

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear Readers,

This is the space where the editors usually comment on our journal's main features — the latest articles and other contributions to our various departments. But in this issue I'd like to turn the spotlight on our Letter department, one that, quite frankly, hasn't seen much use.

In 2001, the final issue of *História, Ciências, Saúde—Manguinhos* included a dossier on Darwinism (the complete contents of vol. VIII, nº 3, can be accessed at <http://www.scielo.br/hcsm>). In one article, entitled “On Darwin, black boxes, and the amazing return of ‘creationism’,” Maurício Vieira Martins presented a good analysis of creationist discourse and its finest expression: Michael Behe's *Darwin's Black Box*, first published in the United States in 1996 and in Brazil the following year. Vieira Martins showed how the theses defended by this professor from Lehigh University in Pennsylvania, challenging the theory of evolution, have helped fuel the rise of creationism, a trend not restricted to the United States but steadily gaining ground across the globe. Vieira Martins puts particular emphasis on the decision taken in 1999 by the Kansas State Board of Education. By voting to eliminate any reference to Darwin's theory of evolution from the State Science Standards, the Board effectively allowed individual school districts to exclude evolutionism from their curricula.

In 2004, this movement hit the state of Rio de Janeiro full force, thanks to the Evangelical couple now governing it — Rosângela Rosinha Matheus and her husband, Anthony Garotinho Matheus, the power behind the throne — and thanks as well to the support of the powerful bloc of Evangelicals within the state legislature. Flouting the cornerstone of republican constitutions, that is, separation of church and state, the governor then called for a civil-service exam to hire educators to teach confessional religious studies, thereby reinforcing the line of thought now impugning the theory developed in 1859 by the famous English naturalist. While a political and legal battle wages over the issue, public-school students in Rio are being taught that creationism explains the origin of human beings and other species; with Darwin's concepts cast aside, the biblical text is left to reign supreme in our state's schools.

In March of this year, we received a letter from Enézio E. de Almeida Filho, who questioned the diligence of those responsible for evaluating the originals that Maurício Vieira Martins submitted for publication in *História, Ciências, Saúde—Manguinhos*. The reader argued that the author's “documentally unfounded” article distorted reality. Both Vieira Martins and his two reviewers offered to comment on Almeida Filho's letter, and our editors agreed to lift the veil of anonymity usually accorded to peer-reviewers. *Manguinhos* has thus opened its pages to a topic that has been stirring controversies within human societies ever since Darwin published *The Origin of Species*. The revolution this theory then ignited within the sciences and within the realm of philosophical and religious ideas still kindles heated controversies. The Brazilian Society for the Progress of

Science (SBPC), for example, is devoting the July issue of its electronic journal *ComCiência* (nº 56) to the polemical debate between evolutionism and creationism (<http://www.comciencia.br/>).

As one of this journal's editors, I welcome all viewpoints under discussion, although I have my own stance on the issue. I do not partake of the reactionary old ideology that opposes the accumulation of knowledge and our exploration of the fascinating scientific enigmas surrounding the biological forces that have, ever since our common origins, moved living beings into the future and into relationship with each other, through the endless generation and extinction of species. Such processes of nature differ from those that move human societies and their creations into the future and into relationship with each other, including selection of our current pantheon of 'creators' by different religions.

I hope that you, our readers, will turn an attentive eye to the letters published at the end of this issue, where you will also find good bibliographic references on the fields currently at odds.

*Jaime Larry Benbimol*

Editor