

1-1-1991

Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue

Leonard Swidler
Grand Valley State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr>

Recommended Citation

Swidler, Leonard (1990) "Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue," *Grand Valley Review*: Vol. 6: Iss. 2, Article 16.

Available at: <http://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/gvr/vol6/iss2/16>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Grand Valley Review by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact scholarworks@gvsu.edu.

Death or Dialogue: From the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue

LEONARD SWIDLER

The Way Forward

The future offers two alternatives: death or dialogue. This statement is not overdramatization. In the past it was possible, indeed, unavoidable, for most human beings to live out their lives in isolation from the vast majority of their fellows, without even having a faint awareness of, let alone interest in, their very existence. At most, and for most, occasional tales of distant denizens occupied their moments of leisure and satisfied their curiosity. Everyone for the most part talked to their own cultural selves. Even the rare descriptions of the "other" hardly ever came from the others themselves, but from some of their own who had heard, or heard of, the other. Put briefly, until the edge of the present era, humans lived in the Age of Monologue. That age is now passing.

We are now poised at the entrance to the Age of Dialogue. We travel all over the globe, and large elements of the entire globe come to us. There can hardly be a U.S. campus which does not echo with foreign accents and languages. Our streets, businesses, and homes are visibly filled with overseas products. We hear constantly about our massive trade deficit and the overwhelming debts second and third world countries owe us. Through our Asian-made television sets we invite into our living rooms myriads of people from strange nations, cultures, and religions.

We can no longer ignore the "others," but we can close our minds and spirits to them, look at them with fear and misunderstanding, come to resent them, and perhaps even hate them. This way of encounter leads to hostility and eventually war and death. For example, one of the fundamental reasons why Japan attacked Pearl Harbor in 1941 was because Japanese leadership perceived the U.S. as a basic economic threat to their well being. The American response was eventually to drop atomic bombs on "the Japs," annihilating hundreds of thousands of human beings in two brief instants.

Today nuclear, ecological, or other catastrophic devastation lies just a little further down the path of Monologue. It is only by struggling out of the self-centered monologic mindset into dialogue with others as they really are, and not as we have

projected them in our monologues, that we can avoid such cataclysmic disasters. In brief: we must move from the Age of Monologue to the Age of Dialogue.

What we understand as the “explanation of the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly,” we call our religion—or if that explanation is not based on a notion of the transcendent, we call it an ideology. Since our religion or ideology is so comprehensive, so all-inclusive, it is the most fundamental area in which the “other” is likely to be different from us—and hence possibly seen as the most threatening. Again, this is not over-dramatization. The current catalogue of conflicts which have religion/ideology as a constituent element is staggering and include such obvious neuralgic flashpoints as Northern Ireland, Lebanon, Israel, Sri Lanka, Pakistan/India, Tibet, Afghanistan, the Sudan, Armenia/Azerbaijan. . . .

Hence, if humankind is to move from the Age of Monologue into the Age of Dialogue, religions and ideologies must enter into the movement full force. They have in fact begun to make serious progress along this path, though the journey stretches far ahead, indeed.

It is precisely here that you at Grand Valley State University together with the network you contemplate establishing can make a serious contribution to the struggle of humankind along the uncharted path of dialogue. As you start on this path let me offer you what assistance I can by pointing out what I and some of my colleagues have found to be some helpful guideposts along the way.

A Way of Thinking

Dialogue in the religious and ideological area is not simply a series of conversations. It is a whole new way of thinking, a way of seeing and reflecting on the world and its meaning.

If I were speaking just to Christians, I would use the term “theology” to name what I am largely talking about here. But the dialogical way of thinking is not something peculiarly Christian. Rather, it is a way for all human beings to reflect on the ultimate meaning of life. Whether or not one is theist, whether or not one is given to using Greek thought categories, as Christians have been wont to do in their “theologizing,” dialogue is ever more clearly the way of the future in “religious and ideological reflection” on the ultimate meaning of life, and how to live accordingly.

I am convinced that it is necessary to try to think beyond the absolutes that I as a Christian—and others in their own ways— have increasingly found de-absolutized in our modern thought world. Hence, I would like to reflect with you on the ways all of us humans need to think about the world and its meaning now that more and more of us, both individually and even at times institutionally, are gaining enough maturity to notice that there are entire other ways of integrating and understanding the world than the way we and our forebears practiced. We have begun to find a much richer, “truer,” way of understanding the world—the dialogical way. It is this

dialogical way of thinking particularly in the area of religion and ideology that I intend to reflect on here.

My dialogue partners in this new paradigm of understanding are all the ways of understanding the world and its meaning—the world’s religions and ideologies. And so, we eventually need to engage in dialogue with at least the world’s major religions and ideologies, reflecting on what we can learn about and from each other. But beyond all these dialogue partners is an often unconscious but always pervasive dialogue partner for me and an ever increasing number of contemporaries: modern critical thought.

Precisely those who are open to dialogue—that is, are open to going beyond prior absolutes to learning from each other—live in a de-absolutized, “relationalized,” modern critical-thinking thought world, a thought world wherein they no longer can live on the level of a first naivete, but are at least striving to live on the level of a second naivete. On this level they see their root symbols and metaphors *as* symbols and metaphors, and hence do not mistake them for empirical, ontological realities, but also do not simply reject them as fantasies and fairy tales. Rather, because they see them as root symbols and metaphors, they correctly appreciate them as indispensable vehicles to communicate profound realities that go beyond the capacity of everyday language to communicate.

The Meaning of Dialogue

Dialogue is conversation between persons with differing views resulting in participants learning from each other so that they can change and grow—of course, *in addition* conversantes *also* want to share their understanding with their partners. We enter into dialogue primarily so that we can learn, change and grow, not so that we can force change on the other.”

In the past, when we encountered those who differed from us in the religious and ideological sphere, we did so usually either to defeat them as opponents, or to learn about them so as to deal with them more effectively. In other words, we usually faced those who differed with us in a confrontation—sometimes more openly polemically, sometimes more subtly so, but usually with the ultimate goal of overcoming the other because we were convinced that we alone had the truth.

But that is not what dialogue is. Dialogue is *not* debate. In dialogue each partner must listen to the other as openly and sympathetically as possible in an attempt to understand the other’s position as precisely and, as it were, as much from within, as possible. Such an attitude automatically assumes that at any point we might find the partner’s position so persuasive that, if we were to act with integrity, we ourselves would have to change.

Until recently in almost all religious traditions, and certainly very definitely within Christianity, the idea of seeking religious or ideological wisdom, insight or truth

through dialogue, other than in a very initial and rudimentary fashion, occurred to very few people, and certainly had no influence in the major religious or ideological communities. The further idea of pursuing religious or ideological truth through dialogue with other religions and ideologies was even less thinkable.

Today the situation is dramatically reversed. In 1964 Pope Paul VI's first encyclical focused on dialogue: "dialogue is *demande*d nowadays . . . is *demande*d by the dynamic course of action which is changing the face of modern society. It is *demande*d by the pluralism of society and by the maturity man has reached in this day and age. Be he religious or not, his secular education has enabled him to think and speak, and to conduct dialogue with dignity."¹ Further official words of encouragement came from the Vatican secretariat for dialogue with non-believers: "All Christians should do their best to promote dialogue . . . as a duty of fraternal charity suited to our progressive and adult age."²

Why this dramatic change? Why should we pursue the truth in the area of religion and ideology by way of dialogue? In the past 150 years there have been many external factors contributing to the creation of what we call today the "global village." In the past the vast majority of people were born, lived and died all within the village or valley of their origin. Now, however, in many countries hundreds of millions of people have left their homes not only once or a few times, but frequently—consequently experiencing customs and cultures other than their own. Moreover, the world comes to us through the mass media.

All these externals have made it increasingly impossible for Westerners, and then gradually everyone, to live in isolation. We need the other willy-nilly. After two catastrophic world wars, a world depression and a threat of nuclear holocaust we are learning that our meeting can no longer be in indifference, for that leads to encounters in ignorance and prejudice, which is the tinder of hostility, and then violence. But if this violence leads to World War III, it will be the end of human history. Hence, for the sake of survival, meeting in dialogue and cooperation is the only alternative to global disaster.

Twentieth-century global catastrophic events also have had a profound impact on the Christian churches. Stanley Samartha, the first Director of the World Council of Churches' division on interreligious dialogue, noted that, "It is not without significance that only after the second world war (1945), when, with the dismantling of colonialism, new nations emerged on the stage of history and asserted their identity through their own religions and cultures, that both the Vatican and World Council of Churches began to articulate a more positive attitude toward the peoples of other religious traditions."³

A Paradigm-shift in Epistemology

Paralleling the rise of these extraordinary "external" factors was the rise of "inter-

nal” ones, which might be described succinctly as the even more dramatic shift in the understanding of the structure of reality and especially the understanding of truth that has taken place in Western civilization throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This shift has made dialogue not only possible but also necessary. Where such words as immutability, simplicity, and monologue had largely characterized our Western understanding of reality in an earlier day, in the past 150 years mutuality, relationality, and dialogue have come to be understood as constitutive elements of the very structure of our human reality. This substantive shift has been both very penetrating and broad, profoundly affecting both our understanding of what it means to be human and our systematic reflection on that meaning—in traditional Christian terms, our “theologizing.” It is important, therefore, to examine this enormous sea of change in our understanding of reality and truth, this fundamental paradigm shift—and the implications it has for our systematic reflection.

From a certain perspective, how we conceive the ultimate structure of the universe—as either static or dynamic, for example—is the most fundamental dimension of our human thought. Everything else is built upon and stems from it. Even those who claim to have no ultimate view of the universe, no metaphysics, do in fact have the most elusive kind of metaphysics, a covert one.

However, from another perspective, that of origin and development, it is how we understand our process of understanding and what meaning and status we attribute to our statements about reality—in other words, our epistemology—which is primary. *It* will profoundly determine how we conceive our view of the ultimate structure of reality, our metaphysics, what value we place on it and how we can use it. The same is true of everything else we perceive, conceive, and think of, and how we subsequently decide on things and act. For this reason, the revolutionary changes in our understanding of our understanding, in our understanding of truth, that is, in our epistemology, that have occurred in the West since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment have been extremely pervasive and radically influential.

Whereas our Western notion of truth was largely absolute, static, and monologic up to the past century, it has since become de-absolutized, dynamic and dialogic—in a word, “relational.” This “new” view of truth came about in at least six different, but closely related, ways. In brief they are:

Historicism: truth is de-absolutized by the perception that reality is always described in terms of the circumstances of the time in which it is expressed.

Intentionality: seeking the truth with the intention of acting according to what is discovered de-absolutizes the statement.

Sociology of Knowledge: truth is de-absolutized in terms of geography, culture, and social standing.

Limits of Language: truth as the meaning of something and especially as talk about the transcendent is de-absolutized by the limited nature of human language.

Hermeneutics: all truth, all knowledge is seen as interpreted truth, knowledge, and hence is de-absolutized by the observer who is always also interpreter.

Dialogue: the knower engages reality in dialogue in a language the knower provides, thereby de-absolutizing all statements about reality.

In short, our understanding of truth and reality has been undergoing a radical shift. This new paradigm which is being born understands all statements about reality, especially about the meaning of things, to be historical, intentional, perspectival, partial, interpretive, and dialogic. What is common to all these qualities is the notion of *relationality*, that is, that all expressions or understandings of reality are in some fundamental way related to the speaker or knower. It is while bearing this paradigm shift in mind that we proceed with our analysis.

Before the nineteenth century in Europe *truth, that is, a statement about reality*, was conceived in quite an absolute, static, exclusive either-or-manner. If something was true at one time, it was always true—not only empirical facts but also the meaning of things or the oughtness that was said to flow from them were thought of in this way. At bottom, the notion of truth was based exclusively on the Aristotelian principle of contradiction: a thing could not be true and not true in the same way at the same time. Truth was defined by way of exclusion; A was A because it could be shown not to be not-A. Truth was thus understood to be absolute, static, exclusively either-or. This is a *classicist* or *absolutist* view of truth.

Historicism: In the nineteenth century many scholars came to perceive all statements about the truth of the meaning of something as partially the products of their historical circumstances. Concrete circumstances helped determine the fact that the statement under study was even called forth, that it was couched in particular intellectual categories (for example, abstract Platonic, or concrete legal, language), particular literary forms (for example, mythic or metaphysical language), and particular psychological settings (such as a polemic response to a specific attack). These scholars argued that only if the truth statements were placed in their historical situation, their historical *Sitz im Leben*, could they be properly understood. The understanding of the text could be found only in context. To express that same original meaning in a later *Sitz im Leben* one would require a proportionally different statement. Thus, all statements about the meaning of things were now seen to be de-absolutized in terms of time.

This is a *historical* view of truth. Clearly at its heart is a notion of *relationality*: any statement about the truth of the meaning of something has to be understood in relation to its historical context.

Intentionality: Later thinkers like Max Scheler added a corollary to this historicizing of knowledge: it concerned not the past but the future. Such scholars saw truth as having an element of intentionality at its base, as being oriented ultimately toward action, praxis. They argued that we perceive certain things as questions to be answered and that we set goals to pursue specific knowledge because we wish to do something about those matters; we intend to live according to the truth and meaning that we hope to discern in the answers to the questions we pose, in knowledge we decide to seek. The truth of the meaning of things was thus seen as de-absolutized by the action-oriented intentionality of the thinker-speaker.

This is an *intentional* or *praxic* view of truth, and it too is basically *relational*: a statement has to be understood in relationship to the action-oriented intention of the speaker.

Sociology of Knowledge: Just as statements of truth about the meaning of things were seen by some thinkers to be historically de-absolutized in time, so too, starting in this century with scholars like Karl Mannheim, such statements began to be seen as de-absolutized by such things as the culture, class and gender of the thinker-speaker, regardless of time. All reality was said to be perceived from the perspective of the perceiver's own worldview. Any statement of the truth of the meaning of something was seen to be perspectival, "standpoint-bound, *standortgebunden*," as Karl Mannheim put it, and thus de-absolutized. This is a *perspectival* view of truth and is likewise *relational*: all statements are fundamentally related to the standpoint of the speaker.

Limitations of Language: Following Ludwig Wittgenstein and others, many thinkers have come to see that any statement about the truth of things can be at most only a partial description of the reality it is trying to describe. Although reality can be seen from an almost limitless number of perspectives, human language can express things from only one perspective at once. If this is now seen to be true of what we call "scientific truths," it is so much the more true of statements about the truth of the meaning of things. The very fact of dealing with the truth of the "meaning" of something indicates that the knower is essentially involved and hence reflects the perspectival character of all such statements.

A statement may be true, of course—it may accurately describe the extramental reality it refers to—but it will always be cast in particular categories, language, concerns, etc., of a particular "standpoint," and in that sense will be limited, de-absolutized.

This also is a *perspectival* view of truth, and is therefore also *relational*. This limited and limiting, as well as liberating, quality of language is especially clear in talk of the transcendent. The transcendent is by definition that which goes beyond our experience. Any statements about the transcendent must thus be de-absolutized and limited far beyond the perspectival character seen in ordinary statements.

Hermeneutic: Hans-Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur recently led the way in developing the science of hermeneutics, which, by arguing that all knowledge of a

text is at the same time an *interpretation* of the text, further de-absolutizes claims about the “true” meaning of the text. But this basic insight goes beyond knowledge of texts and applies to all knowledge. In all knowledge *I* come to know something; the object comes into me in a certain way, namely, through the lens that I use to perceive it. As St. Thomas Aquinas stated, “Things known are in the knower according to the mode of the knower— *cognita sunt in cognoscente secundum modum cognoscentis.*”⁴

This is an *interpretive* view of truth. It is clear that *relationality* pervades this hermeneutic, interpretative, view of truth.

Dialogue: A further development of this basic insight is that I learn not by being merely, passively, receptive to, but by being in dialogue with, extramental reality. I not only “hear or receive reality, but also—and, I think, first of all—“speak” to reality. I ask it questions, I stimulate it to speak back to me, to answer my questions. In the process I give reality the specific categories and language in which to respond to me. The “answers” that I receive back from reality will always be in the language, the thought categories, of the questions I put to it. It can “speak” to me, can really communicate with my mind, only in a language and categories that I understand.

When the speaking, the responding, grows less and less understandable to me, if the answers I receive are sometimes confused and unsatisfying, then I probably need to learn a more appropriate language when I put questions to reality. If, for example, I ask the question, “How far is yellow,” I will of course receive a nonsense answer. Or if I ask questions about living things in mechanical categories, I will receive confusing and unsatisfying answers.

This is a *dialogic* view of truth, whose very name reflects its *relationality*. With this new and irreversible understanding of the meaning of truth, the critical thinker has undergone a radical Copernican turn. Just as the vigorously resisted shift in astronomy from geocentrism to heliocentrism revolutionized that science, the paradigm shift in the understanding of truth statements has revolutionized all humanities, including theology-ideology. The macro-paradigm with which critical thinkers operate today is characterized by historical, social, linguistic, hermeneutic, praxic and dialogic—*relational*—consciousness. This paradigm shift is far advanced among thinkers and doers; but as in the case of Copernicus, and even more dramatically of Galileo, there are still many resisters in positions of great institutional power.

With the de-absolutized view of the truth of the meaning of things we come to face the specter of relativism, the opposite pole of absolutism. Unlike *relationality*, a neutral term which merely denotes the quality of being in relationship, *relativism*, like so many “isms,” is a basically negative term. If it can no longer be claimed that any statement of the truth of the meaning of things is absolute, totally objective, because the claim does not square with our experience of reality, it is equally impossible to claim that every statement of the truth of the meaning of things is completely relative, totally subjective, for that also does not square with our experience of reality, and of course would logically lead to an atomizing isolation which would

stop all discourse, all statements to others.

Our perception, and hence description, of reality is like our view of an object in the center of a circle of viewers. My view and description of the object, or reality, will be true, but it will not include what someone on the other side of the circle perceives and describes, which will also be true. So, neither of our perceptions and descriptions of reality is total, complete—"absolute" or "objective" in the sense of not in any way being dependent on a "subject" or a viewer. At the same time, however, it is also obvious that there is an "objective," doubtless "true" aspect to each perception and description, even though each is relational to the perceiver—"subject."

But if we can no longer hold to an absolutist view of the truth of the meaning of things, we must take certain steps so as not to be logically forced into the silence of total relativism. First, besides striving to be as accurate and fair as possible in gathering and assessing information and submitting it to the critiques of our peers, we need also to dredge out, state clearly, and analyze our own presuppositions—a constant, ongoing task. Even in this of course we will be operating from a particular "standpoint."

Therefore, we need, secondly, to complement our constantly critiqued statements with statements from different "standpoints." That is, we need to engage in dialogue with those who have differing cultural, philosophical, social, religious viewpoints so as to strive toward an even fuller perception of the truth of the meaning of things. If we do not engage in such dialogue we will not only be trapped within the perspective of our own "standpoint," but we will now also be aware of our lack. We will no longer with integrity be able to remain deliberately turned in on ourselves. Our search for the truth of the meaning of things makes it a necessity for us as human beings to engage in dialogue. Knowingly to refuse dialogue today could be an act of fundamental human irresponsibility— in Judeo-Christian terms, a sin.

Ground Rules

In interreligious, interideological dialogue, it is not sufficient to discuss a religious-ideological subject, that is, "the ultimate meaning of life and how to live accordingly." The partners must come close to the dialogue as persons significantly identified with a religious or ideological community. If I were neither a Christian nor a Marxist, for example, I could not participate as a partner in Christian-Marxist dialogue, though I might listen in, ask some questions for information, and make some helpful comments. Of course, anyone who is not identified with a particular tradition can engage in a religious or ideological dialogue, but one simply would not call it interreligious or interideological.

The following are some basic ground rules for authentic interreligious, interideological dialogue. These are not theoretical rules from an ivory tower. They have been learned from hard experience: to ignore them is to diminish or destroy the

dialogue.

First Rule: *The primary purpose of dialogue is to learn, that is, to change and grow in the perception and understanding of reality and then to act accordingly.* We come to dialogue so that we ourselves can learn, change, and grow, not so that we can force change on the other, our partner, as the old polemic debates hoped to do. On the other hand, because in dialogue both partners come with the intention of learning and changing themselves, each will in fact find the partner has changed. Each partner will also have taught the other—but only because teaching was not the primary purpose of the encounter. Thus the alleged goal of debate, and much more, is accomplished far more effectively by dialogue.

Second Rule: *Interreligious, ideological dialogue must be a two-sided project—within each religious or ideological community and between religious or ideological communities.* Because interreligious, interideological dialogue is corporate, and because its primary goal is for all partners to learn and change themselves, it is necessary that all the participants enter into dialogue not only with their partners across the faith line—the Catholic with the Protestant, for example—but also with their coreligionists, with their fellow Catholics, to share the fruits of the interreligious dialogue. In this way the whole community can eventually learn and change, together gaining ever more perceptive insights into reality.

Third Rule: *Each participant must come to the dialogue with complete honesty and sincerity.* It should be made clear in what direction the major and minor thrusts of the tradition move, what the future shifts might be, and even where the participants have difficulties with their own traditions. False fronts have no place in dialogue. Conversely, *each participant must assume the same complete honesty and sincerity in the other partners.* A failure in sincerity will prevent dialogue from happening, and a failure to assume the partner's sincerity will do so as well. In brief: no trust, no dialogue.

Fourth Rule: *In interreligious, interideological dialogue we must not compare our ideals with our partner's practice, but rather our ideals with our partner's ideals, our practice with our partner's practice.*

Fifth Rule: *Each participant must define her or himself.* Only the Jew, for example, can define from the inside what it means to be a Jew; the rest of us can only describe what it looks like from the outside. Moreover, because dialogue is a dynamic medium, as each participant learns, she or he changes and hence continually deepens, expands, and modifies her or his self-definition as a Jew, being careful to remain in constant dialogue with fellow Jews. Thus it is mandatory that each dialogue partner define what it can mean to be an authentic member of that tradition.

Conversely, *the side interpreted must be able to recognize itself in the interpretation.* For the sake of clarity, the dialogue participants will naturally attempt to express for themselves what they think is the meaning of the partner's statement; the partner must be able to recognize her or himself in that expression.

Sixth Rule: *Each participant must come to the dialogue with no hard-and-fast assumptions as to where the points of disagreement lie.* Both partners should not only listen to one another with openness and sympathy, but also try to agree as far as is possible while still maintaining integrity with their own tradition; where they absolutely can agree no further without violating their own integrity, precisely there is the real point of disagreement—which most often turns out to be quite different from what was assumed beforehand.

Seventh Rule: *Dialogue can take place only between equals, or par cum pari* as Vatican II put it. Both must come to learn from each other. This means, for instance, that between a learned scholar and an uninformed person there can be no authentic, full dialogue, but at most a gathering of information as in a sociological interrogation.

Or, if a Muslim views Hinduism as inferior, or a Hindu views Islam as inferior, there will be no dialogue. For authentic interreligious, interideological dialogue between Muslims and Hindus, both partners must come mainly to learn from each other; only then will they speak “equal with equal,” *par cum pari*.

This rule also indicates that there can be no such thing as a one-way dialogue. The Jewish-Christian discussions begun in the 1960s, for example, were on the whole only prolegomena to interreligious dialogue. Understandably and properly, the Jews came to those exchanges only to teach Christians, and the Christians came mainly to learn. But, for authentic interreligious dialogue between Christians and Jews, the Jews must also come to learn; only then will the conversation be *par cum pari*.

Eighth Rule: *Dialogue can take place only on the basis of mutual trust.* Although interreligious, ideological dialogue has a kind of “corporate” dimension in that the participants must be involved as members of a religious or ideological community—for instance, as Marxists or Taoists—it is also fundamentally true that only *persons* can enter into dialogue. But a dialogue among persons can be built only on personal trust. Hence it is wise not to tackle the most difficult problems in the beginning, but to seek those issues most likely to provide some common ground and to establish a basis of human trust. Then as this personal trust deepens and expands, the more thorny matters can gradually be undertaken.

Ninth Rule: *As we enter into interreligious, interideological dialogue we must learn to be at least minimally self-critical of both ourselves and our own religious or ideological traditions.* A lack of such self-criticism implies that our own tradition already has all the correct answers. Such an attitude makes dialogue not only unnecessary but even impossible since we enter into dialogue primarily so we can learn—which obviously is impossible if our tradition has never made a misstep, if it has all the right answers. To be sure, participants in interreligious, interideological dialogue must stand within a religious or ideological tradition with integrity and conviction, but their integrity and conviction must include, not exclude, healthy self-criticism. Without it there can be no dialogue—and, indeed, no integrity.

Tenth Rule: *Each participant eventually must attempt to experience the partner's*

religion or ideology "from within." A religion or ideology does not merely engage the head, but also the spirit, heart and "whole being"; it has both individual and communal dimensions. John S. Dunne speaks of "passing over" into another's religious or ideological experience and then coming back enlightened, broadened and deepened.³

Interreligious, interideological dialogue operates in three areas: the practical, where we collaborate to help humanity; the "spiritual," where we attempt to experience the partner's religion or ideology "from within"; the cognitive, where we seek understanding and truth. Dialogue also has three phases. In the first phase, which we never completely outgrow, we unlearn misinformation about each other and begin to know each other as we truly are. In phase two we begin to discern values in our partner's tradition and wish to appropriate them into our own. If we are serious, persistent and sensitive enough in the dialogue, we may at times enter into phase three. Here we together begin to explore new areas of reality, of meaning, of truth—aspects which neither of us had even been aware of before. We are brought face to face with these new, still unknown dimensions of reality through questions, insights, probings produced in the dialogue. We will experience for ourselves that dialogue patiently pursued can become an instrument of new "re-velation," a further "un-veiling" of reality—on which we must then act.

Notes

¹ *Ecclesiam suam*, no.9, as cited in Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Liturgical Press, 1975), p. 1003.

² *Humanae personae dignitatem*, cited in Flannery.

³ Stanley Samartha, "The Cross and the Rainbow: Christ in a Multireligious Culture," in John Hick and Paul F. Knitter, eds., *The Myth of Christian Uniqueness. Toward a Pluralistic Theology of Religions* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1987), p. 79.

⁴ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae*, II-II, Q. 1, a. 2.

⁵ Cf. John S. Dunne, *The Way of All the Earth* (New York: Macmillan, 1972).