

Marrying Science and Tech to Spirituality

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I work at the cusp of finance and technology. On the one hand, both of these disciplines are making progress toward true global solutions to our greatest challenges. With the democratization of education, technology and pervasive global media, an opportunity exists for each individual to participate and take initiative in this progress. Yet, on the other hand, I also have come to believe that our current institutions are inadequate to sustain humanity's progress. Those institutions embody extremes—with nations and corporations centered on the interests of only a few stakeholder groups and consumed with an excessive focus on quantitative outputs and competition.

It has become obvious that unless individuals and societies turn towards justice and fairness for the whole, they are increasingly privy to corruption, unethical behavior and practices that lead to undesirable ends. In private and governmental structures for example, excessive corporate executive pay scales, questionable accounting practices, hacking and cybercrime, and the subprime mortgage crisis are just a few examples that prove ingenuity without a moral conscience can turn dark.

As the spiritual teachings of the Baha'i Faith remind us, if we can marry the scientific attainments, technical ingenuity and creativity of our intellectual forces, with proactive nurturance of our spiritual capacities and the human character virtues of kindness, trustworthiness, truthfulness, creativity and service, we can realize the true benefits of both science and faith:

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. – Abdu'l-Baha, *Abdu'l-Baha in London*, pp. 28-29.

Indeed, when I travel now, I visit and am inspired to learn of the progress of grassroots communities forming around the world, centered not on ethnic, gender or religious commonality but based on common interest and a desire to create positive change.

As an example, in Munich where I live, technologists volunteer their time to offer education to refugees to upskill them to better find jobs. When I was in India at a rural social development cooperative for women, I met Munich-based Germans setting up NGOs to serve rural women and children in India, donating time and money to give them opportunities to go to school, which they would not otherwise have. These initiatives are raised out of an awareness of our place in the world as global citizens, where each of us has a purpose and valuable contributions to make. That altruistic, selfless sense of human unity, solidarity and oneness—the first principle of the Baha’i teachings—has spread across the planet:

Do not busy yourselves in your own concerns; let your thoughts be fixed upon that which will rehabilitate the fortunes of mankind and sanctify the hearts and souls of men. This can best be achieved through pure and holy deeds, through a virtuous life and a goodly behaviour. ...

O friends! It behoveth you to refresh and revive your souls through the gracious favours which in this Divine, this soul-stirring Springtime are being showered upon you. The Day-Star of His great glory hath shed its radiance upon you, and the clouds of His limitless grace have overshadowed you. How high the reward of him that hath not deprived himself of so great a bounty ... Let your vision be world-embracing, rather than confined to your own self. – Baha’u’llah, *Tablets of Baha’u’llah*, pp. 86-87.

I invite you to step into this new spiritual paradigm, and with a world-embracing vision, join others in our workplaces and communities to move towards the global development goals set by the United Nations and the ultimate goal of world unity set forth by the Baha’i teachings. We can all embrace our altruism, inclusion and love for others by helping to raise up a new culture marked by “unity in diversity”—a culture stemming from the belief that everybody has talents they can contribute to initiatives where we live, for the progress of all humankind. With that attitude, we will be able to break down the invisible silos between us wherever we are, and emerge as a truly free and prosperous global civilization.