

## PROLOGUE

The typical philosophical dialogue is not a friendly chat (often it is not even friendly), but a sustained train of reasoning based on arguments and counter-arguments, examples and counter-examples, theses and antitheses, involving one or more people grouped in two more or less discernible sides (in case only one person is involved, the dialogue is a conversation between a person and the doubts that beset him).

Philosophical ideas and theories in general cannot, like the hypotheses of experimental sciences, be confronted with raw facts. Logic (and plain common sense) is for philosophy, as for mathematics, the only guide (despite the disrespect for logic and sound argumentation – not to mention common sense – some philosophers sometimes display). But unlike mathematical postulates and axioms, philosophical presuppositions are far from indisputable. So, philosophy must provide for an arena for the free confrontation of philosophical ideas, styles, presuppositions, arguments and theories. This is why dialogue is the philosophical method *par excellence*.

Some may argue that, ideally, dialogues should converge to a consensus, be it the thesis, the antithesis or a *tertium*, a synthesis. But the opposite is almost always the case. This may be viewed as undesirable, for it keeps philosophy from partaking with the sciences in the dignity of knowledge: when we cannot decide on rational grounds between two conflicting “truths” we do not have two truths, we have none. But could we realistically expect consensus where fundamental philosophical issues are concerned? More importantly, is consensus *really* desirable? Knowledge is surely a good thing, but so is a constant clash of ideas. Like music our intellectual life profits from harmony and tonality, but can also delight in dissonance and atonalism. Agreement may bring comfort, but hardly progress; disagreement is a necessary condition for innovation.

If there is one thing that we can learn from the history of philosophy is that it is not a science; philosophy has never been, at any given moment of its development, a single coherent body of knowledge built by a harmonious cooperation of many. It seems that the business of philosophy is not to provide us with knowledge, but with models, interpretations and perspectives instead (which so often influence every corner of our intellectual and practical lives). So, it can only profit from a liberal attitude of *laissez faire* (or rather, *laissez penser*). Philosophy is, it seems, art rather than science; or better still, a *rational* form of art. But in order to avoid excessive liberalism (anything goes), which the emphasis on “rational” above demands, conflicting views must confront each other. And let the fittest survive.

Our aim in editing this issue of *Manuscrito* was to provide an arena for dialogue, which the publication of Oswaldo Chateaubriand’s book *Logical Forms* required. After all, this book offers us a fresh, systematic and original approach to classical questions of logic, philosophy of language and epistemology, sometimes in agreement, sometimes in disagreement with canonical philosophers, such as Frege and Russell (and ignoring others outside the analytical tradition altogether). This is precisely the sort of thing that needs to meet criticism in order to have its vitality tested. We decided to promote this by inviting philosophers of different persuasions to a debate with Prof. Chateaubriand. The result is what you are about to read, a dialogue in the noblest philosophical sense. If the questions raised are relevant and if the answers given are convincing it is for you to judge.

I can merely thank the contributors for their willingness to accept my invitation and Oswaldo for his joyful readiness to face his critics.

Jairo José da Silva (invited editor)