Biel/Bienne, 17/03/25

Proposition regarding the future of *Dialectica*, 1.1.2025-31.12.2027

Object of the present vote. In my view, the members of the general assembly are asked to give a vote of confidence, both in me as editor of the journal *Dialectica* and in its involvement with the Open Access publisher *Philosophie.ch*. This vote is an essential first step in the reconstitution of *Dialectica* as an association under Swiss law, because it affects (and to some extent determines) all subsequent decisions. In order to (re-)gain your confidence, I lay out (i) what my mistakes were, (ii) to what extent they're remedied, (iii) why I wish to continue in my role as editor of the journal and director (gérant / Geschäftsführer) of the association and (iv) what my strategy and action plan are.

Meae culpae. *Dialectica* has had five difficult years, and many mistakes were made. I'm taking responsibility for them, in my three roles as association director, editor and production manager. As an **editor**, the most important mistake was that we did not prepare for our "flipping", the transition to Open Access, in advance. In the autumn of 2019, eager to switch to Open Access and spurred on by our success in securing SNSF funding for a one-year "Spark" flipping project, we prematurely cancelled our publishing contract with Wiley and were hence thrown into cold water. The team quickly assembled was motivated, but new to the task and we didn't really know each other nor what exactly there was to do. Hence the pandemic hit us at the worst possible time, before tasks were distributed and before we had a clear idea of what lied ahead. It turned out that we had to do the whole production process - turning an accepted manuscript into a beautiful layouted pdf and a completely machine-readable html - from scratch. Using John MacFarlane's [pandoc tool](#) and [markdown](#), an increasingly popular lightweight markup language, we conceived, designed and developed the (to our knowledge) only editorial workflow that only uses free software - which is now freely available for everyone to use on [github](#), the parts specific to Dialectica marked out and thus easily adaptable to other journals as well. In parallel, we developed our own editorial management system, the [fishpond](#), to our knowledge the only one which allows for triple-blind refereeing, where not just authors and referees are blind, but also those who pick referees and evaluate their reports. This work led to a great delay in publishing, but also made possible the financial survival of the journal, which lived off the swissuniversities project "[philosophers' workbench](#)" for the years 2022-24.

As **association director**, the most important mistake was the decision, taken in 2020 and hence before my involvement with *Philosophie.ch*, to integrate *Dialectica* into the administrative structure of the philosophy portal. The reason was that this structure (assemblies, accounts, work contracts, tax exemption, social security accounts etc.) was already in place and that the possible synergies, mostly in terms of reduced workload, looked appealing. As of 2025, this intermeshing has been reversed: *Dialectica* will now be its own association and be related to *Philosophie.ch* at most by a publishing contract, like the one the journal used to have with Wiley.

As **production manager,** the most consequential and questionable decision was to treat the bibliography of *Dialectica* articles as meta-data, ie. as being in the publisher's, not the authors' responsibility. In practice, this means that we had to "re-do" all references, i.e. have one big bibliography from which all articles cite. This has a number of advantages (cf. below), but also imposes a large work burden of uniformisation and standardization. Fortunately, our copy-editors could fall back to my own personal bibliography, amassed over the last 30 years, and so did not have to start completely from scratch.

Mission accomplished. In my view, these three main mistakes have been remedied. The production process is now complete and has been "freezed", insulated within a "docker" environment, where tools and programs are no longer updated. It should remain useable for years to come, producing articles identical in look and feel to the ones already published. The administrative structure of *Dialectica* as its own association is being put in place, and new people are ready and willing to serve as board members. The bibliography has been integrated into the portal (cf. the pages, e.g., on the [SEP](), [Phil Imprint]() and [Ergo]()) and it will be made available to prospective *Dialectica* authors as well.

Evaluation of the present situation. As I see it, the problems encountered lie mostly on the side of the production, ie. the publisher's part, not on the side of the editing, i.e. the journal's part. Throughout these years, the refereeing process ran smoothly and efficiently, with many new people taking part in this selfless and laudable service to the profession. While we tried to keep a low profile and communicated very sparingly with authors and other stakeholders, some people got upset and angry, but they usually came to understand the situation and excused us for the delay in the publication of their papers. The journal's reputation was certainly dented, but I do not think this reputational damage is irreversible. In response to [our Daily Nous post in February 2024](), for example, we got a lot of very positive feed-back. I am confident that submission numbers will quickly go up once we announce our "coming out" as an OA journal.
In retrospective, perhaps it would have been better for the journal to choose another publisher, perhaps some OA press like [Open Humanities Press]() or [Ubiquity Press](). We evaluated this option and decided against it, mostly because we did not know where to get the money such a publisher would expect from the journal for a free (aka "Platinum" or "Diamond") open access publication. The cooperation with the portal not only made it possible to apply to *swissuniversities* money (which we did with success), but also shifted costs to the portal, which bore the costs of becoming itself an Open Access publisher (now open for other journals as well).

Why I apply to remain editor. In the 26 years I have been editing *Dialectica,* I have grown very fond of the journal, its history and its role in the philosophical community. *Dialectica* played a very important role in bringing analytic philosophy to the European Continent, and it could now play an equally important role in the global struggle to make science open, ie the fight of researchers to wrestle back control over their own work from multinational for-profit firms like Elsevier and Springer. There is much interest in the philosophical community and in the Swiss Open Access microcosm in *Dialectica*'s "flipping" experience and I would very much like continuing to promote *Dialectica* as a OA model, both within philosophy (like at the [GAP.11]()) and among the institutions involved in the Swiss OA action plan (as a member of the "[Open Access Alliance]()").
I wish to remain editor in order to get *Dialectica* back into calmer waters, to resume the "courant normal" within the new publishing framework and to start reaping the fruits the seeds of which have been planted.

Editorial strategy. As an editor, my strategy comprises the following elements, all to be discussed with the members of the Executive Board and the Editorial Committee and to be revised accordingly.
- **A Swiss journal**. *Dialectica's* "Swissness" is not just its unique selling point, but has now become vital to its financial survival. Generating no income from authors or readers, *Dialectica* depends on the support it gets from academic institutions. These are primarily located in Switzerland and the journal's contacts with them have to be nurtured and deepened. *Dialectica's* anchorage in Switzerland should be reflected in the composition of the Executive Board and the Editorial Committee, but it also needs to be maintained by regular contacts (including the writing of many reports) with the SASH, swissuniversities, the Open Access Alliance, the consortium of university libraries, the SNSF, the individual libraries and their OA departments and so on.
- **New functionalities**. The potential of our "revolutionary" strategy is far from exhausted. In

addition to the "classic" (official, registered) versions of the Dialectica articles hosted on a "classic" [Open Journal System webpage](#), we want to make available enhanced versions of them on [*Dialectica's* portal pages](#). For a restricted group of users, these should contain full-text links in the bibliographies, downloadable reference lists, commentary functions etc. I believe that this will greatly increase the attractiveness of *Dialectica* as a publishing venue.

- **Collaborative refereeing**. Our refereeing system, the fishpond, should be developed further and integrated into the portal architecture, allowing for a simple, efficient and convenient way of discussing submitted manuscripts, writing and evaluating reports, process statistics, sharing reading tips and references etc. These improvements should make the work of the members of the Editorial Committee both more visible and more interesting. By integrating the good elements of the "open review" trend, *Dialectica* also positions itself on the forefront of the "Open Science" movement.

- **High-risk, high-reward**. Within the Editorial Committee, which is collectively responsible for publication decisions, the Editor is a primus inter pares. Like all other EC members, however, editors have their own tastes and predilections, which deserve to be known. My own preference is for substantial, scholarly pieces, which critically review a lot, if not all of the relevant literature and make a substantial contribution (a prime example, in my view, is Dean Zimmerman's "[The A-Theory of Time, the B-Theory of Time and 'Taking Tense Seriously'](#)"). This is one reason why it is good that *Dialectica* does not have word limits and does not impose any formatting requirements for initial review. As far as I see, we are one of very few venues for such stand-alone substantive pieces and they are, in my view, also the most interesting to read and to comment upon.

- **Privileging speed over comments**. The fishpond is designed to produce quick decisions on submissions and to lower their median turn-around time to about two weeks. This goal can be attained by opening up the fishpond to new members of the Editorial Committee, a partial automatisation of the email correspondence and the introduction of broad evaluation categories ("nothing new", "sloppily prepared", "insubstantial" etc.) - as it is done in the fishpond now, such evaluations should not lead to (desk) rejections, but to papers being "sent back with regrets", quickly but without (implied) criticism.

- **Collaborative editing**. Authors should become much more involved in the copy-editing of their articles. Instead of imposing increasingly cumbersome formatting requirements for final manuscripts, we should instead involve authors much more directly in the editing of their work. Instead of annotating pdfs, authors should, for example, be able to tell a fellow philosopher that they intended to have all schematic proposition letters in italics. In a short collaborative session, an agreement on the final look of the article can be quickly and efficiently reached.

- **A shared bibliography**. While its introduction was quite cumbersome (cf. above), having a shared bibliography presents many opportunities for the journal. It makes it much easier to provide "cites" and "cited-by" information to CrossRef, making articles easier to find and to cite. It allows for cross-linking articles (which articles cite quine:1960? which other articles have been published in feminist metaphysics?) and for linking references with profiles, containing personal bibliographies. It allows for the retrieval and the verification of bibliographic information (for example DOIs) en masse, thereby greatly increasing its quality. Not having to scrape together their references and to painstakingly check their accuracy, authors will also save a lot of time.

- **An open ecosystem**. Integrating the journal into the portal's architecture improves the "ecosystem" aspect of the publications, something commercial publishers seek to achieve by adding new functionalities to their pdf viewers. In contrast, our system is more limited and more open: more limited in that it focusses on philosophy, more open in that it is not restricted to publications of just one publisher. It should therefore be possible to provide better reading tips, better overviews of topics, journals and publishers and thereby make *Dialectica* articles more visible and more widely read.

About FC's proposal. It is very good news that Damiano Costa, Anne Meylan and Claudio Calosi want to be more involved with *Dialectica*. I would greatly appreciate if they would immediately join (or rejoin, in Claudio's case) the Editorial Committee and be elected as board members, strengthening the journal's ties with ESAP and the academic community as a whole. It is important and urgent that *Dialectica*'s reputation is restored, and that the normal publication schedule is restored in 2025. While I agree with the need to involve more people, especially in the EC and in the procurement of high-quality submissions, I do not think this is the right time for a change in leadership. The risk that there will be a further delay in the 2025 publications, especially if there is a change of publisher, seems quite substantial to me.

An action plan. If the general assembly of Dialectica expresses its confidence in me and *Philosophie.ch*, I propose

1. to convene an "ordinary" general assembly soon, in April, to elect new members to the Executive Board (the steering committee of the association) and, among them, a new president;
2. to invite the steering committee of *Philosophie.ch* to offer a publication contract for 2025-2029, with clearly stated deadlines and penalties for both the non-delivery of manuscripts (the journal's fault) and the non-publication of articles (the publisher's fault);
3. to invite all Swiss academic philosophers to join the Editorial Committee, and the members of the Editorial Committee to become associate editors;
4. to advertise the position of chief copy-editor for the remaining nine months of 2025 (for which Marco Schori can apply), and to direct all available resources on the copy-editing of the 2024 and 2025 issues;
5. to undertake, with the help of the EB and EC members, a broad marketing campaign within the philosophical community, to procure more high-quality submissions and to advertise the fishpond as an attractive refereeing model;
6. to contact all Swiss OA stakeholders, requesting their support and offering them, in return, the use of our markdown workflow, OA toolkit and of the fishpond.

I hope that this information gives you a reasonably complete picture of the package you are offered. I am at your disposition for any further information you may find useful. In case I am slow to respond to emails, please just call me at +41 76 7628125. All the best,