

## BOOK REVIEW

Maria Cecília M. de Carvalho (org.), *A Filosofia Analítica no Brasil*. (Campinas, Papyrus, 1995), pp. 250.  
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This book consists of twelve articles based on presentations at the Second Brazilian Conference of Analytic Philosophy held in Valinhos (São Paulo) during October 1993. The themes of the articles range widely: including skepticism (Danilo Marcondes), Hume on causation (Paulo R. Margutti Pinto), the observability of singular causal relations (João Paulo Monteiro), relations between conceptions of scientific rationality, the dynamic of research institutions and social philosophy (Alberto Oliva), discussion of specific controversies in the philosophy of science (Nelson Gonçalves Gomes, Luiz Henrique de Araújo Dutra, Alberto Cupani), the place of evolutionary theory in articulating a materialist theory of consciousness (João de Fernandes Teixeira), and generalization in ethics (the editor). With the exception of the quite original one of Oliva, these are all frequently discussed themes of ana-

lytic philosophy. All the articles manifest clear competence, and none lack interest. They make a useful contribution to the growing body of work in analytic philosophy available, and being produced, in Portuguese.

In light of the diversity of the themes, and the lack of relationship between any of them, it is difficult to generalize, or to draw overall conclusions about the book. I venture the following comments, making them from the perspective of an observer who has, for almost thirty years, participated regularly in activities connected with philosophy of science in Brazil, and whose philosophical life has been enriched through this participation. I leave it to the reader to judge the accuracy and relevance of the comments, and to assess their critical force (if any).

In her preface the editor, Maria Cecília de Carvalho, points out that analytic philosophy is not defined by commitment to any particular substantive theses. Rather, she says, it is characterized by a “particular way of doing philosophy”, one which aims for “conceptual clarity”, “which emphasizes the grounds that sustain arguments”, and which is open to “the exposition and critical discussion” of a philosopher’s ideas. I would add that writings in analytic philosophy tend to focus attention on the question (problem, thesis, argument) at hand, attempting to draw clear conclusions and to defend them from objections, critically interacting with the works of others principally for the sake of this end, rather than (say) for expository or historical ends. According to its ideals, analytic philosophy recognizes the authority only of argument, not of professional credentials or eminence; and consequently its exemplary contributions are not primarily expository and critical of the works of other philosophers; rather, the well worked-out and lucidly expounded arguments of others are considered foils for the

unfolding of the arguments one wishes to endorse oneself (which, of course, may be identical with those of another philosopher).

Three things particularly struck me as I read the articles in this book. The first is that most of them are devoted largely to the discussion of well known philosophical writings, and are not shaped by an attempt to argue for a thesis that is stated independently of the views expressed in the writings under discussion. Some of the articles are expositions (works in the history of analytic philosophy) of important controversies: e.g., Gomes on the controversy between Neurath and Popper on the empirical base of science, and Cupani on that between Apel and Albert on analytical models of knowledge. I single out these two, both marked by conceptual clarity and close attention to argument, because they are quite brilliant expositions and – for me – they both filled in some gaps in my knowledge of the history of the philosophy of science. Others are purely critical: e.g., Dutra's important critique of van Fraassen's distinction between the observable and the non-observable. There are a few exceptions to the general pattern: e.g., Monteiro nicely uses arguments of Strawson on the observability of singular causal connections as a foil to further his own neo-Humean account of causation; and Teixeira's focus remains fixed on his thesis that "consciousness in the product of essentially dynamic processes within the brain".

The second is that the authors show virtually no signs of having gained from critical interaction with one another, or from other philosophers in Brazil and works published in Brazilian journals. Only one author (Oliva) cites in his bibliography even one work by a Brazilian philosopher (other than himself); and, otherwise, only one (Dutra) cites an article published in *Manuscrito*. Even an article proposing a new approach



to skepticism (Marcondes) does not interact with the important contributions on skepticism of Oswaldo Porchat (University of São Paulo). It is as if each author is engaged in a different discussion with different groups of philosophers in other countries. If this book is representative of analytic philosophy in Brazil, it appears that analytic philosophy in Brazil is not philosophy much conducted in discussion among Brazilian philosophers, as well as with colleagues elsewhere. I am not placed adequately to make a judgement about how representative these articles are. I note, however, that the articles reflect little or no engagement with Brazilian contributions from which I have learned a great deal: the logic, philosophy of science and philosophy of logic developed by Newton da Costa (University of São Paulo) and his collaborators; the philosophy of logic and language of Oswaldo Chateaubriand (Pontifical Catholic University of Rio de Janeiro); and the work broadly on skepticism, empiricism and realism by several philosophers at the University of São Paulo, the Federal University of Santa Catarina, and elsewhere. (The articles by Marcondes and Dutra, however, contribute to this last body of work.)

The third thing that struck me, and it is linked with the second, is that the book offers no distinctive Brazilian contribution. Of course, I do not think that there should, or could, be a kind of analytic philosophy that somehow reflects the “Brazilian character”, or displays a uniquely Brazilian way of doing analytic philosophy. Like analytic philosophy elsewhere, analytic philosophy in Brazil appropriately deals with questions that can be objects of critical discussion anywhere. But there are features of Brazilian intellectual culture that raise, in a distinctive way, questions that are appropriate objects of discussion in analytic philosophy. I have in mind especially certain issues in political philosophy and the philosophy of the social

sciences; (though I certainly do not want to downplay the value of the distinctive contributions that already derive from the discussions mentioned at the end of the previous paragraph). Consider, e.g., the question of social, economic and cultural rights – very underdeveloped in U.S. and European analytic political philosophy, unlike the question of civil and political rights – which has great pertinence to immediate political and social controversies in Brazil, and which is being investigated by a number of Brazilian jurists and legal philosophers [e.g., José Eduardo Faria (ed.), *Direitos Humanos, Direitos Sociais e Justiça*, São Paulo: Malheiros Editores, 1994]. Or, consider conceptual questions about the nature of “development” and social ethics that arise in connection with the various and competing proposals for development, especially those of the currently dominant neoliberalism. Oliva’s interesting question (and discussion) about the relations among conceptions of scientific rationality, the institutions of science, and desired forms of social arrangements might be enhanced by bringing into the story a discussion of the kinds of scientific institution that would be appropriate for Brazilian development<sup>1</sup>. My point is that Brazilian analytic philosophers are particularly well *located* for the discussion of such matters, just as U.S. political philosophers (e.g., Rawls) were particularly well placed to deal with pressing issues of liberal theory. I raise these issues as examples only. They happen to be of considerable interest to me, and also they are issues of significance for philosophical discussion throughout the world; but I do not want to imply

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of the recent (July, 1996) conference of the Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science (Sociedade Brasileira para o Progresso da Ciência) was “Science for the Advancement of Brazilian society” (“Ciência para o Progresso da Sociedade Brasileira”). All the components of Oliva’s question are pertinent to this theme.

that they are necessarily the most urgent, important or interesting issues that might be taken up, or that other concerns of analytic philosophy should become subordinated to them.

Recognizing that now, as is clearly evident from reading the contributions to this book, there seems to be a “critical mass” of well-trained and competent analytic philosophers in Brazil, I wish to raise the question, in an open-ended way, of whether it makes sense to explore the possibility of a distinctive Brazilian contribution to analytic philosophy – and, if so, how?