

Outline of a course on science and religion from the Bahá'í viewpoint

- I. The conventional view of the relationship between science and religion.
 - A. Science = rational knowledge about physical, visible, observable world.
 - B. Religion = (largely irrational) belief about imaginary, insubstantial, unseen world.
 - C. It is a matter of pure individual choice whether to become involved with unseen (unobservable) reality. Those who are so inclined do so, while others don't.
 1. Those who are involved with religion have a tendency to be irrational while those who are rational deal with science and the visible world.

- II. But this conventional view is surely wrong, because science itself has established the existence of a fascinating world of unobservable forces and entities.
 - A. Example of gravity.
 - B. All the basic forces of physics.

- III. Thus, not a matter of choice whether or not to deal with unseen world.
 - A. Unseen world and seen world interact.
 - B. Unseen causes seen. Observable effect can have an unobservable cause. Observable world is not self-sufficient.
 - C. Unseen world envelops the seen.
 1. Example of ocean.

- IV. How to deal with the unseen world.
 - A. Make abstract models and test them. Traditional way of science. Mathematics is language of abstract models; experiments test their validity.
 - B. Observe those things which come from unseen world into visible world. Study the process of transition between the seen and the unseen world.
 1. Every human being comes from invisible world to visible world.
 - C. Human being is most sophisticated structure in known universe.
 1. Founders of religions, greatest of all.

- V. Baha'i concept of progressive revelation.
 - A. Holds that God, that ultimate unseen force, periodically sends a specially designated human soul from the unseen world into the seen world.
 1. These beings have direct knowledge of the structure of the unseen world and they explain to us the laws that govern spiritual reality.

- a. These laws operate objectively; example of gravity. We do not break spiritual laws, we break ourselves on spiritual laws. If, for example, a person steals it has consequences on his soul, but not necessarily in visible world.
 - B. These laws are the basis of social progress.
 - 1. It is the implementation of these moral and spiritual laws and principles that produces social progress, just as the application of scientific laws and principles produces material progress.
 - C. In this view, not only science but also religion is a knowledge-generating enterprise.
- VI. History as collective growth process.
- A. "Visible" history is the history of the childhood and youth of humanity.
 - 1. Advent of modern science was transition from childhood to adolescence.
 - 2. Acquisition of the capacity for one-one and one-many relations.
 - a. Family, tribe, city-state, nation.
 - B. We are now at threshold of maturity, in late adolescence.
 - 1. Materially developed but still spiritually undeveloped.
 - C. If we are to successfully negotiate transition to maturity, need to recognize and use both sources of knowledge of the unseen world, science and religion.
 - 1. Indeed, both of these sources are from God. Science and not just religion is from God.
 - 2. This is a conscious and deliberate process, not an automatic one.