

Re(senhas)

ISSN: 3085-6434

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.71263/rbpyb91>

ANTHROPOPHAGY AND MISPLACED IDEAS AS KEYS TO A CRITICAL READING OF BRAZILIAN PHILOSOPHY

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Introduction

The originality of Brazilian thought has been the subject of numerous debates within the scope of national university philosophy. Thus, countless pages were filled in order to

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answer the question "is there a Brazilian Philosophy?", promoting a heated debate between those who consider Brazil a mere assimilatory experience and those who believe that there is a "genuinely Brazilian" production.

The quarrel framed by a notion of homogeneous "Philosophy" as its horizon, which takes the part (intellectual production, mostly written and born in the university environment) as the whole (the multiplicity of knowledge in its different forms). Clearly, this is a metaphilosophy issue and a dispute about the meaning of the term "philosopher" which, due to its complexity, is not within the scope of this essay. Consequently, those who question the authenticity of Philosophy made in Brazil generally reduce the multiplicity of Brazilian philosophies to the production of institutionalized intellectuals and former aristocrats who made up the *intelligentsia* of monarchical or republican Brazil.

Moreover, in addition to ignoring the indigenous, quilombola, and popular knowledge of the most diverse Brazilian groups, the plaintiffs tend to incur in the myth of originality. Here it is not intended to deny the relevance of national adjectives to qualify intellectual productions or cultural knowledge, but rather to challenge the notion that there is a "purely" national philosophy of any country whatsoever. Such "flawed notion" is based on a notion of "originality" that does not match the History of Thought, after all, there is no idea created *ex nihilo*. In other words, there is no "originally Greek" philosophy born of an exceptionality of ideas that arose there without external influence. Nevertheless, it is possible to speak of "Greek Philosophy" as a cut that takes into account

philosophical, geographical, political and epistemological aspects, which, by the way, were only possible thanks to cultural exchanges with other civilizations.

It should be noted that Plato was influenced by Egyptian knowledge (Philosophy), just as the Germans were deeply affected by Greek thought. In the same way, Brazilian thought cannot be deprived of its authenticity because it suffers from the influence of other forms of knowledge. Nevertheless, one must perceive and analyze the context in which such influences occur, such as colonization, globalization and dependence on large foreign university centers.

Due to the length of the work, this essay does not aim to deal with all forms of philosophies present in Brazil, but to promote a new approach to the institutionalized "Philosophy" that is the object of the aforementioned dispute. Thus, the scope of this essay is to seek tools to deal with Brazilian Philosophy without falling into the defense of an "originality" or "purity" that does not exist in human thought, also taking into account the mimicryisms and foreignisms that marked the history of national thought. For such a critical undertaking, we make use of two terms that come out of the Brazilian intelligentsia and cultural manifestations: "Anthropophagy", signaling the reception and incorporation of the ideas of the Other (usually a foreigner); and the "Misplaced Idea", which points to the coupling of concepts and notions separate from the social conditions that gave rise to them, generating a philosophical or practical mismatch.

The essay aims, therefore, to provide, from a Brazilian vocabulary, a critical analysis of Brazilian philosophical

productions, distinguishing them between good and bad incorporations of the thought of others. In other words, the essay proposes the division between the assimilation of the Other's thought from "Anthropophagy" (the good incorporation, which adapts the foreigner to the national reality) and the "misplaced Ideas" (the bad incorporation, marked by the mismatch between thought and social reality).

Anthropophagy

Regarding Anthropophagy, one can observe in this concept, coined and developed by Oswald de Andrade (later revised by the Tropicália movement), the emancipatory character that aimed to make Brazil autonomous from European influences in the most diverse fields of cultural and intellectual production. Thus, the playwright, throughout his militant career, outlined a typical project of Modernism in which he was inserted: the valorization of national production, even if it borrowed foreign concepts and propositions. It is in this sense that Caetano Veloso, a musician profoundly influenced by Oswald's work, refers to the manifestos written by Andrade:

Above all, I received the shock treatment of the Oswaldian "manifestos": *Manifesto da poesia pau-brasil*, from 24, and, especially, *Manifesto antropófago*, from 28. These two texts of extraordinary beauty are at the same time an *aggiornamento* and

a liberation of the European avant-garde (Veloso, 2017, s. p.).

Veloso, having been greatly influenced by Andrade's modernist production, promoted a late resurgence of Oswaldian modernist ideals from the Tropicália movement. Therefore, the artist encapsulates a prescriptive intention in the idea of "Anthropophagy":

The second manifesto, the *Anthropophagous*, develops and makes explicit the metaphor of devouring. We, Brazilians, should not imitate but devour new information, wherever it came from, or, in the words of Haroldo de Campos, "assimilate the foreign experience under a Brazilian species and reinvent it in our terms, with inescapable local qualities that would give the resulting product an autonomous character and would give them, in principle, the possibility of starting to function in turn, in an international confrontation, as an export product" (Veloso, 2017, s. p.).

Therefore, it can be inferred from this that the "Manifesto Antropófago" represents an effort not to deny foreign influence, aiming at an "untouched Brazil", but to seek the construction of thought through the image of the habits of the "Caraíbas" who inhabited Brazil, that is, the incorporation of the Other from devouring. Furthermore, Andrade constructs this image almost in the manner of anthropophagy between the Tupinambás (Castro, 2013) and Araweté (Castro; Cunha, 2017), that is, a dialectical relationship that

aims at the incorporation and reallocation of subjects among themselves.

Thus, it concerns the development of a Brazilian experience that seeks to find in foreigners characters for their enrichment, selected from local needs. In other words, an appropriation of characteristics, as was done by the Tupinambás with anthropophagy, a perpetuation of the traits of an adversary aiming at improving the existence of the group to which one belongs (Castro; Cunha, 2017). Anthropophagy is the actualization of the conditions of existence of a society through on a dialectical contact with the Other.

It is with this image of the incorporation of the Other, of the selection of the best, that Oswald de Andrade postulates the "good assimilation" for the Brazilian cultural sphere: when questioning himself about law, Oswald wrote: "I asked a man what Law was. He replied that it was the guarantee of the exercise of possibility. That man was called Galli Mathias. I ate it" (Andrade, 1978a, p. 16). Thus, this search for the "usable" and the "nutritious" in the thought of others would take place in such a way that anthropophagy should be a distinctive feature of human thought: "Only anthropophagy unites us. Socially. Economically. Philosophically" (Andrade, 1978a, p. 13).

Brazilian intellectual production, constantly influenced by foreigners, whether by colonization or globalization, would take place through anthropophagy, being understood "as devouring and symbolizing it in the anthropophagic rite, which is communion" (Andrade, 1978b, p. 143). In other words, the philosophical act would be, to a certain extent, the communion

between different needs and responses, generating something new and peculiar to each interaction.

Although Oswald de Andrade is imbued with a modernist analysis of Brazilian culture, his concept of "anthropophagy" can be adapted ("devoured", in a certain sense) to the reading of the country's intellectual and philosophical production. However, in this context, a caveat must be made: Anthropophagy is an Oswaldian value and presumes a successful selection of what is assimilated, that is, it is not a mere description of the entire Brazilian cultural production.

It is for this reason that we resort to "misplaced ideas" to deal with philosophy that, in its assimilatory intent, selects in a controversial way what it will "devour", resulting in a Brazilian alienation in relation to its own thought.

Misplaced Ideas

The notion of "misplaced ideas" was introduced by Roberto Schwarz, literary critic and professor, with an immediate focus on the reception and establishment of liberalism in Brazil and its contradictions. Thus, it is in this analysis that the author, based on the notion that "Every science has principles, from which its system derives", concludes that, "Since they do not refer to our reality, economic science and other liberal ideologies are abominable, impolitical and foreign, as well as vulnerable" (Schwarz, 2000, p. 11).

In other words, for the author, ideas are tied to their principles, which are, in turn, are closely related to their material conditions of origin. Moreover, in view of the Brazilian form of scientific, artistic and discursive production, it can be inferred that Brazil would be a habitual assimilator of ideas alien to its material conditions: "Throughout its social reproduction, Brazil tirelessly introduces and replaces European ideas, always in an improper sense" (Schwarz, 2000, p. 29). In other words, Brazil repeatedly resorts to European ideas to build its discursive apparatus, and these are, in general, devoid of their core that provided the conditions for their existence and, therefore, their applicability.

Given this, Schwarz points out that the colonizing role and the relationship of submission between Brazil and the European powers are a determining factor for such a contradictory and harmful relationship for the functioning of Brazilian social institutions:

We started from the common observation, almost a feeling, that in Brazil ideas were displaced from their european context. And we provide a historical explanation for this displacement, which involved the relations of production and parasitism in the country, our economic dependence and its peer, the intellectual hegemony of Europe, revolutionized by Capital. In short, to analyze a national originality, evident in everyday life, we were led to reflect on the process of colonization as a whole, which is international (Schwarz, 2000, p. 30).

The issue of the originality of Brazilian thought is recurrent, so it is important to emphasize that Schwarz was influenced by the sociology of Sérgio Buarque de Holanda, especially when it comes to misplaced ideas, by the citation taken from "Raízes do Brasil", in which he criticizes the broad assimilation of European thought into Brazilian culture:

The attempt to implant European culture in an extensive territory, endowed with natural conditions, if not adverse, largely foreign to its millennial tradition, is, in the origins of Brazilian society, the dominant fact and richest in consequences. Bringing from distant countries our ways of living, our institutions, our ideas, and timid in maintaining all this in an environment that is often unfavorable and hostile, we are still exiles in our land today. We can build excellent works, enrich our humanity with new and unforeseen aspects, elevate to perfection the type of civilization we represent: the truth is that all the fruit of our labor or our laziness seems to participate in a system of evolution proper to another climate and another landscape (Holanda, 1995, p. 31).

Thus, Schwarz seems to echo the sociologist of "Raízes do Brasil", constituting a sharp criticism of the movements of importation of European knowledge that simply does not adapt to the Brazilian material and intellectual conditions, generating a sense of estrangement and "foreignness" in their own lands. It is not, therefore, a mere question of the evoked image of

geographical landscapes and climatic effects, but rather an alienation from the social relations and material conditions that generated the concepts and philosophical currents that would come to arrive and settle in Brazilian lands.

Referring to the precursors of Schwarz's criticism, Abrão, therefore, synthesizes the resumption of ideas promoted by the author, placing him in the line of thinkers such as João Cruz Costa and Sérgio Buarque de Holanda himself:

Formulated by Roberto Schwartz in an article entitled "misplaced ideas", this theory, however, takes up the analyses of João Cruz Costa (1904-1978) or Sérgio Buarque de Holanda (1902-1982): ideas in Brazil, copied from foreign models and therefore without the economic, social and political bases that produced them in the origin, would be as if loose or, at least, in a very peculiar relationship with the Brazilian reality - which would explain both its poverty and lack of originality and, on the contrary, its wealth (Abrão, 1999, p. 468).

In this line, the importation of foreign knowledge would be a typical assimilatory form of the Brazilian reality, which, however successful at times, would be the cause of a perennial estrangement that makes Brazilians a "foreigner in their own lands". Therefore, the concept of "misplaced ideas" served as a diagnosis of the Brazilian cultural situation, but which can be used as a key to reading, in contrast to "Anthropophagy" in this essay, to understand the assimilating movements in certain authors and philosophical movements in the country.

An assimilatory philosophizing and its implications

The questioning of the existence of a "Brazilian philosophizing" has taken on various contours and nomenclatures, as in the works of Ivan Domingues (2017), Júlio Cabrera (2010) and Roberto Gomes (2008). Such contributions scrutinize the Brazilian case, having inevitably encountering the issue of originality. The concern with such a national and original character (almost pure) can be seen, in the History of Philosophy in Brazil, in an even older booklet, attesting to the perenniality of the debate with the Luis Washington Vita's work: "Panorama da Filosofia no Brasil", from 1969.

In this work, the author has no doubts about the existence of a national philosophy, nor does he dwell on different nomenclatures. Thus, for Vita, the originality of Brazilian philosophical thought lies in its adaptability and its ability to test thought brought from abroad:

Thus, the History of Philosophy in Brazil, if, on the one hand, it is almost always the history of the penetration of other people's thoughts into the recesses of our spiritual life or the narrative of our degree of understanding and the quotient of speculative sensibility, on the other hand it is also the demonstration of the criterion of *choice* or option in the face of the most appropriate thought for the solution of the most burning national problems, starting, therefore, from the historical-social

environment that surrounds and encourages it, even if with ideas elaborated abroad but tested and converted here into conditioning factors of action rather than into abstract categories (Vita, 1969, p. 3).

This means that Brazil would be a "battlefield", in which ideas would be put to the test and, thanks to its different material conditions, would allow a transformation or overcoming of European ideas:

The change of *habitat* - a thought, meditated in the shade of oaks and castles must be re-meditated in the sight of sugarcane fields and mocambos... - automatically serves as a proving ground for the old ideas: some of these reach new significance, others are soon lost. (Vita, 1969, p. 3)

Therefore, one could conclude that Brazilian philosophical production would take place in terms of reaction and reflection, so that the professional philosopher would be more of a mature selector of ideas than a spokesperson:

That is: while in Europe the thinker is almost always a product of the environment in which he was formed and acts, in Brazil he is, as a rule, a reactive, a creator of atmosphere, an intellectual stimulant, because he is always the conductor of what, spiritually, is the product of another spiritual circumstance (Vita, 1969, p. 4).

It can be suggested, based on Vita's reflections, that the character of Philosophy in Brazil, whether by way of

anthropophagy or by way of misplaced ideas, is duly assimilatory, in the sense of adaptation to national demands and realities (Vita, 1969, p. 5). Summarizing Vita's thought regarding "Brazilian exceptionality", one can understand the "originality" of national thought as eminently based on the relations of assimilation and adaptation of the ideas of others:

In the process of assimilating the ideas of others, we imprint our characteristics, according to the old principle: everything we receive takes the form of its container, or like certain perfumes that, in contact with the epidermis, undergo a chemical alteration that alters their fragrance, and this is our "originality" (Vita, 1969, p. 6).

Thus, it can be understood that, when dealing with Brazilian institutionalized thought, the fruits of its assimilatory character from the notions of: "anthropophagy", for the ideas that thrive here and highlight their adaptability; and "misplaced ideas", for those that cause strangeness or impracticality, because their material bases are incompatible with those found in Brazil.

It is noteworthy that, in agreement with Vita's understanding, that the fertility of Philosophy in Brazil is more related to its adaptability than to a supposed purity. Furthermore, in the absence of a "purely national" character, Brazilian Philosophy gains form and creative power from the devouring of other people's ideas, which gives foreigners a format appropriate to national problems, and not the other way around.

In this line, Ariano Suassuna would be a great symptom of the assimilatory devouring character of Brazilian thought. The playwright-philosopher, who even wrote a manual of Aesthetics, was deeply influenced by Iberian culture in his theater and music (Petry, 2010), however, it is unquestionable that his work is "genuinely" Brazilian. With his Armorial Movement, Ariano Suassuna reveals the anthropophagic character of Brazilian thought by proposing a dialectic between the popular and imported erudition.

However, it is important to note that the assimilatory character brings with it some ills, given the social context of dependence and colonization that involved Brazilian production. An example of this is the overvaluation of foreign paradigms (Messias, 2017) to the detriment of national and regional ones, causing Brazilian thinkers to be relegated to oblivion or coadjuvantism. It is in this context that the speech of Marxist philosopher Angela Davis sounds almost like a denunciation: "Why do you need to look for a reference in the United States? I learn more from Lélia Gonzalez than you do from me" (Mercier, 2020).

In this way, Philosophy in Brazil takes place in an academic environment that, based on the myth of "originality", restricts Brazilian production to the role of commentator. Therefore, in this space of knowledge construction, what comes from abroad is mostly seen as "original", while the Brazilian is generally "assimilatory", being treated as less important. As a consequence, foreign social theories are used in absentia to deal with national problems, being unable to understand them in their complexity, an example being the uncritical use of

American theories on race in the scenario of Brazilian miscegenation.

Reconizing the assimilatory character of human thought and abandoning the myth of "originality" are important steps Tomara revaluating Brazilian philosophy and thought. It is in this sense that the concepts of "Anthropophagy" and "misplaced ideas", as they were used in this essay, contribute to this revaluation, since they assume assimilation as unavoidable. Thus, they encompass both the positive dimension of the assimilatory process, that is, the devouring of foreign ideas with a view to their transformation into something new for the local context; as for the negative dimension, which is the irreflexive reception that employs foreign thought (generally, overvaluing it) out of step with the Brazilian social reality.

In other words, the use of such concepts allows a critical approach to Brazilian Philosophy, without incurring in the myth of "originality" and without ignoring the problem of the uncritical reception of foreign thought resulting from the peripheral social reality of the country.

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Submitted in January 2025

Approved in February 2025

Re(senhas)

