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# Vain Imaginings: and a guideline for education and life pursuits. As presented in the Baha'i Writings.

This topic of "Vain Imaginings" is more than what it appears on the surface. Not only is it simply believing or imagining something to be true that is not; such as the earth being flat or at the center of the solar system; it pervades our whole state of perception, our assumptions; how we reason and how we "see" the world to be. Culture, Authority, upbringing, personal likes and dislikes, style and degree of education; all this and more have a combined profound impact on an individual's viewpoint and life issues.

The following excerpts deal with the shortcomings and fallibility in our grappling with the mysteries of cosmic-spiritual Truth and our place in it. All humanity fails to truly understand the many levels of meaning woven into Revealed Scripture. People become attracted to what authority figures confidently say is true. They become enamored with the fellowship of like-minded believers, which, in turn, only reinforces what they themselves, are led to believe. Instead of independently investigating, the majority remains content to simply accept what they are taught. Perhaps this can have a temporary seemingly positive effect but the long-term result is truly being captivated. It is imagined needs are met by participating in religious or social events, involvement with competition (whether it be business, gaming, dating etc.), or being entertained (and influenced) .by the world of the media, and commercialism.

Yet, it is evident many are looking for something more; more than the status quo; more than what is deemed "satisfying" or "successful". It is also imagined, in our arrogance, that we are capable of apprehending, of grasping, Divine Truth; that somehow, God neatly fits into a package of teachings or tradition. Of course, it is surely unarguably true that God and creation are infinitely beyond our ability to understand. The best we can do is study Inspired Scripture and, independent of what we have been taught, seek for ourselves what best enables us to serve God and Man.

Read on and ponder on what Inspired Writings say.

*"Aqa Sidq-Ali was yet one more of those who left their native land, journeyed to Baha'u'llah and were put in the Prison. He was a dervish; a man who lived free and detached from friend and stranger alike. He belonged to the mystic element and was a man of letters. He spent some time wearing the dress of poverty, drinking the wine of the Rule and traveling the Path, but*

*unlike the other Sufis he did not devote his life to dusty hashish; on the contrary, he cleansed himself of their vain imaginings and only searched for God, spoke of God, and followed the path of God.” (Abdu'l-Baha, Memorials of the Faithful, p. 36)*

*24.” O spiritual youth! Praise thou God that thou hast found thy way into the Kingdom of Splendours, and hast rent asunder the veil of vain imaginings, and that the core of the inner mystery hath been made known unto thee.*

*This people, all of them, have pictured a god in the realm of the mind, and worship that image which they have made for themselves. And yet that image is comprehended, the human mind being the comprehender thereof, and certainly the comprehender is greater than that which lieth within its grasp; for imagination is but the branch, while mind is the root; and certainly the root is greater than the branch. Consider then, how all the peoples of the world are bowing the knee to a fancy of their own contriving, how they have created a creator within their own minds, and they call it the Fashioner of all that is, whereas in truth it is but an illusion. Thus are the people worshipping only an error of perception.*

*But that Essence of Essences, that Invisible of Invisibles, is sanctified above all human speculation, and never to be overtaken by the mind of man. Never shall that immemorial Reality lodge within the compass of a contingent being. His is another realm, and of that realm no understanding can be won. No access can be gained thereto; all entry is forbidden there. The utmost one can say is that Its existence can be proved, but the conditions of Its existence are unknown”.*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, Selections from the Writings of Abdu'l-Baha, p. 53)**

*110. We have permitted you to read such sciences as are profitable unto you, not such as end in idle disputation.*

*The Baha Writings enjoin the acquisition of knowledge and the study of the arts and sciences. Baha’is are admonished to respect people of learning and accomplishment, and are warned against the pursuit of studies that are productive only of futile wrangling.*

*In His Tablets Baha’u’llah counsels the believers to study such sciences and arts as are useful and would further the progress and advancement of society, and He cautions against sciences which begin with words and end with words, the pursuit of which leads to idle disputation. Shoghi Effendi, in a letter written on his behalf, likened sciences that begin with words and end with words to fruitless excursions into metaphysical hair-splittings.*

*And, in another letter, he explained that what Baha’u’llah primarily intended by such sciences are those theological treatises and commentaries that encumber the human mind rather than help it to attain the truth.*

*Praise and thanksgiving be unto Providence that out of all the realities in existence He has chosen the reality of man and has honored it with intellect and wisdom, the two most luminous lights in either world. Through the agency of this great endowment, He has in every epoch cast on the mirror of creation new and wonderful configurations. If we look objectively upon the world of being, it will become apparent that from age to age, the temple of existence has continually been embellished with a fresh grace, and distinguished with an ever-varying splendor, deriving from wisdom and the power of thought.*

*This supreme emblem of God stands first in the order of creation and first in rank, taking precedence over all created things. Witness to it is the Holy Tradition. Before all else, God created the mind from the dawn of creation, it was made to be revealed in the temple of man.*

*Sanctified is the Lord, Who with the dazzling rays of this strange, heavenly power has made our world of darkness the envy of the worlds of light: And the earth shall shine with the light of her Lord. Holy and exalted is He, Who has caused the nature of man to be the dayspring of this boundless grace: The God of mercy hath taught the Quran, hath created man, hath taught him articulate speech."*

**[1 Quran 39:69.]**

**[2 Quran 55:1-3]**

*"O ye that have minds to know! Raise up your suppliant hands to the heaven of the one God, and humble yourselves and be lowly before Him, and thank Him for this supreme endowment, and implore Him to succor us until, in this present age, godlike impulses may radiate from the conscience of mankind, and this divinely kindled fire which has been entrusted to the human heart may never die away."*

**(Abdu'l-Baha, The Secret of Divine Civilization, p. 1)**

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*Consider carefully: all these highly varied phenomena, these concepts, this knowledge, these technical procedures and philosophical systems, these sciences, arts, industries and inventions, all are emanations of the human mind. Whatever people has ventured deeper into this shoreless sea, has come to excel the rest. The happiness and pride of a nation consist in this, that it should shine out like the sun in the high heaven of knowledge. Shall they who have knowledge and they who have it not, be treated alike? And the honor and distinction of the individual consist in this, that he among all the world's multitudes should become a source of social good. Is any larger bounty conceivable than this, that an individual, looking within himself, should find that by the confirming grace of God he has become the cause of peace and well-being, of happiness and advantage to his fellow men? No, by the one true God, there is no greater bliss, no more complete delight."*

(Abdu'l-Baha, *The Secret of Divine Civilization*, p. 2)