Postface: Philosophical Dialogue

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Abstract On November 10–11, 2010, Marcelo Dascal's 40 years of academic scholarship were commemorated by an international conference held at Tel Aviv University and the Peres Center for Peace in Tel Aviv/Jaffa. Marcelo's colleagues from Israel and other countries, former and current students, family, and many friends, as well as the Dean of the Faculty of Humanities and the chair of the Department of Philosophy, welcomed the lecturers who contributed to the intensive program of those two exciting days. I wish to express my gratitude to my University, to my family, to the participants, and especially to all those who helped to organize the moving event in cooperation with Dr. Noa Zauderer-Naaman, whose tireless efforts assured its success.

In the present "Postface," it will be clear that the focus of my thanks to all those present in this event derives from the peculiar nature of the title "Philosophical Dialogue," which characterizes the rich variety of philosophical exchanges. I confess that I was moved when I realized that in several of these exchanges, I identified signs of the challenging dialogues and debates held in seminars, conferences, research meetings, and conversations with MA and PhD students about the orientation of their work. Though some of these dialogues sometimes closely followed what had been discussed earlier in my presence, many of them were surprisingly original in their interpretations and applications of the topics and concepts they employed, e.g., concepts such as hard and soft rationality, presumption, controversy, dialectics, philosophy of science, pragmatics, communication, thought, argumentation, logic,

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conversation, rhetoric, relevance, and ethics and references to famous thinkers such as Leibniz, among others.

As I usually do in similar events, throughout the 2 days of Philosophical Dialogue, I have been attentive to all the lectures, asking several questions, proposing a few suggestions, and receiving relevant and sharp replies, many of which positive. As a result, several exchanges between parts of the audience and of the speakers became independent interesting philosophical dialogues about certain issues. An example is the chapter of Shahid Rahman, "Dialogues and Monologues in Logic," whose Introduction explains:

> The dialogical framework is an approach to meaning that provides a pragmatist alternative to both the model-theoretical and the proof-theoretical semantics. However, since dialogic had and still has a bias towards antirealism, it has been quite often seen as a version of the proof theoretical approach. The main claim of the paper is that the proof theoretical approach as displayed by a tableaux system of sequent calculus is, from the dialogical point of view, a monological approach and cannot provide a purely dialogical theory of meaning. Indeed, in general validity is monological, in the sense that a winning strategy is defined independently of the moves of the Opponent. In the dialogical framework validity should be based bottom up on a dialogical semantics. The dialogical approach to logic is nothing but a semantic rule-based framework where different logics could be developed, combined or compared. But are there any constraints? Can we introduce rules ad libitum to define whatever logical constant? The answer is no: logical constants must be governed by player independent dialogical rules. The approach of the present paper has been influenced by Marcelo Dascal's reflections on meaning, pragmatics and dialogues. In fact, on my view, the dialogical approach to logic offers a framework for developing logic as close as possible to his own theory of meaning and soft-rationality.

Another example is the chapter of Rodica Amel, "Speaker's Meaning," where she analyzes how M.D. performs as the speaker-author of his Hebrew book *Mashav Haruah* (= *Changing Wings: Humanities in a New-Old World*). She begins by describing the book and its relation to the Israeli "reality" its author-speaker has to represent and face:

> For a common reader, Dascal's book, Mashav HaRuah, is an account of a reality disposed on two fronts: in the foreground, the academic life and activity, carried on in Tel-Aviv University's Faculty of Humanities, an ample dynamics which is focused on the dean's managerial commitment during his tenure of office for 5 consecutive years, 1995–2000; simultaneously, the reader's attention is caught by a large, agitated, and conflicting image of Israeli life displayed in the background. The book sums up the speeches uttered by a Dean of Humanities invited to open several scientific meetings and official ceremonies – symposiums, colloquiums and other manifestations – that took place in the Tel-Aviv Campus during his tenure.
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> After completing his dean's task, M. Dascal, professor of philosophy, much involved in the activity he had run through, reflected upon his experience, both as a person and as a philosopher, reexamined all the speeches he had uttered, realizing their unitary character, their argumentative value for his pragmatic research, and decided to publish them in a book.
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> In the new form, it becomes obvious that the speeches, thematically organized, are of a less official style as usually expected. Therefore, the book counts as a collection of essays about the most controversial problems characterizing the Israeli society. The image of the "reality" it presents is much deeper than it seems at first sight. The diversity of issues in debate and the way they were organized in the book allow the reader to grasp that reality.

In what follows, Rodica stimulates the curiosity of the reader by referring to the speaker-author's conception of pragmatics as viewed in one of his earlier writings: "Comment extraire de ce qu'un discours quelconque dit et de ce qu'il montre celui de ses sens possibles auquel ce discours est censé nous diriger" represents – says M. Dascal (1996: 1375) – the main problem of pragmatics. ["How to extract from what any discourse says and from what it shows the possible meanings towards which this discourse is supposed to lead us" represents the main problem of pragmatics.]

Mashav Haruah is a book written in the first person. The author is the speaker, who performs his speech acts on different registers. The discursive identity of the author depends on his discursive strategy being more or less presumed by the speaker which is differently oriented in each kind of interaction. In spite of the strategically different targets, the polyphony of the author's voice is maintained: the voice of the human person, his consciousness with psychological and spiritual concerns, the dean's voice, the author's social and professional cognitive concerns and experiences, the voice of a scholar, the author's cognitive identity, and his theoretical arguments and conclusions. Which of these voices' rhetoric is the reader expected to capture is left by Rodica Amel for the reader to decipher.

Only by carefully reading and rereading the nearly 20 articles of Philosophical Dialogue will the reader be aware of the book's richness of contents and interpretations. In particular of the various pieces that correspond to M. Dascal's achievements that are present in most of the articles included in the book. This is the reason for interrupting the above list of examples and jumping to another list of dialogic philosophy well represented in this book, a source based on what is perhaps the best known source of Dascal's published work, *G.W. Leibniz's: The Art of Controversies*.

The genre dialogue was quite popular in Leibniz's time. He himself wrote many philosophical pieces in this genre, which include, among others, his well-known major works, i.e., the Nouveaux Essais and the Theodicy. No doubt he was an authority in this field, whose superb performance was worth imitation by whoever ventured in the genre. To illustrate the variety of his dialogical practice, let us consider a few examples.

By the end of 1677, Leibniz was appointed by the Duke of Hanover as his advisor for juridical affairs. He was assigned by the Duke to accompany the Apostolic Vicary Nicolaus Stenus in his visit to Hanover. This Danish scientist had converted to Catholicism and became Pope Innocentius XI envoy to the Lutheran Hanover in order to explore the possibility of reunification of the Christian churches – an idea cherished by Leibniz, who held a long conversation with Stenus. The conversation was carefully transcribed by him, serving as raw material for the fictional "Dialogue between Poliandre and Theophile." In spite of its political failure, this dialogue is considered one of Leibniz's "mystical dialogues," in Baruzi's terms, and contributed to his later intensive irenic activities.

Another more successful example is the dialogue "Conversation between Father Emery the Hermit and the Marquis of Pianese, Minister of State of Savoy – a dialogue which yielded a Remarkable Change in the Minister's Life," to which

Leibniz also gave the title "Dialogue about the Application one must have for One's Salvation" – a title that stresses the religious aim of persuading a former believer to return to the most important of beliefs, i.e., Salvation. The two characters in the "Conversation" represent paradigmatic persons, exemplified in Leibniz's environment and certainly relevant for his dialogical purposes. Both of them are in fact products of disenchantment: one of them becomes a skeptic who regards both religion and science as unable to overcome the predominant vanity and intrigue of court life; the other withdraws from such a life in order to restore the integrity and power of his faith. Between the skeptic who is on the verge of cynicism and the deeply religious isolated hermit, the dialogical exchanges seem at first to generate an abyss that prevents the very possibility of a conversation, not to say of persuasion of the former by the latter. At the beginning, while displaying a certain curiosity vis-à-vis the personality of the famous hermit, the marquis does little more than presenting one after the other the familiar skeptic topoi. The hermit, however, does not endeavor to persuade the marquis to accept a system of beliefs or any given method; he rather lures the marquis into a discussion where reason is used in an unprejudiced way to lead him to salvation through a faith that, free from commitment to any pre-established dogma, is capable of meeting the requirements of rationality, beyond the limits of any particular confession. The nearly 30 pages of this dialogue reveal not only the Leibnizian-rich argumentative steps but also his ability to recognize and respect the weight of his opponent's apparently insurmountable doubts.

From a dialogical viewpoint, what is remarkable is how Leibniz, having depicted the extreme conditions of a court such as that of the marquis, successfully demonstrates how even in such a situation a true and useful dialogue is possible.

Nevertheless, not all dialogues Leibniz is concerned with have to do with religious issues. In the short originally Latin text I translated as "On the Dialogistic Art," it is on other characteristics of dialogues that he is primarily interested. In this little piece, he is not concerned with the efficacy of the genre as a literary, persuasive, or philosophical device but rather as a tool for properly handling controversies and other kinds of debates. The main condition he sets up for the correctness and success of such exchanges is the impartiality of the dialogue author, who is required not to favor one or the other of the disputants but to remain totally neutral as to the controversy's result. Here is the way the obedience to this condition should be followed, according to Leibniz:

It is usual to write dialogues in such a way that the author favors one side. The truly philosophical dialogistic art would be to write so that both sides dispute with equal art, and that those things that a ferocious adversary could say be actually said. Thus, ultimately, the triumph of the dialogue would be the triumph of the cause. Indeed, it would then be like a colloquium and a judiciary conference of the litigating parties – the dialogue's author acting, as it were, as a judge or, if you prefer, as president and moderator.

The figure of a moderator is also present in "On Controversies," Leibniz's 1680 summary of a conversation he had with Prince Johann Friedrich of Hanover, who was seeking advice on advancing the negotiations for the reunification of the Church. He begins by telling the Prince that "The variety of studies I have been forced to undertake interrupted a long time ago my project of working at an exact

discussion of some controversies," to which he adds: "I think it is now time to come back to it, since I have been asked to treat in depth the important question of the signs of the true Church." His interrupted work, he claims, comprised a "very peculiar method" he had developed for himself, a method that had "two great advantages: first, it could not be disapproved by anyone; second, it would lead to the end, furnishing a sure means to arrive at a conclusion." The Prince objected that many others had already proposed new methods that did not yield any advancement; but Leibniz called his attention to the difference between his promise and theirs: "for they always promise very easy methods, by which they hope to convince their adversaries in a short time; whereas I declare that the method I undertake is very difficult, and that it requires great dedication and a great deal of time."

The Prince, partly satisfied with this response, requested at least "some visible sign of the advantage of this method – a sign capable of appealing to everybody, even before getting to the details." The Prince's request, Leibniz claimed, anticipated what he intended to say about his method, namely, "that indeed there is here a rather surprising sign of the virtue of this method, which made it visible that it is one of a kind," a statement to which he added: "You will agree, Sire, that there is nothing that makes a dispute more commendable than the moderation of the disputants; well, I claim that this moderation will be manifest here in a quite special and indisputable way."

The dialogue continues, with the Prince complaining that Leibniz speaks enigmatically, whereas he does not understand a word of what he says, and with Leibniz's bold reply: "Your Highness will be satisfied by my clarification." What I purport to do, he says, "is to write down controversies in such a way that the reader cannot know which party is favored by the author … Everybody would be forced to admit that the form of my undertaking imposes upon me moderation, and that I couldn't so disguise myself without sweetening things and retaining a measure of impartiality everywhere." The Prince, still not understanding the rest, declares the invention excellent: "If you succeed in realizing it, and if you are able to write down controversies without letting it be known which party you favor, I anticipate an extraordinary success for you. People will be attracted by such an unexpected novelty and everybody will want to read your works by virtue of their rarity."

After describing various features that encumber disputes and confound disputants, such as apparent contradictions of the adversaries, repetitions of the reasons adduced, ad hominem arguments, malice, abuses, mistakes, findings that bring reasons to one's side, as well as "abilities one learns by oneself and practices without thinking in the heat of the dispute," which are also disturbing for disputes and controversies, Leibniz spells out, under the title "It must be noted," the six conditions that the "moderator" or the "expounder" must fulfill in order to prevent the abovementioned disturbances and to ensure the proper application of the "method":

1. "that this method will first be applied to the question of the Church and what depends upon it, as an experiment, since the decision on this question would provide a precedent for all the rest;

2. that he who uses this method will be neither judge, nor party, nor reconciliator, but only expounder;

3. that the expounder's faithfulness will be apparent in that no one will be able to guess which party he belongs to – which is unheard of in controversies, and can be taken as a palpable sign of moderation and equity;

4. that he will maintain a certain indisputable order which will bear the clarity of evidence, and which must exclude formally the five difficulties indicated above;

5. that he will summarize the disputes as much as possible, so that one can see all their economy, even though what often makes these things prolix and difficult is not so much their nature as the complicated and ambiguous expressions used by the authors, which one must develop so as not to let them say that their reasons have been neglected;

6. that it will usually be easy for a man of common sense to make his judgment based on the report given, without any need that the expounder declare [his own opinion]."