



**ILUSTRACIJA ~ Rekonstrukcija;** Pashalna Hagada, s ritualnim uputama na francuskom (Bouton Haggadah), zbirka Braginsky, Zürich 19. stoljeće; Četiri evanđelja na arapskom jeziku, Palestina 1335. (British Library, Add MS 11856); Stranica iz rukopisnog Kur'ana, Tunis, krajem 9. i početkom 10. stoljeća (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.45); Paolo e Federico Manusardi, Sv. Petar i Pavao Daniele Crespi (1598.-1630).

**ILLUSTRATION ~ Reconstruction;** Passover Haggadah, with ritual instructions in French (Bouton Haggadah), Braginsky Collection, Zürich 19th century; The Four Gospels in Arabic, Palestine, 1335 (British Library, Add MS 11856); Folio from a Qur'an Manuscript late 9<sup>th</sup>-early 10<sup>th</sup> century (Metropolitan Museum of Art, 30.45); Paolo e Federico Manusardi, Saints Peter and Paul by Daniele Crespi (1598-1630).

Dr. Leonard Swidler je profesor katoličkog mišljenja i međureligijskog dijaloga na Univerzitetu Temple od 1966., osnivač/urednik s Arlene Andersonom Swidlerom 1964. *Časopisa za ekumenske studije* (Journal of Ecumenical Studies), osnivač/direktor *Instituta za dijalog* 1978. Diplomirao je historiju, filozofiju, i teologiju na St. Norbert College, magistrirao na Univerzitetu Marquette, a doktorirao na Univerzitetu Wisconsin i Univerzitetu Tübingen, Njemačka (STL). Bio je gostujući profesor na univerzitetima u Grazu, Hamburgu, Tübingenu, Univerzitetu Nankai (Tianjin, Kina), Univerzitetu Fudan (Šangaj), Univerzitetu Temple Japan (Tokio), Univerzitetu Malaja (Kuala Lumpur), Kineskom univerzitetu (Hong Kong) i Univerzitetu Khazar (Baku, Azerbejdžan).

Objavio je više od 200 članaka i 75 knjiga, među kojima su: *Studija religije u doba globalnog dijaloga* (2000), *Globalna etika* (2007), *Triologija: Židovi, kršćani i muslimani u dijalogu* (2007.), *Klub modernosti: Za nevoljne kršćane* (2011.), *Dijalog za međureligijsko razumijevanje* (2014.), *Doba globalnog dijaloga* (2016), *Religija za nevoljne vjernike* (2017)...

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Leonard SWIDLER

**KOSMIČKI PLES DIJALOGA!**

**COSMIC DANCE OF DIALOGUE!**

## Abstract

The author starts from the obvious statement that no one knows everything about everything and that we can have only partial knowledge of any limited study of reality, although, when it comes to religion, many still claim to know everything they need to know. Since people cannot know everything, dialogue is necessary, because through a conversation with another, a person learns what he cannot notice from his place and with his personal lenses of knowledge. Dialogue is not just a way to get more information: *Dialogue is a whole new way of thinking!* Dialogue in its broadest sense is at the very heart of the cosmos, that is, the very essence of the cosmos and our humanity is dialogical, and fulfilled human life is the highest expression of the Cosmic Dance of Dialogue. Therefore, the author emphasizes, we humans today have an obvious choice: *dialogue or death!* The text points out that there are three main dimensions of dialogue, which correspond to the structure of humanity: The dialogue of the *head*, *hands* and *heart* in the *holistic harmony* of the *holy man*. In the dialogue of the *head* we reach out to those who think differently from us to understand how they see the world and the reason for their behavior. The world is too complicated for anyone to figure it out on their own. In *hand* dialogue, we team up with others to make the world a better place where we all need to live together. In the dialogue of the *heart* we open ourselves to perceive/receive the beauty of the other. The author concludes that people cannot live divided. If they want to survive, and even flourish, they must not only dance individually the dialogues of *head*, *hand*, and *heart* but also bring together the various parts in *harmony*.

**Key words:** *dialogue, head dialogue, hand dialogue, heart dialogue, cosmic dance, age of global dialogue, divergence, convergence, harmony.*

## Historical Background

I first wrote down these reflections thirty-six years ago, on June 17, 1984, within the context of a series of conferences, East and West, sponsored by the Non-Governmental Organization, *World Culture Open*, centered both in Manhattan, New York, and Seoul, Korea. It happened as I led a group from *World Culture Open* to Beijing. The culmination of our visit was an „International Press Conference“ held at the *Grand Hall*, Tiananmen Square, Beijing, China. Over 200 Chinese were present, including six former Ministers of State.

As the last Chinese dignitary was finishing his remarks, a Chinese staff person whispered in my ear, asking me, as leader of the Western visitors' group, to please, make some substantive responsive remarks (gasp!). As I walked toward the podium, I desperately thought: What I should say besides the customary thanks for the Chinese's hospitality? Fortunately, having taught for several years in Chinese universities with „successive“ interpretation, I was used to speaking slowly, quite deliberately, and with frequent pauses so as to ensure that the interpreter would accurately translate my thought and words. So, I spoke essentially the thought and words below.

Not too long after I spoke, with follow-up questions and responses, the session ended and I rushed to the waiting taxi taking me to the airport. During that thirty-minute ride I feverishly wrote down in my notebook, while it was still fresh in my mind, what I had just spoken in Tiananmen Square to the Chinese leaders and news people. What essentially, I thought and spoke then is reproduced below - The Cosmic Dance of Dialogue.

### 1. *Nobody Knows Everything about Anything - Therefore Dialogue!*

In the dawning *Age of Global Dialogue* we humans are increasingly aware that we cannot know everything about anything. This clearly is true for the physical sciences: No one would claim that she or he knows everything about biology, physics, chemistry.... Likewise, no one would claim that we know everything about the human sciences, sociology, or anthropology, or - good heavens, economics! - and each of these disciplines is endlessly complicated. In sum - in the form of a mantra:

**„Nobody Knows *Everything* About *Anything* - Therefore, *Dialogue!*“**

However, when it comes to the most comprehensive, the most complicated, discipline of all – Religion - billions of us still claim that we know all there is to know, and whoever thinks differently is simply mistaken!

But, if it is true that we always can only know partially in any limited study of reality, as in the physical or human sciences, surely it is *all the more true* of Religion and Secular Ideologies which are „explanations of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly.“<sup>1</sup> We must, then, be even more modest in our claims of knowing better in this most comprehensive field of knowledge, Religion/Ideology, „the *ultimate* meaning of life.“

Because of the work of great thinkers like the late Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, we now also realize that no knowledge can ever be completely objective, for we, the *knower*, are an integral part of the process of *knowing*. In brief, *all knowledge is interpreted knowledge*. Even in its simplest form, whether I claim that the *Bible* is God's truth, or the *Qur'ān*, or the *Gita*.... or indeed, the interpretation of it by the Pope, my Rabbi, Shaik, Guru or..., it is *I* who affirm that they teach the complete truth. But, if neither I, nor anyone else, can know everything about anything, including, most of all, the most comprehensive claims to truth - *Religion/Ideology* - how do I proceed to search for an ever-fuller grasp of reality, of truth?

## 2. From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Global Dialogue!

The clear answer is Dialogue. In Dialogue I talk with you primarily so that *I* can learn what I cannot perceive from my place in the world, with my personal lenses of knowing. Through your eyes I see what I cannot see from my side of the globe, and vice versa. Hence, dialogue is not just a way to gain more information. Dialogue is a whole new way of thinking! We are painfully leaving behind the *Age of Monologue* and are, with squinting eyes, entering into the *Age of Global Dialogue!*<sup>2</sup>



<sup>1</sup> Leonard Swidler and Paul Mojzes, *The Study of Religion in an Age of Global Dialogue*. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000).

<sup>2</sup> See: Leonard Swidler, *After the Absolute: The Dialogical Future of Religious Reflection*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990. See a major expansion of *After the Absolute*, *Quanjia Duihua de Shidai*, trans. by Lihua Liu, (Beijing: China Social Science, 2006). A still further expansion, *The Age of Global Dialogue* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2016).



### 3. *The Universe Is a Cosmic Dance of Dialogue!*

*Dialogue* - in its most expanded meaning: „The mutually beneficial interaction of differing components“ - is at the very heart of the Cosmos, of which we humans are the highest expression:

1. On the *Macro* level of the whole of the *Cosmos* (expanding since the „Big Bang“ 13.8 billion years ago at the speed of light (186,000 mph!): the basic interaction/dialogue of matter and energy (in Einstein's unforgettable formula:  $E=MC^2$ ; „Energy = mass times the square of the speed of light“) to,
2. On the *Micro* level, the creative interaction/dialogue of protons and electrons in every *atom* to,
3. The vital symbiosis of body and spirit in every *human*, through,
4. The creative dialogue between *woman* and *man*, to,
5. The dynamic „humanizing“ dialogic relationship between *individual* and *society*.

Thus, the very essence of the Cosmos and our Humanity is *Dialogical*, and a fulfilled Human life is the highest expression of the *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue*.

In the early millennia of the history of humanity, as we spread outward from our starting point in central Africa, 200,000 years ago, the forces of *Divergence* were dominant. However, because we live on a globe, in our frenetic divergence we eventually began to encounter each other more and more frequently. Now the forces of stunning *Convergence* are becoming increasingly dominant.

In the past, during the *Age of Divergence*, we could live in isolation from each other; we could ignore each other. Now, in the *Age of Convergence*, we are forced to live in One World. We increasingly live in a Global Village. We cannot ignore the other, the different. Too often in the past we have tried to make over the other into a likeness of ourselves, often by violence, but this is the very opposite of dialogue. This ego-centric arrogance is in fundamental opposition to the *Cosmic Dance of Dialogue*. It is not creative; it is destructive.

Hence, we humans today have a stark choice: *Dialogue*, or *Death*!

Potruga za Jedinim  
Seeking the One

**Kosmičk**  
**pl**  
**dijaloga/of**

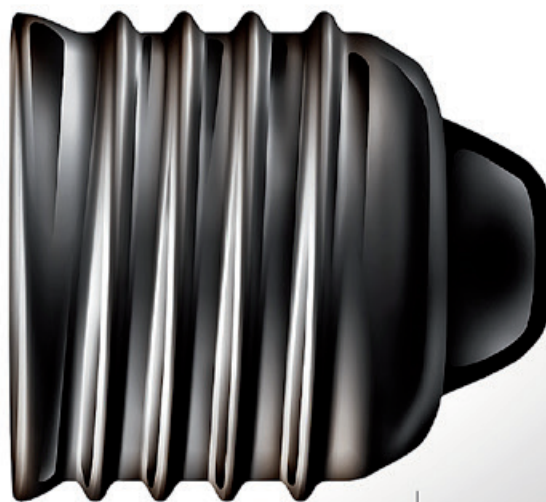
Potruga za lijepim, duhovnim

Seeking the Beautiful, the Spiritual

Potruga za istinom

Seeking the Truth

**ki**/Cosmic  
**es**/Dance  
Dialogue



**dijalog**  
/Dialogues  
**glave,**  
/of the Head  
**ruke**  
/Hands  
**i srca**  
/and Heart

Harmonija

Harmony





#### 4. Dialogues of the **Head, Hands, Heart** in **Holistic Harmony** of the **Holy Human**

For us humans there are three main dimensions to dialogue, corresponding to the structure of our humanness: Dialogue of the *Head, Hands, Heart*, in *Holistic Harmony* of the *Holy Human*.

##### a) *The Cognitive or Intellectual: Seeking the Truth*

In the Dialogue of the *Head* we reach out to those who think differently from us to understand how they see the world and why they act as they do. The world is too complicated for anyone to grasp alone; increasingly, we can understand reality only with the help of the other, in Dialogue. This is important, because how we *understand* the world determines how we act in the world.

##### b) *The Ethical: Seeking the Good*

In the Dialogue of the *Hands* we join together with others to work to make the world a better place in which we all must live together. Since we can no longer live separately in this „One World“, we must work jointly to make it not just a house but a *Home* for all of us to live in. In other words, we join hands with the other to „heal the world“ — *Tikun olam*, in the Jewish tradition. The world, within us, and all around us, is always in need of healing, and our deepest wounds can be healed only together with the other, only in Dialogue.

##### c) *The Affective or Aesthetic: Seeking the Beautiful, the Spiritual*

In the Dialogue of the *Heart* we open ourselves to perceive/receive the beauty of the other. Because we humans are body and spirit - or, rather, body-spirit - we give bodily-spiritual expression in all the arts to our multifarious responses to life: joy, sorrow, gratitude, anger.... and, most of all, love. We try to express our inner feelings, which grasp reality in far deeper and higher ways than we are able to put into rational concepts and words or every-day deeds; hence, we create poetry, music, dance, painting, architecture.... - the expressions of the heart. All the world delights in beauty, and so it is here that we find the easiest encounter with the other, the simplest door to dialogue.

Here, too, is where the depth, spiritual, mystical dimensions of the human spirit are given full rein. As the seventeenth-century mathematician/philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623–1663) said: *Le cœur a ses raisons que la raison ne connaît point*, („The heart has its reasons, which reason knows not“).<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> See: Pascal, Blaise: *Pensées et opuscules* (5e édition revue); publiés avec une introduction, des notices, des notes et deux fac-similés du

#### d) Holiness: Seeking the One

We humans cannot live a divided life. If we are even to survive, let alone flourish, we must „get it all together.“ We must not only dance individually the dialogues of the *Head*, *Hands*, and *Heart*, but also bring our various parts together in *Harmony* to live a *Holistic life*, which is what religions mean when they say that we should be Holy (Greek, *holos*, „whole“).

#### e) The Cosmic Dance of Dialogue!

Hence, we are authentically *Human* only when our manifold elements are in Dialogue within each other, and we are in Dialogue with the other persons and all reality/Reality, around/in us.

WE HUMANS MUST BE THE *Lead Dancers* IN THE  
*Cosmic Dance of Dialogue!*

