Commentary on “Potentialities and their Manifestation:

A Selection of Passages from the Writings of Bahá’u’lláh and the Báb

and from the Writings and Talks of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá”[[1]](#footnote-0)

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In my work developing the Anisa Model of Education as The Wholistic Educational System (WES), for the “philosophy of education” of WES, in addition to being informed by science, the arts, and humanities, especially the process philosophy of Alfred North Whitehead, I have continued to draw on divine guidance from humanity’s various sacred scriptures, especially those of the newest revealed religion, the Bahá’í Faith, from which were selected the passages in this compilation on potentialities and their manifestation. The compilation accompanying this commentary needs to be expanded to include statements on potentialities and their manifestation from other spiritual traditions.[[2]](#footnote-1)

It was Dr. Daniel C. Jordan who found that Whitehead’s cosmology to be very much in harmony with the Bahá’í Revelation, especially Bahá’u’lláh’s concept of the existence of various types of potentiality and their manifestation or realization in the actual world. For the term “manifestation,” Whitehead uses “actualization.” For him, “actualization of potential” is the “universal of universals.” That is, it is the fundamental principle underlying creation. Due to this harmony, Dr. Jordan adopted the metaphysics of Whitehead as the philosophic foundation for his Anisa Model of Education.[[3]](#footnote-2) And from the many concepts found in the Bahá’í Writings and from those in Whitehead’s metaphysics, Dr. Jordan selected one of the most fundamental concepts that they held in common--the process of actualization (or manifestation) of potentiality--as the organizing principle of the Anisa Model.[[4]](#footnote-3)

For further explanations of this organizing principle and how a system of education was generated from it, in the Google folder titled “Introduction to the Wholistic Educational System (WES),” see the documents titled “First Principle and Corollary Principles of WES” and “Further explanation of Organizing Principle of WES.” (Access to this folder can be requested by writing to me at kbookwalter@gmail.com.)

Regarding the following quotation of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá on the special capacities of human beings, see my comment below the passage:

He [Man] has consciousness, volition, memory, intelligent power, divine attributes and virtues of which nature is completely deprived, bereft and minus; therefore man is higher and nobler by reason of the ideal and heavenly force latent and manifest in him.[[5]](#footnote-4) --‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Scientifically, I would suggest that this statement be understood as meaning that humans have a degree of these five qualities that go far beyond that of animals, i.e., “nature” in this quotation. That non-human entities possibly have a type of consciousness that is unique to their ontological level, is a continuing topic of research and debate. Animals of course do have a certain degree of volition, of memory, and of intelligence; and they do manifest some of the divine attributes of God which could be viewed as virtues.

1. William Keith Bookwalter, compiler. [↑](#footnote-ref-0)
2. Quotations from other sacred scriptures and traditions can be sent to this author at kbookwalter@gmail.com. For educators in Hispano-America, this author will welcome assistance in finding the official, Spanish translations of as many of the passages in this compilation as possible. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
3. From a conversation I had with Dr. Jordan in Tegucigalpa, Honduras in 1979. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
4. I can only imagine the excitement of Dr. Jordan, after being inspired by these Bahá’í quotations and others, when he found a philosopher—Alfred North Whitehead--who some would consider to be of the stature of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; whose cosmology was in harmony with the Teachings of Bahá’u’lláh, whose metaphysics could account for Einstein’s theory of general relativity and quantum mechanics; who had his own theory of general relativity, all of which, no doubt, will contribute to the ongoing development of a Bahá’í-based philosophy of reality. I can only imagine that Dr. Jordan’s enthusiasm was further heightened after Raymond Paul Shepard carried out a review of the foremost philosophies and paradigms, down through recorded history, regarding the nature of human beings and the broader reality in which they develop and finding that Whitehead’s philosophy of organism was, indeed, the most cutting-edge, comprehensive, and coherent metaphysics available to us during our current phase of evolution. (See, for example: file:///C:/Users/HP/Documents/Documents/Documents/WES/Anisa/Dissertations/3%20Process%20and%20personality%20\_%20toward%20a%20unification%20of%20psychological%20t.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
5. ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, *The Promulgation of Universal Peace: Talks Delivered by ‘Abdu’l-Bahá during His Visit to the United States and Canada in 1912* (Wilmette, IL: Bahá’í Publishing Trust, 1982) 178. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)