

ANDERSSON, G. (Ed.), *Rationality in Science and Politics. Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science, Vol. 79*, Dordrecht: D. Reidel, 1984.

This anthology consists mainly of essays authored by well-known and not-so-well-known Popperians. Conceived as a sort of *Festschrift* to G. Radnitzky, it includes articles written by non-Popperians like Grünbaum and Feyerabend as well. Radnitzky is an important thinker who deserves to be honored, and those who have done so by contributing to this anthology are themselves first-class thinkers in the broad domain of philosophy of sciences. Despite the best of the motives, the efforts of these fine thinkers has nevertheless resulted in something which is worse than a mediocre anthology. Most articles are tired and listless, dull and boring, tedious and repetitive. Together, they hardly say anything that is new, significant or interesting. And this makes the absence of wit and style even more glaring. This is not in any measure due to the personal shortcomings of any of these thinkers. It has more to do with the brand of thinking they all tirelessly campaign for: Popperianism. It has become a hallmark of Popperianism, in the last decade or more, to simply keep recycling the same ideas, in more or less the same form in which they were adumbrated thirty and odd years ago by Sir Karl Popper.

Andersson's article, which leads the collection, begins by pleading for critical rationalism. We are told that relativism and dogmatism are not the only alternatives open to us, in both science and politics, but that there is a third choice viz. "a criticist position according to which...problems are solved by a combination of creative imagination and critical thought" (p. 9). I really wonder, when I read platitudes like these which abound in this anthology, Who could disagree with the idea that "creative imagination" and "critical thinking" are required to solve problems?

Agassi's contribution is true to the vague, meandering pseudo-conversational style which he has unfortunately come to adopt as his own. As usual, there are casual and caricatural references to other thinkers and their ideas, simple-minded rebuttals and a lot of flag-waving. What we need, says Agassi, "is to institutionalize and educate for the love of learning and the respect for it" (p. 27). Any dissenters?

Hans Albert shows that the old rationalistic ideal of arriving at new, absolutely certain knowledge by means of a "rational heuristic in the sense of an algorithm for the growth of knowledge has not...stood up to criticism". He 'conjectures' that the "sacrifice of the classical idea of a final foundation makes possible a re-orientation of methodological thought" (p. 43).

Andersson, in his second contribution, asks how one can accept fallible test statements. He shows that Popper has already answered this question, and that both Kuhn and Lakatos were wrong in their understanding of Popper: Kuhn because "he thought that Popper did not say anything about this question", which he evidently did; Lakatos because even though he "knew that Popper says that test statements are accepted by decision", he "thought that this decision has to be conventional and arbitrary" (p. 63).

Bartley has certainly become less interesting to read since he returned to the folds of Popperianism. He looks anew at the demarcation problem in its most general form as a question of demarcating a good idea from a bad one.

Not surprisingly, he suggests that there *is* no criterion which could do such a job (p. 83) and leans very heavily in favor of an evolutionary epistemology.

Feyerabend's article is about Xenophanes who "belongs to that delightful group of thinkers for whom 'serious thinkers' rarely show any great enthusiasm" (p. 95). It is as much about Xenophanes as it is about the nature of critical rationalism. Though he assents to Popper's conclusion that Xenophanes could indeed be seen as a forerunner of critical rationalism, his reasons for doing so will be of scarce comfort to Popperians: "In his criticism Xenophanes ... insinuates that his way of seeing things is known and accepted by all, but not understood by all: He, Xenophanes, only makes explicit what everybody already takes for granted though many, and especially the 'stupid Ethiopians' are unable to draw the right consequences. Xenophanes' "criticism" is therefore an insinuation, not an argument and Popper shows great perception when calling him a forerunner of critical rationalism" (p. 108).

Grünbaum's article is an attempt to say something about the concept of placebo in medicine. Following this there are other articles by Gellner, Kanitscheider, Koertge, Nagai, Pera, Salamun, Szumilewicz-Lachman, Topitsch and Popper. The book ends on a biographical sketch of Radnitzky by Andersson.

As I indicated at the beginning of the review, I do not quite see the point of such an anthology. On the whole, this is a drab and dreary assortment with an exception here and an exception there. I would advise that you use this book instead of a sleeping pill whenever you have difficulty in falling off to sleep, a soporific is not at all a bad thing to be, if it was not for the fact that this one does not come as cheap.