**The Role of Spirituality in the Search for Extra-Terrestrial Intelligence**

**PI: José Funes**

**Co-PIs: Marcelo Lares and César Murúa**

Are we part of a bigger *“spiritual cosmic family”*? Could we establish an intersubjective relationship with other spiritual species? To address these and similar questions in Córdoba, Argentina, we have started with the project OTHER (Otros mundos, Tierra, Humanidad, and Espacio Remoto) which is a multidisciplinary laboratory of ideas to explore new ideas to answer the old question: *Are we alone in the universe?*

Our team is formed by researchers of the Universidad Católica de Córdoba (UCC) and Universidad Nacional de Córdoba (UNC).

The project has different activities that we summarize here:

**1. Research**

The search for extra-terrestrial intelligence (SETI) assumes that we live in a bio-friendly universe. But do we live in a spiritual-friendly universe?

*Homo sapiens*, as the only available study case, has a spiritual nature that can be manifested in a variety of ways. However, this might not be the case for any other ET civilization.

There are three levels of evolution - cosmic, biological, and human - that represent different levels of complexity and emergence. The natural and human sciences correspond to different types of rationalities that interpret the complex reality. This quest also requires the philosophical and theological rationalities. We propose to include the spiritual quest in a new multidisciplinary approach to the SETI.

Among the factors to take into account we propose to introduce the spiritual factor as a relevant one in the possibility that *Homo sapiens* or other alien species may have to communicate.

**2. Intelligent-Spiritual Extraterrestrial Life Survey**

As part of our research, we aim to conduct a survey of students and faculty at the UCC and the UNC taking into account a variety of majors including scientific and non-scientific careers. This research is carried out in the area of ​​the city of Cordoba that is characterized by having a long university tradition. The city of Cordoba, besides having a rich Catholic tradition, offers the possibility of interreligious dialogue, through the Interreligious Committee for Peace (COMIPAZ).

The survey intends to explore the role of spirituality in the SETI research. Is it spirituality a motivation for this search and in the possibility of communicating with other species?

**3. Educational and Public Outreach**

**3.1 Chair on Science, Religion, and Education at UCC.** We propose to create a chair on Science, Religion and Education at the UCC. The chair will provide an academic environment for the discussion of our research. The discussion should involve students and faculty of the UCC and will also be opened to local community. In a near future the chair could address other topics related to Science, Religion, and Education. We propose to organize 6 public lectures in 3 years.

**3.2 Digital media.** We believe that our project is of great interest for the Latin American region. For this reason we consider that the OTHER project and its results can be presented in a TEDx Córdoba event (<http://tedxcordoba.org.ar/>). The UCC has a proven experience in organizing TEDx Córdoba events (<http://www.ucc.edu.ar/noticiasucc/tedx-en-la-ucc/>).

**3.3 Website and Social Network.** We plan to create a website for scholars and for educational purposes. We will create communicate our research and activities using the social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.)

**3.4 High School Level.** In addition we have a started a multidisciplinary laboratory of ideas with faculty at the Jesuit high school Sagrada Familia. The goal is to replicate the idea of the OTHER project at the level of teachers and senior students.

**4. Advisory committee.** Though the team is formed by scholars of the local universities we considered extremely important to be in contact with leader scholars in the field who could be members of an Advisory Committee. These scholars that will be invited to participate in the committee are: Guy Consolmagno, Chris Impey, Ted Peters, Terrence Deacon, Nathalie Cabrol, and Lynn Rothschild.

**5. Publications.** Besides papers that the team plan to publish in referee journals**,** we plan to publish three books in Spanish:

1. A book that presents different perspectives on the SETI research at a scholar level

2. A book for high school students

3. A teaching guide book

We plan to use the UCC press EDUCC (http://www.ucc.edu.ar/infraestructura/educc/)

**Budget for a three-year program**

The total budget for the project is approximately US $230,000

1. Salaries for PI and CO-PI, other investigators, and one executive assistant – US $150,000

2. Survey – US $10,000

2. Travel and lodge for members of the Advisory Committee members and invited lecturers – US $30,000

3. Public lectures, TEDEX talks, high school program, website and social media – US $20,000

4. Publications – US $8000

5. University overhead fee – US $12,000

**So we plan to submit a proposal to the Templeton Foundation asking for approximately US $165,000**

**By the end of the project we plan to reach about 10,000 college students, 1000 school students, 50 university professors, 100 high school teachers, and more 10,000 people through public lectures, social media, and national news media.**

**The UCC will contribute to this project providing US $65,000** which corresponds to 100% of the salary for the PI, 30% of the cost of the lecture hall for 400 hundred people.

We also plan to ask for financial support from local foundations to partially cover the program for high-schools.