domination by those of cooperation is a natural consequence of the model we accepted as appropriate for the organization of society, a model that is inspired by the workings of the human body. Yet, it is a fact of life that domination constantly fed by competition continues to be the most common characteristic of relationships among human beings. In most relationships, there is a tendency for one person to be seen as *better*, *more*, and therefore *dominant* and the other as *worse*, *less*, and therefore *dominated.* Comparing people with each other, labeling them, and placing them in preconceived categories are unfortunately well-established habits of our minds. These habits interfere with the assiduous work that has to be done in order to establish the equality of women and men. Meeting such an enormous challenge requires not an environment of competition, of contention, of winning and losing, but an environment governed by the spirit of cooperation among all involved, both men and women.

Reflections (3.20)

The structure most affected by the relationship between men and women is the family. The vision one holds of an ideal family is, without question, an element of a conceptual framework for social action. Discuss in your group the profound changes that the unit of the family as a basic structure of society must undergo in order to reflect the principle of the equality of women and men.

Review

In the first chapter of this unit, we gave a brief explanation of how our efforts to contribute to the advancement of civilization need to be governed by an evolving conceptual framework within which we study, act, reflect on our actions and learn. We mentioned several categories into which the elements of our conceptual framework may fall: our beliefs about fundamental questions of existence; our views on knowledge and the role it plays both in the life of the individual and the development of society; the principles by which we live and the values we cherish; and the approaches and methods we most likely adopt in our actions. The next two chapters were dedicated to the discussion of two fundamental principles: the oneness of humankind and justice.

From among the numerous implications that the principle of the oneness of humankind, the bedrock of our entire belief system, has for the organization of society, we chose to pay special attention to the relationship between the individual and society in Chapter 2. The modern notion of the individual as a significant entity separate from the collectivity, we proposed, should be understood as the outcome of an evolutionary process, particularly of Western civilization. The individual in a society governed by the principle of the oneness of humankind can neither model the sovereign individual being promoted by current ideology nor the individual of the past who was often suffocated by the social environment. To explore the origins of the modern conception of the individual, we followed some of the arguments presented in one treatment of the subject, *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism*. Our choice of this book, we reiterated, does not imply full adherence to the claims being made by its authors; our approach in this series is to focus on the work of a few authors rather than quoting extensively from available literature, convinced that this will contribute more to the development of the capacity to read the literature of a given field in a mode that is both critical and constructive.

Our conception of oneness, we know, is not reducible to a mere plea for tolerance or a romantic dream of brotherhood. It stands at the center of our view of existence and governs the way we define the nature of the fundamental processes and structures of our collective life on the planet. To explore this idea further, we tried to clarify in the second chapter our understanding of history. The rising consciousness of the principle of the oneness of humankind is a sign of the maturation of the human race. In this age of transition, as humanity approaches its maturity, new capacities and powers will emerge. A consistent perspective on history is, in itself, a significant element of our evolving conceptual framework. To arrive at a comprehensive theory of history, of course, requires much more than what we have said in those few pages of Chapter 2. All we did was to ask you as a group to explore the interpretations of a few thinkers, hoping that you would decide to continue to investigate this fascinating area of human knowledge in the future.

The conceptual framework we are trying to elaborate gradually has both theoretical and practical implications. Its purpose is to guide not only our thoughts but also our actions. The issues with which we must deal in our endeavor to contribute to the advancement of civilization demand spiritual insight, scientific knowledge, and a vision of practical steps. To gain a deeper understanding of how consciousness of the oneness of humankind allows us to see the great challenges faced by humanity in new light, we brought Chapter 2 to a close with an examination of one of today's most pressing imperatives: the establishment of world peace.

The second set of beliefs explored in this unit was related to justice. At the heart of our conception of justice is the conviction that it is not a mere construct of human society but has its roots in the spiritual qualities that constitute the properties of the human soul. This does not mean that we should not be concerned with the body of knowledge that continues to be generated by outstanding philosophers addressing the question of justice from a secular point of view. Justice is a question that needs to be pondered in our hearts, but to understand it we also need to benefit from the ongoing exploration of the subject in moral philosophy, law, and in many other fields of the social sciences. It is for this reason that so many pages of the third chapter were dedicated to an examination of the theoretical framework proposed by John Rawls. Again, rather than presenting you with multiple theoretical views, we focused on one author—surely a most celebrated one—hoping that the ability of each one of you to study well-known works in a critical and constructive mode would be further enhanced. But profound as Rawls' ideas are, they do not exhaust the meaning of justice, nor do they offer a satisfying picture of how it should operate as an organizing principle of society. For that to happen, we have claimed, the spiritual nature of justice has to be acknowledged and its implications fully explored alongside the kind of painstaking analysis Rawls and others like him have carried out. Surely your study of the chapter has caused all of you to weigh carefully the truth of this statement.

That the roots of justice are to be found in the spiritual dimension of existence is one factor that convinces us to give it a pivotal role in the elaboration of the conceptual framework that is to guide the advancement of civilization. Another factor is its profound relationship with the ideal of the unification of the human race. The pages dedicated to the discussion of human rights and to the principle of the equality of women and men were intended to help your group as you reflected on the centrality of the principles of justice and the oneness of humankind to the framework for thought and action we are seeking. As we consider the diverse processes that unfold in the world around us, not only does our consciousness of the urgent need to apply these two principles to the affairs of society expand, but we also become increasingly aware of the number and complexity of issues that must be addressed in their light. An arena in which many such issues arise is usually referred to as globalization. In a certain sense, one hopes that the process will increasingly reflect the principle of oneness. Yet, witnessing the injustices that are being perpetuated, one sees how far consciousness of the oneness of humankind has to advance before the kind of civilization for which we long can be created. Why is it, we wonder for example, that children born throughout vast regions of the world are deprived of the necessities of life? Do they not have the right to benefit from the same privileges enjoyed by children born in affluent nations? A question as straightforward as this opens the door to myriad considerations about the structure of future society. What is to be done with the notion of national sovereignty? Who will control the operation of insatiable greed at the global level? How will issues related to citizenship and the rights and responsibilities that are attached to it be addressed? How will the question of identity and its relationship with "the other" at multiple levels—individual, group, and nation—be treated? These are just examples of

innumerable questions that we ask as we come into contact with the literature of various fields of human endeavor. We hope that this unit has helped bring a different perspective to what is usually a highly materialistic analysis of fundamental issues.

References

Chapter 1

[1] Fundación para la Aplicación y Enseñanza de las Ciencias, *A Discourse on Social Action: Education,* 2nd ed. (Cali, Colombia: FUNDAEC, 2008), 89–90.

[2] Ibid., 86.

Chapter 2

[1] Bahá'í International Community, Office of Public Information, *The Prosperity of Humankind*, 3 March 1995, <http://www.bahai.org/library/other-literature/official-statements-commentaries/prosperity-humankind/>, ¶¶2–3.

[2] Ibid., ¶¶13–17.

[3] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations of World Unity* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1972), 38.

[4] Nicholas Abercrombie, Stephen Hill, and Bryan S. Turner, *Sovereign Individuals of Capitalism* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1986), 35–36.

[5] Ibid., 2.

[6] Ibid., 44.

[7] Ibid., 45.

[8] Ibid., 45–46.

[9] Ibid., 46.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., 47.

[12] Ibid.

[13] Ibid., 48.

[14] Ibid., 48–49.

[15] Ibid., 52.

[16] Ibid.

[17] Ibid., 52–53.

[18] Ibid., 53.

[19] A. Tomlinson, *The Medieval Face* (London: The National Portrait Gallery, 1974), 1, quoted in Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *Sovereign Individuals*, 61.

[20] Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *Sovereign Individuals*, 61.

[21] Ibid., 62.

[22] Ibid.

[23] Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (London: Harper and Row, 1958), 123, quoted in Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *Sovereign Individuals*, 62.

[24] *The Pelican Book of the Renaissance*, ed. J.H. Plumb (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982), 10, quoted in Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *Sovereign Individuals*, 62.

[25] Abercrombie, Hill, and Turner, *Sovereign Individuals*, 62.

[26] Ibid., 63–64.

[27] Ibid., 74–76.

[28] Ibid., 76–77.

[29] Ibid., 78–79.

[30] Ibid., 80–83.

[31] Ibid., 88.

[32] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations*, 9.

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 9–10.

[35] *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by 'Abdu'l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912,* rev. ed. (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), 37–38.

[36] Shoghi Effendi, *The World Order of Bahá'u'lláh: Selected Letters* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1991), 42–43.

[37] Ibid., 170.

[38] *Gleanings from the Writings of Bahá'u'lláh*, 2nd ed., trans. Shoghi Effendi (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1983), 216.

[39] Ibid., 7.

[40] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, 451–52.

[41] *Paris Talks: Addresses Given by 'Abdu'l-Bahá in Paris in 1911* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1995), 189.

[42] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 215.

[43] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, 378.

[44] Ibid., 11.

[45] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Some Answered Questions*, trans. Laura Clifford Barney (Haifa: Bahá'í World Centre, 2014), 9–11.

[46] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, 39–40.

[47] *'Abdu'l-Bahá in London: Addresses and Notes of Conversations* (London: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1987), 28–29.

[48] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Promulgation*, 38.

[49] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Foundations*, 76.

[50] Drawn from Brian Shetler, "Augustine: The River to Eternity," in *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians: Perspectives on Individual, Social, and Civilizational Change*, eds. Johan Galtung and Sohail Inayatullah (Westport: Praeger, 1997), 22–23.

[51] Drawn from Sohail Inayatullah, "Ibn Khaldun: The Strengthening and Weakening of *Asabiya*," in *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians*, 27–29.

[52] George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History*, trans. J. Sibree (London: George Bell and Sons, 1888), 130, quoted in Brian Shetler, "George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel: Dialectics and the World Spirit," in *Macrohistory and Macrohistorians*, 50–51.

[53] The Universal House of Justice, *The Promise of World Peace: To the Peoples of the World* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1985), 13.

[54] Ibid., 15.

[55] Ibid., 15–16.

[56] Ibid., 22–28.

Chapter 3

[1] Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity*, ¶¶18–21.

[2] Bahá'u'lláh, *The Hidden Words* (1975; reprint, Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1994), 3–4.

[3] John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3–4.

[4] Ibid., 4–5.

[5] Ibid., 6–7.

[6] Ibid., 47–48.

[7] Ibid., 11.

[8] Ibid., 10–13.

[9] Ibid., 15–18.

[10] Ibid., 52–54.

[11] Ibid., 11.

[12] *Tablets of Bahá'u'lláh Revealed after the Kitáb-i-Aqdas*, trans. Habib Taherzadeh (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1988), 66–67.

[13] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, trans. Marzieh Gail and Ali-Kuli Khan (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1990), 39.

[14] Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity*, ¶¶22–27.

[15] Matthew Weinberg, "The Human Rights Discourse: A Bahá'í Perspective", in *The Bahá'í World: 1996–97* (Haifa: World Centre Publications, 1998), 248–50.

[16] Ibid., 250–51.

[17] Ibid., 251–55.

[18] Ibid., 256–58.

[19] Ibid., 258.

[20] Bahá'u'lláh, *Hidden Words*, 4.

[21] Bahá'í International Community, *A Bahá'í Declaration of Human Obligations and Rights*, February 1947, <https://www.bic.org/statements/bahai-declaration-human-obligations-and-rights>, ¶1.

[22] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 5.

[23] Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity*, ¶26.

[24] Bahá'u'lláh, *Tablets*, 157.

[25] Bahá'u'lláh, *Gleanings*, 215.

[26] Shoghi Effendi, *World Order*, 202.

[27] Bahá'í International Community, *Prosperity*, ¶27.

[28] Michael J. Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 6, quoted in Weinberg, "Human Rights," 265.

[29] Ibid.

[30] United Nations General Assembly, "Universal Declaration of Human Rights", 10 December 1948, <http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/index.html>, Article 29(1).

[31] Letter dated 26 November 1992 from the Universal House of Justice to the Bahá'ís of the world, in *The Holy Year: 1992–1993* (Riviera Beach: Palabra Publications, 1993), 38.

[32] The Universal House of Justice, *Individual Rights and Freedoms in the World Order of Bahá'u'lláh* (Wilmette: Bahá'í Publishing Trust, 1989), 10.

[33] 'Abdu'l-Bahá, *Divine Civilization*, 39.

[34] Bahá'í International Community, *Creating a Universal Culture of Human Rights*, 15 February 1989, <https://www.bic.org/statements/creating-universal-culture-human-rights>, ¶3.

[35] Bahá'u'lláh, in *The Compilation of Compilations*, vol. II (Maryborough: Bahá'í Publications Australia, 1991), no. 2145, 379.