

Introduction

Rhetoric: Having conceived an inordinate affection for that bearded man in the mantle, Dialogue, who is said to be the son of Philosophy and is older than he (Lucian of Samosata) is, he lives with him. Showing no sense of shame, he has curtailed the freedom and the range of my speeches and has confined himself to brief, disjointed questions: and instead of saying whatever he wishes in a powerful voice, he fits together and spells out short paragraphs, for which he cannot get hearty praise or great applause from his hearers, but only a smile, or a restrained gesture of the hand, an inclination of the head, or a sigh to point his periods.¹

In *The Double Indictment*, a charming dialogue by Lucian of Samosata, the author is brought to trial by his two loves Rhetoric and Dialogue. Rhetoric, Lucian's first companion, accuses him of abandoning her for Dialogue, and Dialogue accuses Lucian of turning him into a monstrosity by combining him with comedy. This dialogue by Lucian marks an important moment in the history of the literary dialogue. Along with Plato and Cicero, who used the dialogue for philosophical purposes, Lucian is one of the three most influential dialogue writers. He adapted the form to mock the pretensions of ideologies of all sorts, including philosophers, showing the comic potential of the genre. After Lucian, the written dialogue was never again the sole preserve of philosophy. He opened the dialogue and reflected back, in *The Double Indictment*, on the justice of what he did to dialogue.

Today we too are turning from rhetoric to dialogue and adapting it to our own needs. As Giulio Ferroni noted in his introduction to a collection of papers on dialogue, "The dialogue is the order of the day: dialogue, dialogicity, dialogism are the constant points of reference for contemporary debates in the human sciences; and, as never before, dialogue

¹ Lucian, *The Double Indictment*, p. 139.

traverses the space of the entire planet creating relationships between entities that until recently ignored each other completely, producing a tight net of voices, calls, and responses."² Dialogue has gone from being a minor literary form, representing a type of intellectual activity, to being a defining human activity. This, as Ferroni points out, may be due the technological advances from the telephone to the Internet that have allowed us to listen in to each other and to enter into discussion with each other as never before. We are weaving a web of conversations that span the globe, and creating new communities unconstrained by distance. In this world of electric talk, dialogue has become the paradigm for virtuous activity. In the age of mass communication it has become the balm for conflict and intellectual difference. As we extend our ability to communicate, we hope we have created the conditions for the dialogues we imagine. Let me mention a few of the specific contexts in which discussion of dialogue has bloomed:

- With the election of Bill Clinton in the United States there has been a marked increase in discussion, even in Canada, about the "information superhighway" championed by his Vice-President Gore. This "infobahn" builds on the Internet, which has been exploding as a communications network for academics.³ The Internet, unlike the mass media like television, encourages the exchange of information through World Wide Web sites, chat rooms, e-mail and discussion lists. It adds to the communication technologies like the telegraph and telephone that we have at our disposal for dialogue. On the Internet there are thousands of open discussions on all sorts of topics that one can participate in. These electronic dialogues are beginning to replace

² Ferroni, *Il Dialogo: Scambi e Passaggi della Parola*, p. 11. This is my translation from the Italian.

³ Statistics published in *Communications of the ACM* in an article entitled "How to Anticipate the Internet's Global Diffusion" (October 1998, vol. 41, num. 10, p. 100) are that as of July 1997, there were 19.54 million hosts on the Internet. The number of hosts grew an average of 15% a quarter in 1996.

traditional mechanisms for the publication of information.⁴ We can now read messages posted by researchers and eye-witnesses without waiting for published news. We can dialogue with witnesses and colleagues rather than read reports.⁵

- The mass media like radio and television, which we would not normally think of as dialogical, are increasingly presenting us with information in the form of discussions which we are invited to overhear. Radio call-in shows that draw us into nation-wide dialogues have been a fixture for some time. Television talk-shows have been growing in popularity; now even the news is presented as a talk-show where we listen daily to dialogues around events and their significance. Experts didn't tell us what to think about the Gulf war, they debated each other in panels set up by the networks. It should not surprise us that politicians routinely use these shows to sway the electorate. Given the importance of these shows in forming public opinion, their

⁴ Jacques Leslie in an article in *Wired* (October 1994, p. 68-71) entitled "Goodbye, Gutenberg: Pixelating peer review is revolutionizing scholarly journals" discusses the growth in electronic academic publications. A good collection of papers on the subject is *Scholarly Publishing: The Electronic Frontier* edited by Robin Peek and Gregory Newby. For lists of these journals and essays on the subject there are a number of online sites including *NewJour* (<http://gort.ucsd.edu/newjour/>) and the *Journal of Electronic Publishing* (<http://www.press.umich.edu/jep/>).

⁵ The number of books on the Internet has also exploded. Just go to your local bookstore and you will find an abundance of how-to books, directories of services, and so on. A readable history of the Internet is *Where Wizards Stay Up Late* by Haffner and Lyon. A good introduction to the Internet is still Ed Krol's *The Whole Internet*. For a more academic perspective there is *Global Networks* edited by Linda Harasim. For an introduction to the field of computer mediated communication there is Hiltz and Turoff's *The Network Nation*. Finally, for those interested in a quick guide to the fuss over the convergence of media there is *Life After Television* by George Gilder.

hosts, like Oprah, Geraldo, and Letterman, can be said to have become our Socratic gadflies, questioning the rich and famous in our living room.⁶

- Dialogue has become a valued practice in business. One of the better known works on management, *The Fifth Discipline*, promotes dialogue as one of the important practices of learning organizations in the information age. As the author, Peter Senge writes in the Introduction, "Dialogue groups now are forming in a wide variety of settings, in the public and private sector. ... We are learning that there is deep hunger to rediscover our capacity to talk with one another."⁷
- Statistical studies of bibliographic databases like the *Philosopher's Index* and the card catalogue of the University of Toronto show that the relative frequency of works on dialogue has increased substantially since the beginning of the 1960s, especially in the area of religious studies, politics, and philosophy.⁸ Not only is more being published on dialogue, but a greater percentage of what is published is now on dialogue.
- Much of this growth in interest in dialogue can be traced back to the Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism* (Unitatis Redintegratio) which exhorts Catholics "to take an

⁶ In an article called *Mass Communication and Para-Social Interaction: Observation on Intimacy at a Distance*, Horton and Wohl comment on how television performers create an intimate atmosphere with the spectator. We are invited to think of Johnny Carson as a friend who winks at us as he questions the characters that pass by.

⁷ Senge, *The Fifth Discipline*, p. xiii of the "Introduction to the Paperback Edition."

⁸ I published preliminary results of these results in "The Desire for Dialogue" in *The Toronto Semiotic Circle Bulletin*. vol. 1, no. 3 (November 1993), p. 2-6. More detailed results were presented by John Bradley and myself at the [ALLC-ACH '94](#) conference in a paper entitled *A Growing Fascination With Dialogue: Bibliographic Databases and the Recent History of Ideas*.

active and intelligent part in the work of ecumenism." An essential step in this work of reconciliation and understanding between faiths is dialogue between their representatives.⁹ Dialogue is not only the model for ecumenical work, but in theologians like Martin Buber it is presented as a paradigm for our relationship with our fellow men, God, and the natural world.¹⁰

- In education dialogue still holds a place of honour. Michael Oakeshott reminds us that, "As civilized human beings, we are the inheritors, neither of an enquiry about ourselves and the world, nor of an accumulating body of information, but of a conversation, begun in the primeval forests and made more articulate in the course of centuries. It is a conversation which goes on both in public and within each of ourselves."¹¹ The National Endowment for the Humanities in the United States has taken this literally and is sponsoring national conversations about the humanities.¹²

⁹ Vatican II *Decree on Ecumenism* (Unitatis Redintegratio), 21 November 1964, Chapter 1, Section 4.

"Then, 'dialogue' between competent experts from different Churches and communities; in their meetings, which are organized in a religious spirit, each explains the teaching of his communion in greater depth and brings out clearly its distinctive features. Through such dialogue everyone gains a truer knowledge and more just appreciation of the teaching and religious life of both communions."

¹⁰ Buber, *I and Thou*.

¹¹ Oakeshott, *The Voice of Poetry in the Conversation of Mankind*, p. 11.

¹² An article in the December 15th, 1994 issue of *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (p. A22) entitled, "Humanities Endowment Steps Up Plans for a 'National Conversation,'" reports that Sheldon Hackney, the new chairman, is setting up a "national conversation" to "bring citizens together to talk in intelligent ways about divisive issues" through grants that support "face-to-face meetings at the local level." The list of proposals funded for implementation in 1996 can be found at the NEH WWW site (<http://www.neh.gov:80/html/report96/public.html>).

- In philosophy dialogue is still alive and well as an activity and subject. Michael Heim in an article on the dialogue experiments of Ernesto Grassi points out that, "For Phenomenology, 'dialogue' and 'being-together' are both subject and object of philosophical investigation."¹³ Recent works like *Dialogue and Deconstruction* report and comment on the encounter between two of the most important contemporary Continental thinkers, Gadamer and Derrida, as the encounter of a philosophy of dialogue and one of deconstruction (as the title suggests). Associating Gadamer with dialogue is not unfair, since it has been an important part of his teaching and thought.¹⁴ On the other side of the Atlantic, in analytic circles, there is also a growing interest in dialogue, though in the context of argument and human-computer dialogue.¹⁵

¹³ Heim, "Grassi's Experiment: The Renaissance through Phenomenology", p. 234. He goes on to comment how dialogue became especially important in the English world of Phenomenology after the Second World War. "The terms of 'existential phenomenology,' such as 'dialogue' and 'commitment,' became common coin and even intellectual clichés in postwar Anglo-European culture."

¹⁴ In his *Philosophical Apprenticeships*, Gadamer writes, "My own nature was well suited to such a 'dialogical existence,' and I attempted to develop this into a teaching style..." (p. 141.) Likewise in an interview reported in *Hans-Georg Gadamer on Education, Poetry, and History*, he says, "I am a dialogical being." (p. 66)

¹⁵ In the editor's introduction to a collection of articles on "Argumentation in Dialogues", Douglas Walton writes, "Three main avenues of research are now converging towards a strong interest in analyzing the dialogue structure of argumentation." (*Argumentation*, p. 393) The three avenues named are the field of argumentation, the field of pragmatics in linguistics, and the field of artificial intelligence (along with associated areas of cognitive science). It is worth noting that in the field of artificial intelligence the most widely discussed test of machine intelligence, the Turing test, is a form of dialogue where the artificial system tries to convince a human judge that it is human by answering questions typed at a terminal.

- Advertisers have not missed this desire for dialogue. Labatt, a Canadian beer company invited us in 1994 to open a dialogue about beer. Their print ad had a picture of a "handsome metal bottle-opener" with the line: "It isn't intended to open a bottle, But a dialogue." Alert dialogue watchers like myself rushed to call an automated voice system and answer a few questions about our favorite beers so that we could get the handsome dialogue opener. Labatt's advertising agency, no doubt, was aware of the connection between dialogue and drinking alcohol that goes back to Plato.

How are we to understand this explosion of dialogue? Lucian was twice accused, first by Rhetoric for abandoning her genre of persuasion for Dialogue, and then by Dialogue for opening him to laughter and corrupting him; I believe our culture should likewise face a double charge, first for abandoning other activities for dialogue, and then by those who think dialogue should be kept for serious tasks and not repurposed for everything from management to advertising. Who then is going to prepare the case? Communication scientists are studying the technologies that facilitate interaction while human-computer interface engineers are studying human-computer dialogue. Political scientists can discuss the merits of dialogue as a political activity while sociologists try to account for the growth of interest in dialogue. Literary historians have traced the history of the written dialogue, while authors continue writing them. It is left up to philosophy, the mother of dialogue, to ask anew what dialogue is and submit that for trial by discussion. We who gave birth to dialogue should, in the spirit of Socrates, hold our child up for examination, and ask if it is but a phantom. To do this we can draw from the history of philosophical dialogues and previous attempts to define dialogue, including Lucian's comical redefinition.

Monstrous Dialogue

Given the number of ways dialogue is used today, the first question we have to deal with is whether dialogue is one thing or many. It may be that what is considered dialogue in one context is not the same thing as what is called for in another. Dialogue could be a monster made up of very different parts, joined for convenience under one name.

This problem of the unity of dialogue can be seen in Lucian's dialogue where the author plays with the possible senses. First, he fashions dialogue into a character, tied to a particular content - that of philosophy, while at the same time retaining its other senses as an oral activity and a written genre. The character stands as the child of a community (philosophy) and a genre of writing. He is described as dour, awesome, and skeletal, due to all the questioning that takes place in dialogue – in contrast to full-bodied Rhetoric, seducer of young men. We have Lucian to thank for cleaning Dialogue up; before that he was not attractive to the public, who had previously "avoided taking hold of him as if he were a sea-urchin."¹⁶ This description, which plays with the image of Socrates as an inquirer who did not care for his appearance and whose barbed questions could sting, no longer seems true given the present love of dialogue.

The second sense of dialogue is as an oral activity. The activity that Lucian represents is different from the character that participates in the trial. It is a way of conversing in short questions and paragraphs, conversing that invites not applause but a smile or slight gesture. It is a subtle activity that does not try to persuade in the direct way of rhetoric, but entertains and educates with irony and light comedy.

¹⁶ Lucian, *The Double Indictment*, p. 149.

The third sense of dialogue is that of the written form. This form, as Lucian the author transforms it, is something else yet. It is a short and entertaining work of moral satire, one of the first of a rich tradition of "Dialogues of the Dead" where impossible combinations of characters (like Dialogue and Rhetoric) are combined, often in Hades. It is also a conscious repurposing of a form traditionally associated with philosophy that is designed to make fun of philosophy so that even the professional philosopher would be amused.

Dialogue the character complains that after being dressed up by Lucian he is "neither afoot nor ahorseback, neither prose nor verse, but seem to my hearers a strange phenomenon made up of different elements, like a Centaur."¹⁷ Lucian's work makes a monster out of dialogue and admits it. It leaves us with an image of dialogue in general as a hybrid genre, neither serious philosophy nor comedy. Along with the character there are, in Lucian's work, two forms of dialogue, the oral conversation, and the written work that represents it. This last form is Lucian's real defense.

If we look at today's explosion of interest in dialogue we can discern three parallel uses of the word that we need to study if we are to understand it as one thing:

1. **Oral Dialogue.** Dialogue as an oral activity between two or more people who alternate asking and answering questions.
2. **Written Dialogue.** Dialogue as a written genre that represents oral dialogue and is usually not intended to be performed on stage.
3. **Ineffable Dialogue.** Dialogue as an exchange between individuals or communities through which comes something undefinable but meaningful.¹⁸

¹⁷ Lucian, *The Double Indictment*, p. 147.

¹⁸ This division of the important senses of dialogue was suggested to me by Eva Kushner, though she should not be held responsible for my wording.

What is significant about all three of these uses of the word dialogue is that we rarely talk about being in dialogue at the time that it is happening. There is something sacred about dialogue, such that we use it sparingly for the untidy interactions we are actually in. Dialogue is something that is to be entered, called for, or read after. We talk about events as dialogues only when we are outside as witnesses, before they have begun or after they are finished. This suggests that one thing these uses have in common is that they refer to something that has a unity that a conversation need not have. Only when an interaction is over (or has not yet begun) can it be judged to have a unity similar to the artistic integrity of finished written work; then we are willing to call it a dialogue. While we are in a conversation we are hesitant to call it a dialogue; when two communities are in negotiation they rarely call it a dialogue; only the anticipated or completed work do we call dialogue. Even what we call for, though it hasn't happened, is imagined as something with the integrity of a finished work, not something confused and wandering like a conversation that could go astray at any moment.

All three of these uses of the word can be found in Lucian if one considers how the character Dialogue is the representative of a community of thinkers and writings. What has changed is the way the third sense has become common since the Second World War, accounting for much of the growth in interest in dialogue.¹⁹ There are two facets to this sense that make it different from the other two. First, this sense of dialogue is used when people talk about the interaction that isn't necessarily between individuals or in the form of an oral conversation. It is this sense of dialogue that is used to talk about the interaction (in whatever form) between communities (as in "Arab-Israeli dialogue"),

¹⁹ There are two other technical senses of dialogue that I have omitted from this discussion. In music "dialogue" can refer to passages where the interaction of instruments is suggestive of oral dialogue. In theatre and film, "dialogue" can refer to the passages of conversation in the script.

ideologies (as in "Marxist-Christian dialogue") and with entities that don't talk in the normal way, like gods or books. Second, it is the hardest use of the word to pin down as it refers to an interaction which is (or should be) meaningful in a way that cannot be defined. The difference between dialogue in this sense and other types of interaction is precisely the undefinable quality of the event. One can't point to some formal element of a dialogue and say that that is what differentiates it from a conversation. A dialogue is an interaction where something valuable and meaningful took place that cannot be described, except by the dialogue. This is the dialogue that we hope for, call for, but rarely find. This is what we hope our fancy communication systems will facilitate.

This book will look at these three senses of the word dialogue, beginning with the last, in order to define dialogue. In the first chapter I will deal with the ineffable in dialogue. I will conclude that while this sense of dialogue cannot be defined, it needs to be kept in mind when we discuss other senses of the word. In the second chapter I look at oral dialogue, and in the third and fourth chapters the written dialogue, showing how they are similar genres of persuasion. The fifth chapter and conclusion propose a definition for the oral and written dialogue that opens the way for a discussion of the ideological baggage of dialogue. Simply put, the bulk of this work gathers up the senses of dialogue, so that I can suggest a definition that allows us to understand the possibilities for dialogue that make it so attractive.

I begin with the third sense of dialogue, rather than taking them in the order listed above, because the ineffable qualities that are associated with dialogue haunt all the senses of dialogue. Only once we understand what cannot be pinned down about dialogue can we safely go on to discuss the more mundane senses of dialogue and define it. The definition I eventually arrive at will not encompass the ineffable in dialogue; it is proposed to further conversation about what can be said about dialogue. This work will

not answer the sociological question of why there has been such a growth of interest in dialogue and opening in its use; it is meant to be part of the conversation about just what dialogue is.

Dialogue and Philosophy

The two trials of Lucian are preceded by a lengthy exchange between Zeus and Justice (Dike) that sets the scene for the trials. Infuriated by philosophers who claim the gods do not care about mortals, Zeus asks Justice to go down and oversee the courts. She is naturally reluctant to do so because of the way she was treated the last time when injustice triumphed at the trial of Socrates. When her father argues that the son of Sophroniscus (Socrates) had convinced everyone to honour her more than injustice she reminds him of the treatment Socrates met. She is finally persuaded when Zeus points out how popular philosophy is:

But at present, do not you see how many short cloaks and staves and wallets there are? On all sides there are long beards, and books in the left hand, and everybody preaches in favour of you ; the public walks are full of people assembling in companies and in battalions, and there is nobody who does not want to be thought a scion of Virtue. In fact, many, giving up the trades that they had before, rush after the wallet and the cloak, tan their bodies in the sun to Ethiopian hue, make themselves extemporaneous philosophers out of cobblers or carpenters, and go about praising you and your virtue. Consequently, in the words of the proverb, it would be easier for a man to fall in a boat without hitting a plank than for your eye to miss a philosopher wherever it looks.²⁰

The visit of Justice accompanied by Hermes, which Zeus encourages, creates an excuse for the unusual trials of Lucian and others. This prelude, with its asides on philosophy, is too long to be merely a device to set the scene for the trials that follow; its

²⁰ Lucian, *The Double Indictment*, p. 95.

length suggests that the sorry state of philosophy is connected to the issue of Lucian's reuse of dialogue. The parody of the philosophical community that frames the issue of Lucian's rejection of Rhetoric has the effect of lessening our sympathy for the character Dialogue, who is after all the "son of philosophy." This in turn makes our judgment of Lucian's choice more likely to be favorable. If we laugh at the philosophy that laid claim on Dialogue we will be less upset with Lucian's reuse of the form associated with philosophy.

Lucian was writing at a time when literary innovation was not valued. While the Mediterranean world looked to Rome for political peace, writers tended to imitate the Greek forms and look back with nostalgia on classical Greek culture. Lucian stands out as one of the few literary innovators, and his innovation consisted in the repurposing of the classical forms. His educated audience would recognize the fact that he is using the philosophical dialogue to parody the very community that traditionally used the form. If the character that stands for Lucian defends himself against Rhetoric using Rhetoric's tools (the long discourse), Lucian the author is using philosophy's ways (the written dialogue) to defend himself against Dialogue, the scion of philosophy. The dialogue is an example of the reuse of dialogue that, while it may have offended literary purists, also addresses those offended, offering a defense of the innovation. The dialogues would not work if their audience were not acquainted with philosophical discourse and the importance of dialogue to philosophy. If dialogue is not related to philosophy then the parody doesn't work, and ironically, if the parody works, it distances dialogue and philosophy by perverting the form. (Would philosophy recognize her son after Lucian had combined him with comedy and dressed him up?)

The Double Indictment and Lucian's other works, because of their critical relationship to philosophy, are at the edge of the discipline. They discuss philosophical subjects and

philosophers but are not serious enough to be considered philosophical. They draw attention to hypocrisy within philosophy, while remaining committed to the virtues that philosophers fail to attain. They create a parodic distance between the reader and philosophy, but in so doing, preserve the possibility of a purified discipline. By choosing to mock philosophy, Lucian shows a certain respect for it. In so doing he opens the question of form and philosophical content. If Lucian is successful you can't read a philosophical dialogue in the same naive way again, but that doesn't prevent you from returning to philosophy with pleasure.

Despite the distancing of philosophy and dialogue that takes place in threshold dialogues like Lucian's, I believe reopening an inquiry into dialogue is a perfect task for philosophy. First, dialogue has long been associated with philosophy. Despite the proliferation of non-philosophical dialogues, the written dialogue is still associated with the discipline of philosophy. Even if the parent and child are estranged, they are still related by birth. Second, there is a rich, if ignored, tradition of written philosophical dialogues. This tradition is woven into today's renewed interest in dialogue. If there is a place to start an investigation of dialogue, it is with this written record. Third, explicit discussion of dialogue has already taken place in the history of the discipline, though the concerns then were different from ours today. We need to recover the discussion about dialogue that has taken place to better understand our present fascination with it. Fourth and finally, it has traditionally been the contribution (not prerogative) of philosophy to define such subjects that cross disciplines.

Some might object that defining is an inappropriate move at this point; that definitions tend to end discussion violently. While I doubt there is any real danger that an obscure book will silence anyone, let me assure the reader that this definition is intended to start discussion, not end it. I would like it said that this definition brought dialogue into

focus so that it could be discussed, just as so many Socratic dialogues are launched with definition. For this to happen I will define dialogue in a manner becoming to the subject, through the reading of dialogues, so that they guide their definition.

Definition through Dialogue

At the end of Rhetoric's accusation she asks the judge, Justice herself, to prevent Lucian from using her "weapons" (rhetorical discourses) against her in his defense. Instead, Rhetoric claims, Lucian should be forced to defend himself according to the ways of his new interest - Dialogue. Hermes, who is assisting Justice, comes to Lucian's aid saying that it is impossible to defend oneself by dialogue.

The irony is that Lucian is doing just that. His dialogue is a defense of the choice of dialogue in dialogue form. Of course the defense by dialogue is not before Justice, but before us, the readers of the dialogue. In the dialogue the character Lucian is judged innocent on both counts, but it is left up to us readers to judge whether the author was justified in his abandonment of rhetorical discourse for dialogue, and whether he should be allowed his satiric repurposing of dry philosophical dialogue. If the reader is entertained by the dialogue and recognizes the appropriateness of the parody, then the author is acquitted.

One might ask, given my interest in dialogue, why is this book not in dialogue form? Why don't I investigate dialogue with its weapons? Put abstractly, if this work is about the relationship between form and content, is the form of this work related to its content? The reason for which I have chosen to stick to the long-winded, traditional form of philosophical writing is that the written dialogue, as I will argue at the end of this text, works by carrying certain content in a less than explicit fashion. This content, to be discussed explicitly, needs another form — a form that in turn may hide another agenda.

You might say that the hardest form to describe clearly is that in which one writes. Or you might write that dialogue cannot defend itself, only represent itself. Lucian does not defend dialogue in general, only his use of it. He does so by providing an example of his work. I am not interested in defending my use of dialogue, but in the investigation of dialogue that can inform the current fascination with it. Lucian would say that this work is philosophy getting the last word (though not the last laugh).

Even though this work is not in dialogue form, that does not mean that it will not be grounded in dialogue. In the redefinition of dialogue and his companions we are going to take a hint from Rhetoric and ask that dialogue defend itself by means of dialogue. We will stick to dialogues as evidence in our investigation. As we have done in this introduction we will cradle these long paragraphs of discourse with the short ones on particular dialogues. We are taking a step further the hermeneutical principle that works should be interpreted through their internal hermeneutical suggestions. We are trying to interpret a genre as it presents itself, and defends itself. Hermes, the god of hermeneuticians, would say it is impossible for writers of dialogue, or Dialogue itself, to define itself by dialogue; but Hermes is only one voice among many, in dialogue.

Despite the grounding in dialogues, this work is not a history of that vehicle. I will concentrate on particular dialogues appropriate to the line of the investigation, specifically those of Plato, Xenophon, Lucian, Cicero, Bruni, Hume, Valla, and Heidegger. The choice of dialogues is based on the needs of the investigation and the desire to cover a representative sample of works. I particularly want to show that there are interesting philosophical dialogues after Plato. While I do not presume to discuss these writers in as thorough a fashion as they deserve, I hope that the discussion of dialogue in general will prove interesting to those engaged in the discovery of any particular dialogue.

In Lucian we have the first sustained discussion of dialogue in a dialogue. This discussion is a defense against accusations that Lucian opened dialogue to unnatural uses, especially comical ones. *The Double Indictment* was both an example of the new dialogue and an answer to critics who were suspicious of this adaptation of a classical form. Today we find dialogue also adapted to new contexts, and we can expect charges to be brought that it is being misused. This book is neither a defense, nor an accusation of the expanded use of dialogue. It is a working definition for those interested in thinking philosophically about dialogue and its possibilities.