

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the
Santayana
Society*

No. 13
Fall 1995



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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Society's annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the December meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) in New York City.

SANTAYANA SOCIETY

1995
ANNUAL MEETING

Comments on the Santayana Edition:

Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr.

Texas A&M University

“The Quarrel Between Poetry and Philosophy”

Hilary Putnam

Harvard University

Ruth Anna Putnam

Wellesley College

6:00 - 8:00 P.M. 28 December
Palace/Winter Garden
New York Marriott Marquis Hotel

Thinking in the Ruins: Two Overlooked Responses to Contingency

It might appear that there are no two philosophers whose relation to each other is of less interest and the investigation of which is less likely to yield substantial results than that of George Santayana and Ludwig Wittgenstein. This may be the reason why no significant work has ever been done on this topic. The two seem to be engaged in radically different projects. They appear to agree neither on their presuppositions and methods nor in their aims and results. Even their styles are divergent and their sensibilities incompatible.¹

The surprising reality, however, is that there are tantalizing similarities between the philosophical positions of Santayana and Wittgenstein. In the context of overwhelming apparent differences, the remarkable extent of these resemblances is adequate by itself to warrant investigation. But there also are other compelling philosophical reasons for looking at this relationship.

To understand the differences and the similarities between Santayana and Wittgenstein better, it is important to take a closer look at the time in which they lived. In the years between the two world wars, many began to feel that the intellectual, moral, religious and social traditions that had been in place for a long time were in ruins. The social structures of Victorian England were crumbling and the progress of the Industrial Revolution had turned into the horrors of modern warfare. Whereas F.H. Bradley had been able to write confidently about "My Station and Its Duties," a generation later Jean Paul Sartre could find nothing but "bad faith" in a life of devotion to one's social role. The intellectual, moral and religious practices that philosophers had attempted to justify by showing their ground in some transcending certainty came to seem arbitrary or suspended in thin air.

The First World War appeared to bring down every tradition. It brought an end to empires that traced their heritage to the days of Rome. It also leveled the dominant intellectual tradition that consisted of the search for certainty, a search that had defined the philosophical project at least from Descartes' day, and on some accounts since Plato's.² Philosophers who wrote under the influence of the war thought that, since human practices were in need of grounding and none could be provided, life was pervaded by uncertainty. They expressed these feelings of displacement and homelessness in the thought that nothing anyone had claimed to know could withstand criticism. Seeing only ruins, they maintained that actions could receive no justification and lives, cut loose from any foundation, were meaningless. These thinkers saw empty contingency where necessity and certainty had been; their reaction took the form of skepticism about knowledge and values, and cynicism about life.

This "modern malaise" has been noted by many, though few have related it to philosophy. As a result, no one has noticed that the two figures we are concerned with,

¹ This paper was read to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Boston on December 27, 1994.

² See John Dewey, *The Quest for Certainty* (G.P. Putnam's Sons: New York, 1960), Chapter 1.

who flourished in those years and who went about the task of doing philosophy in strikingly different ways, nevertheless share remarkable similarities of thought and attitude. Santayana and Wittgenstein could well be viewed as philosophers of homelessness. Both were personally displaced and intellectually homeless. Santayana was a Spaniard who lived in the United States and later in Europe, but as an adult never in his land of birth. Wittgenstein was an Austrian who gave up his birthright — not only his country of birth but also his family inheritance — and lived out his life in England. He expressed his alienation from the modern vision of life in many places.³ Santayana's disengaged, spectatorial stance was evident in his solitary life and in his philosophical view of the world as his "host" and of himself as a transient guest.

Perhaps it was this personal homelessness that made it possible for each in his own way to appreciate the character of the intellectual problems that emerged from the fragmentation of the modern world. In any case, the philosophical kinship between the two is as deep as it is surprising. Both responded to the modern condition not by delegitimizing the practices in which our lives are expressed, but by discarding the traditional project of the search for certain foundations. In so doing, both struggled with and rejected skepticism. This allowed them, in their different ways, to preserve a great deal of the tradition their age persisted in questioning. Each manifested a deep respect for the wisdom implicit in long-standing human practices and rejected as shallow or nonsensical any skepticism that failed to take into account the realities of the human situation.

By breaking with the requirement of certain foundations, Santayana and Wittgenstein were able to appreciate the integrity of human practices. According to both, it is not living human knowledge but a mistaken philosophical tradition that demands foundations and thus creates intellectual homelessness and displacement. Both thought that to get our house in order, we have to rethink our social, religious, philosophical and moral practices outside the context of the search for certainty. This insight and the projects that flowed from it define the philosophical kinship of George Santayana and Ludwig Wittgenstein.

Here we shall focus on one aspect of our larger project of exploring the complex relations between the thought of Santayana and that of Wittgenstein. We shall examine Santayana's and Wittgenstein's responses to the discovery of contingency. This is done best by putting their ideas in context and viewing them as two related, though interestingly different, approaches among historical alternatives.

The modern malaise had a variety of technological, social, economic and political causes. Intellectually, it came to consciousness as the recognition that our values and practices are thoroughly contingent, that they lack the certainty or rightness or absolute justification prior generations insisted they could attain. The painful growth of this complex consciousness is what we call "the discovery of contingency." We do not mean to assert, of course, that thinkers in other ages had not been aware of the contingency of events, of the historical situatedness of our values and of the happenstance character of some of our most dearly held beliefs. But the upheavals of

³ See, for example, the opening sections of *Culture and Value* (edited by G.H. von Wright and translated by P. Winch. Blackwell: Oxford. 1980). The book will be cited as C.V. hereafter.

the Twentieth Century have made it difficult even for ordinary people to believe in the privileged status of their own ways. Confronted with alternative modes of life, we face an unprecedented level of uncertainty about the practices and values that define us.

There are at least six distinct responses to the discovery of contingency. Perhaps the standard, traditional view is one of denial. This Cartesian-like move attempts to pull the sting of contingency by stressing a necessity that grounds or transcends it. Affirming the reality of eternal forms, self-evident necessary truths, God, and the transcendental unity of apperception are all ways of responding to contingency that deny its ultimate hold on us.

Such approaches typically maintain that there is no *real* contingency: only if we cut ourselves off from "the ground of our being" can our lives and practices be seen as contingent. If, on the other hand, we view contingency against the backdrop of the necessary structures of being, thought, consciousness or language, it loses its significance or simply disappears.

At the opposite pole, skeptics and nihilists embrace a message of desperation. The nihilist, as we use the term, accepts the demand for foundations but thinks we can find none. Thus our intellectual and moral practices are left suspended in midair. They may be inescapable in our situation, but they are tragically unjustified. Since questionable rules cannot provide reliable guidance, we face desperation and a permanent crisis.

The two poles of denying contingency and despairing at its universality define the outer limits of modern philosophy. The era began with Descartes' demand for absolute certainty and culminated in Nietzsche's withering assessment and ultimate displacement of such demands in favor of a play of forces understood as the "will to power."⁴

In the Twentieth Century, at least four other ways of appropriating contingency have been developed. Two of these are perhaps fairly well known; two others, those of Santayana and Wittgenstein, have not received adequate attention. The better known responses are clearly exemplified in the works of Dewey and in the ideas of various so-called "postmodern" thinkers.

Let us consider Dewey first. For him, the demand for foundations is itself illicit or compensatory. The quest for certainty is an understandable but unintelligent response to the need for security in a precarious world. Instead of seeking to improve our lot piecemeal or gradually, we want wholesale guaranties of the legitimacy and ultimate success of our enterprises. In doing so, we forget the context in which our practices have developed. To see these practices as contingent is not to see them as unjustified, but rather as historically specific responses to problematic situations. They represent solutions to problems that have plagued us. Because the problems may change and the solutions may not work for long, recognition of the contingency of our practices is at once acceptance of the need to adapt new means to old or novel ends.

The contingency of value thus opens the possibility of the sort of criticism and transformation that is characteristic of Dewey's pragmatism. All such criticism is itself

⁴ This is not to suggest that Nietzsche's philosophical significance is limited to the negative moment of bringing the project of modern philosophy to an end. As will be evident in what follows, his work contributed greatly to another form of response to the discovery of contingency.

rooted in values, but this creates no problem for Dewey. There are no absolute foundations, no fixed starting point from which all thinking must or should proceed. Rather, we begin where we are and evaluate our situation in light of the values we happen to hold. The assessment continues or resumes each time we fail to achieve satisfaction. In the process, no value is free from criticism and every value can be replaced or modified.

The key is to become aware of the conditions and consequences of living by or acting on particular values. In the light of these, we can intelligently modify or reject our allegiances. We may discover, for example, that the satisfaction of certain of our desires is incompatible with other established values. Or we may find that economic, social or technological changes increase or lower the cost of satisfying some wants. Such changes call for specific and piecemeal adjustments to our values. There is no general rule as to how such adjustments should be made. We experiment and see if we like the results.

The point is that, for Dewey, values and the practices that go with them are neither absolute nor arbitrary. Every value can and may sooner or later have to be questioned. But every practice is historically situated and was established to meet some human need. Some of them, of course, have become so deeply entrenched that we cannot even imagine ourselves without them. Our life and identity may well depend on hanging on to such practices. Dewey does not claim that every change is possible for everyone. But changes are endemic and our homey comfort is constantly in the process of being eroded. If we are lucky, the changes are gradual. And if we are intelligent, we may control them and so increase our satisfactions. We have reason neither for assurance nor for despair. But a cautious confidence in constructive action may well bring good results.

So far, we have seen denial, despair and acceptance with the hope of amelioration as responses to contingency and homelessness. The fourth response might well be called "postmodern." There is no fully developed position of the sort we shall describe within the work of any one thinker. But the composite picture gives a reasonably accurate representation of many features characteristic of the postmodern stance.

If anything can be central to an intellectual activity whose aim is to decenter our practices, interruption of the normal is. Here contingency is embraced, if not actually flaunted: we are reminded again and again that our normalized social structures and relations lack a legitimating "metanarrative." But worse, as products of the Enlightenment, they supposedly participate in a nostalgia for unity and totality that amounts to the exclusion and destruction of whatever lies in excess of them.

The power of our normal practices in claiming absolute authority and justification is therefore dangerous. This power must be problematized: we must learn to experience our institutions as limited and exclusionary, and ourselves as homeless in relation to them. Without such distancing or "deferring," it is impossible to maintain a critical edge. Without it, a great deal of violence and terror go unnoticed or seem implicitly "justified" as simply a part of normal practice. Even the pursuit of solutions within the structure of our practices merely continues in place the destructive if invisible forces of normalization. Painful as this is, we must retain an attitude of suspicion and questioning. Only constant reminders of contingency can help us remember our practical and intellectual tendency to surrender to or to invent the absolute.

These varied responses to contingency help us understand some of the truly interesting features of the work of Wittgenstein and the thought of Santayana. With regard to human practices, at least, Wittgenstein appears to be deeply conservative. Throughout both the *Tractatus* and *Philosophical Investigations*,⁵ one of his primary concerns is to prune the claims of philosophy either to support or to undermine our basic practices. Instead of formulating a direct response to contingency and its attendant feeling of homelessness, Wittgenstein undertakes to examine why the adventitious nature of our practices should bother us at all. His answer takes the form of a powerful indictment of philosophy.

Traditional philosophical thought has viewed itself as the capping stone of the human cognitive enterprise. Consequently, it has created the illusion that our religious, ethical and epistemic practices require a foundation that only it, with its access to certainty, can provide. Without such grounding, the practices supposedly lack legitimacy and we can never be sure that what we do is defensible or right.

Such an approach to contingency and to the task of philosophy constitutes, for Wittgenstein, a radical mistake. A primary purpose of his later work is to expose the pretensions of philosophy by showing, among other things, the discontinuity between philosophical problems and our actual practices. The “philosopher’s trick” is to convince us that the philosophical uses of such terms as “reason,” “doubt” and “knowledge” are somehow continuous with or even underlie our ordinary employment of them. Nothing could be farther from the truth, Wittgenstein believes, and he proceeds to unmask the pretensions of this pompous but hollow mode of thought.

In the *Investigations*, he tries to show that philosophy has nothing positive to contribute; it “leaves everything as it is.” Our practices are not grounded in any philosophical foundation and they lack nothing if they fail to live up to the demand for certainty. Everything is in order just as it is. He affirms this not only when he writes about epistemic matters, but also when he discusses religious belief in such works as *Culture and Value* and *Remarks on Frazer’s Golden Bough*. In the latter, he argues that Frazer misconceived the nature of religious belief by assimilating it to scientific or pseudo-scientific claims.⁶ Thus Frazer’s arguments for rejecting religion in favor of science fall short or, worse, miss the point. Religious beliefs are not primitive scientific convictions to be replaced by new cognitive developments. In *Culture and Value*, he goes so far as to reject the need even for a historical foundation of Christianity.

Queer as it sounds: The historical accounts in the Gospels might historically speaking, be demonstrably false and yet belief would lose nothing by this: not, however, because it concerns ‘universal truths of reason’! Rather, because historical proof (the historical proof-game) is irrelevant to belief ... (C.V. 32)

The language-game of religious belief is not to be confused with history or with

⁵ We cite Ludwig Wittgenstein’s *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953) as P.I. in the sequel, or sometimes as *Investigations*.

⁶ This insistence on difference, this refusal to ‘reduce’ one form of human activity to another, is characteristic of the later Wittgenstein and is a commitment he shares with Santayana. Of course, each justifies it in a different way.

science or with that of “truths of reason,” whatever those might be. Rather, it is *sui generis*; “It is just *another* language-game” (P.I. 64). As such, it is not open to question and criticism from any extraneous direction. Everything is in order just as it is.

But if everything *is* in order, then we are free to “relax into” our institutions — to accept our form of life, as Wittgenstein might have said. This almost stoic position is expressed clearly in a comment from 1946.

If life becomes hard to bear we think of a change in our circumstances. But the most important and effective change, a change in our own attitude, hardly even occurs to us, and the resolution to take such a step is very difficult for us. (C.V. 53)⁷

What makes us feel uneasy is not that our practices are, from some cosmic standpoint, contingent, but the illusion created by traditional philosophy’s demand for foundations. Once such demands are quieted, we can with good conscience feel at home with what we have.

This conservative response arises at least in part out of distrust of the idea of “progressive transformation” that underlies industrial life and philosophical positions similar to Dewey’s. It is, moreover, sharply at odds with the suspicions, the interruptions and the ceaseless questionings of postmodern thinkers.⁸ Wittgenstein sees himself as resisting what he calls the “main current of European and American civilization” with its devotion to progress. He is bothered by the fact that everything is supposed to accomplish something. “Even clarity,” he says, “is sought only as a means to an end, not as an end in itself. For me on the contrary clarity, perspicuity are valuable in themselves” (C.V. 6-7). Philosophy itself has a finite, non-progressive task: it comes to an end once we “command a clear view of the use of our words” (P.I. 122). After all,

Philosophy may in no way interfere with the actual use of language; it can in the end only describe it. For it cannot give it a foundation either. It leaves everything as it is. (P.I. 124)

In this distrust of “progress,” there is nothing of the enthusiasm of American pragmatism. It expresses, instead, a more characteristically European attitude, amounting to the belief that the longstanding practices of humankind embody a wisdom that is not likely to be matched by current fads and that should not be assailed by skeptical doubts. Our “forms of life” are fine when seen in the right light. Our objections to them are hollow and derive from illusory demands. Contingency presents no problem so long as philosophers refrain from inventing or at least elaborating standards that make our values and practices look bad.

This respect for our “workaday opinions” is one of the surprising similarities between Santayana and Wittgenstein. Santayana announces as early as the Preface to *Scepticism and Animal Faith* his belief that “the shrewd orthodoxy” of humankind is

⁷ The similarity to Santayana on this point is obvious and will be discussed below.

⁸ It is not clear whether the deferral and interruption that are characteristic of the postmodern response are meant to serve the purpose of eventual constructive transformation or to stand on their own. If the former, they become a strategic moment in a larger pragmatic project. Only in the latter case do they constitute a distinctive response to contingency, a response that consists of reminding us of it, embracing it and articulating its details.

in the end more nearly right than the special schools of philosophy. The entire edifice of animal faith he constructs is meant to be the articulation of the beliefs we tacitly embrace when we engage in the activities of life.

There is a further remarkable resemblance between Santayana and Wittgenstein. Both identify traditional philosophy as the source of the problems we have with contingency and both attack it for advocating inapt, unreasonable, illusory or absurd criteria of justification. Skepticism is inescapable, Santayana points out, so long as certainty is the aim and ultimate standard of knowledge. Seeking absolute assurance or transcendent grounding isolates philosophy from the concerns of life and empties it of all content: we are left gaping in silence at the immediacies of the moment.

Reduction to solipsism of the present moment, however, has two marvelously positive consequences. The first is recognition that an honest philosophy demands standards different from absolute certainty. Successful animal life defines the criteria to which we must adhere if we are to retain a connection between what we think and what we unhesitatingly do. This is the grounding insight of the philosophy of animal faith Santayana proceeds to detail, of the system of ideas designed to capture the beliefs every animal's activities confirm. This system does not shrink from accepting contingency, uncertainty and the less than absolute status of all our practices. On this level, Santayana thinks philosophy must remain docile with respect to animal habits.

The second positive outcome of the skeptical reduction is the discovery of essence. It is ironic that someone who makes essence the centerpiece of his philosophy should claim not to be an essentialist. But, of course, Santayana is correct in this claim: the infinity of the realm of essence strips forms of their moral, epistemic and metaphysical prerogatives. Precisely because there are so many essences and they constitute a non-hierarchical democracy, we cannot claim that any of them exhausts the nature of one or a group of existing things.

The realm of essence, in turn, makes the spiritual life possible. Here is the promise of transcendence philosophers have always looked for, a way of escaping the crushing vicissitudes of animal life. But the transcendence is also ironic: while the flux touches the eternal at the top of every wave, the peace of essence cannot suffuse animal life. Pure intuition presents a frozen landscape, a frozen cosmos-scape, even a frozen infinity of possible disorders that yield no escape from contingency and no security.

Santayana's ironic transcendence of the flux is matched by his ironic acceptance of the legitimacy of human practices within it. From the perspective of each, the other exists only at the point of disappearance or insignificance. For the engaged animal, spirituality is a useless luxury. Considering the infinity of essence, however, the values of animal life constitute only an irrelevant local incident. In one sense, the acceptance and the transcendence cancel out each other's claims to absoluteness, leaving a tragic sense of life or at least a pervasive sadness at the fleeting beauty that surrounds us.

The distinctively Santayanan response to contingency is shaped by the interplay between transcendence in the spiritual life and the situatedness of the animal. Having once intuited essences for their own sake, one can never take the values, projects and practices of animal life with ultimate seriousness. At the same time, however, the attitude of detachment this generates is easily combined with respect, shared by Wittgenstein, for the practical wisdom of the active animal. In one respect, therefore, Santayana's response to contingency also reminds us of the Stoics. If contingency rules the world, we must face it bravely as one of the ultimate facts. But that need not keep

us from participating in whatever even vaguely sensible practices may flourish in our society, for in the long run and from a cosmic standpoint, all of it matters not at all.

Although we have not exhausted all the possible, or even all the interesting, responses to contingency, our discussion has shown at least some of the richness of the landscape. Evaluating such major philosophical movements as pragmatism and postmodern thought requires that we locate them within just such a rich field of relevant alternatives. The work of Santayana and the thought of Wittgenstein add significantly to the profusion of alternatives. Consideration of them is, therefore, doubly valuable. Beyond their intrinsic importance and interest, they also help us see currently more popular responses to contingency in proper intellectual context.

MICHAEL HODGES AND JOHN LACHS

Vanderbilt University

Contingency, Philosophy, and Superstition

In their interesting and welcome paper, Hodges and Lachs represent Santayana and Wittgenstein to be *philosophers of contingency*.⁹ Both thinkers are responding to a “modern malaise” (1) that “began with Descartes’ demand for absolute certainty and culminated in Nietzsche’s withering assessment and ultimate displacement of such demands in favor of a play of forces understood as the ‘will to power’” (3). Conceived intellectually, this malaise is “the recognition that our values and practices are thoroughly contingent, that they lack the certainty or rightness or absolute justification prior generations insisted they could attain” (2).

But where has that sense of contingency come from, and what gives it its peculiar power to disconcert us? Hodges and Lachs are certainly right to lay part of the blame at the door of (modern) philosophy itself. The Cartesian metaphysical doubts that were supposed to lead us to a secure foundation on which to build our edifice of truth have mostly led to more and more doubts; the rigorously skeptical frame of mind constructed in the *Meditations* is, like many of our contemporary addictions, much harder to get rid of than to acquire. Epistemological and moral skepticism were by no means invented at the outset of the modern era, of course, but they certainly were granted a new lease on life then; and we are now living, as Hodges and Lachs aptly put it, in the ruins created by their efflorescence.

But why did those skeptical doubts get such a hold on us in the first place? Hodges and Lachs frequently make it sound as if Wittgenstein and Santayana believe that modern philosophy simply created out of whole cloth its unanswerable demands for certainty. Here is a representative quotation: “According to both [Santayana and

⁹ This paper was read to the Santayana Society in Boston, Massachusetts on December 27, 1994, in response to the above paper by Michael Hodges and John Lachs. Numerical references are to the latter.

Wittgenstein], it is not living human knowledge but a mistaken philosophical tradition that demands foundations and thus creates the conditions of homelessness and displacement" (2). Here is another one: "Both [Wittgenstein and Santayana] identify traditional philosophy as the source of the problems we have with contingency and both attack it for advocating unreasonable, illusory or absurd criteria of justification" (7). I don't think that's right. I distrust the large contrast in the first quotation between "living human knowledge" and our "mistaken philosophical tradition," and I suspect both Wittgenstein and Santayana would see philosophy as more a *symptom* of our problems with contingency than their source, as the second quotation has it.

As a way of digging deeper into my disagreement, let me focus on what Hodges and Lachs say about Wittgenstein. Glossing his claim in §124 of the *Philosophical Investigations*¹⁰ that philosophy "leaves everything as it is," they say, "Our 'forms of life' are fine when seen in the right light. Our objections to them are hollow and derive from illusory demands. Contingency presents no problem so long as philosophers refrain from inventing standards that make our values and practices look bad" (6). As a try at characterizing Wittgenstein's response to our "modern malaise" and its expression in philosophy, those three sentences I've just quoted are not wrong, exactly; but they are partial, and in that way misleading. There is no doubt that the later Wittgenstein deeply distrusted philosophy and hated the *Luftgebäude* it typically produces; there is equally no doubt that he wanted it to come to an end, giving the philosopher peace at last (*PI* §133). But philosophy can come to a properly peaceful end only if we philosophers can understand how it got started in the first place, and what has kept it going in the meantime; and Hodges and Lachs seem to me seriously to err in their account of Wittgenstein here. They make it sound as if he believes that *philosophers themselves*, perversely and mistakenly, have set up standards and ideals that are impossible for our justifications of our practices to meet, and then those philosophers have stood back, wringing their hands, weeping and moaning (or sometimes resentfully gloating) when the inevitable justificatory shortfall was noticed. All we have to do, they seem to think (speaking here for Wittgenstein), is to tell those nasty philosophers to *stop*: to point out to them that the demands they have "invented" are "hollow" and "illusory" (6).

I think this seriously misconstrues Wittgenstein's sense of the matter. To play off against those passages of the *Philosophical Investigations* cited by Hodges and Lachs, let me call your attention to sections 110-111:

§110. "Language (or thought) is something unique" — this proves to be a superstition (*not* a mistake!), itself produced by grammatical illusions.

And now the impressiveness retreats to these illusions, to the problems.

§111. The problems arising through a misinterpretation of the forms of our language have the character of *depth*. They are deep disquietudes; their roots are as deep in us as the forms of our language and their significance is

¹⁰ Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. G. E. M. Anscombe (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1953). We refer to this as *PI* in the sequel.

as great as the importance of our language. — Let us ask ourselves: why do we feel a grammatical joke to be *deep*? (And that is what the depth of philosophy is.)

These two short sections would require quite a long essay for their adequate exposition, but here I must hit only the high spots. Notice that §110 begins by quoting a typical philosophical thesis, one that is right at home in philosophy's traditional attempt to justify our ordinary practices by appeal to something fixed and transcendent. To claim — as Wittgenstein's interlocutor does here — that language is a unique phenomenon is a way of gesturing at the — alleged — uniqueness of human beings, those who are the language animals; and that uniqueness now seems to require some metaphysical/philosophical account as its ground. What exactly *is* our uniqueness? Where does it come from? When this grounding account is in place (as the speaker of the quoted sentence assumes it someday will be), we will then be able to use it to justify some of our most important human practices (e.g., our practices of treating human beings as beings of dignity, not just utility). Those practices will then have been given the metaphysical foundation they (seem to) require.

Clearly Wittgenstein is committed to opposing such metaphysical ambition, but notice that he doesn't trivialize the impulse that gives it rise. He characterizes the proto-philosophical conviction about the uniqueness of language as a *superstition* (*ein Aberglaube*), not a *mistake* (*ein Irrtum*). A mistake is an intellectual or ethical error; it is something that might be corrected and then erased from our lives by appeal to clear sight of the relevant truth. But it isn't clear that a superstition is, for Wittgenstein, an *error* at all. If I can't go peacefully to sleep at night without first kissing a photograph of my distant beloved, it would be a crass response to such superstitious behavior to insist that I must be making some sort of mistake (e.g., that I must have some erroneous scientific beliefs about the efficacy of kissing photographs). That would be to take exactly the line that Wittgenstein finds so objectionable in Frazer's anthropology. No, the superstitious kissing of the photograph is not a mistake, nor does it rest upon one; it is a response — a superstitious response — to something one experiences as having a deep and demanding *Pathos*. (In §110, Anscombe translates '*das Pathos*' as 'impressiveness'.) The action of kissing the photograph satisfies some sharp need in us; we are afflicted with both the impressiveness of the desire to kiss it and the impressiveness of the kiss itself. It is not an *error* to feel such *Pathos*, and it is certainly not a *Pathos* one has created for oneself ("inventing" 6). And that *Pathos* will not be made to go away merely by showing that it is attached to practices that are open to some sort of intellectual objection ("She can't know that you are kissing her photograph! She's in California, for God's sake!"); it will merely displace itself elsewhere, or leave us unable peacefully to sleep.

The same holds true, according to Wittgenstein at §110, for a philosophical conviction such as "Language is something unique." That conviction springs from us unbidden as response to the deep *Pathos* of our ability to speak: to speak truly and falsely; to create and to describe in mere physical sounds and marks the worlds in which we live, or might wish or fear to live. How is such speaking possible? Might we lose (or have secretly lost) that ability? Might our speaking somehow necessarily fail to be able to do what it seems to? These questions are naturally impressive to us,

impressive because of the impressiveness of that which they are questions about: our speaking, and thus the life that comes to us by way of that speaking. The *Pathos* of those phenomena is neither a mistake nor an illusion, nor is it a mistake to respond to it with questions and arguments that are expressions of practices intended to honor and to sustain that *Pathos*. These are all aspects of our natural history as human beings.

Of course, some of our responses to such *Pathos* are, as Wittgenstein says, superstitious ones; and philosophy is for him a paradigm case. But that is a very particular sort of characterization of philosophy, one that Hodges and Lachs do not employ in their account. People do not “invent” superstitious practices, as Hodges and Lachs say that philosophers have invented the impossible demands that these days beset us. And superstitions don’t disappear just by pointing out that they seem to involve false beliefs, such as the “grammatical illusions” Wittgenstein mentions in §110. Confronted with the recognition that they are illusions, the *Pathos* that gave rise to the superstitions of philosophy retreats now to the illusions themselves, and — more importantly — to the problems they create for us. For example, Hodges and Lachs (and most of the rest of us, to be sure) still find certain philosophical problems, such as the problem of the legitimation of our practices, deeply impressive; otherwise they would’t be writing the book the rest of us eagerly await, of which their paper is the prospectus. The *Pathos* has merely been displaced into some new (and — he would say — equally superstitious) forms (e.g., the paper they have written). In this way they illustrate, against their will (we may presume), precisely the phenomenon Wittgenstein was remarking in §110.

Wittgenstein is not in the business of correcting philosophical mistakes, or of trashing the “invented” philosophical criteria of justification we currently suffer under. He is in the business of undoing superstitious responses to the *Pathos* of our lives, of releasing us from the deadly traps set for us, not by the mistakes and inventions of philosophers, ancient or modern, but by our language, and by the forms of life it is a part of, and of which it is the *Äusserung*. Thus in understanding Wittgenstein it is impossible to take the measure of his critique of philosophy as superstition without at the same time talking about what he intends to replace such superstition with. And that is why it is necessary to talk about the peculiar style and force of his own writing, which he carefully fashioned as a sort of confessional autobiography of his own superstitiousness in the hope that the *Pathos* he so intensely experienced (“Tell them I’ve had a wonderful life.” — his last words) could there be fostered and preserved: preserved in a way that the usual distinction between art and superstition is transcended and the usual distinction between art and religion is erased.

It is *that* Wittgenstein (strange as he may seem) I miss in the paper by Hodges and Lachs. And it is *that* Wittgenstein who I think would turn out to have something important to talk to Santayana about.

As a final word, and in the spirit of Auden’s “Let your last thinks be thanks,” I want to commend Mike Hodges and John Lachs for this excellent anticipation of their project and to express my firm belief that it will be an unusually valuable contribution to our current philosophical need.

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Rorty has no Physics

Richard Rorty admits no physics into his philosophy. Had he permitted the concrete material world to be one of the determiners of his conversation, he would surely not have made some of the audacious statements he is noted for. He would not have insisted that there is no such thing as human nature, if he had allowed his philosophical position to reflect the enormous commonality found in the genetic makeup of all humans, and the similarity of the challenges faced by all living organisms. This would also have deterred him from making his historicist claim “that socialization, and thus historical circumstance, goes all the way down — that there is nothing “beneath” socialization or prior to history which is definatory of the human.”¹ If his philosophical position were centred about the material cosmos, he would be less likely to dismiss truth as an outmoded concept, where truth is seen as the unwritten record of events past and future within that cosmos. If he had been in a position to treat contingency in the classical manner as a cosmological concept, he would hardly have converted it into an unfocused all-purpose sceptical notion.

The effect of having a physics would not so much reverse his position on the above and other subjects; rather, it would introduce some measure into Rorty’s sweeping statements. It is not necessary to insist that socialization “goes all the way down,” in order to recognize the powerful impact of environment and social conditions upon behaviour and opinion. One might agree that there is no fully determinate concept of what is human nature; nevertheless, this does not entitle one to deny flatly any common characters and conditions shared by humans. Rorty approves of modern efforts to achieve freedom in place of the old philosophical goal of seeking the truth. But the frank acknowledgement of our setting in the recalcitrant world helps show that the freedom open to us is sharply limited, and requires for its realization the recognition of and reconciliation with the truth.

For traditional philosophy, the predicate ‘contingent’ assigns to the assertion that an event has occurred the specific meaning that it need not have happened. For one who has no physics, the predicate might well be dispensed with altogether; but in the case of Rorty (and many who follow his lead), the term is retained and utilised in a vastly broadened, inexact manner, so that one speaks perhaps of the contingency of language, of selfhood, and of community. To the original concept are appended the epistemic notion of uncertainty and the moral notion of malaise, among other things. Now it could be maintained that if there is contingency of events, then there must be uncertainty and unpredictability about what happens. And it could equally be maintained that where there is uncertainty, there will inevitably be a certain intellectual quiet. Thus both uncertainty and malaise could reasonably be associated with contingency. In the first paper above, it is noted that Santayana finds contingency in events taking place in the world, believes that we are uncertain in our knowledge, and affirms that society suffers from a modern malaise; Ludwig Wittgenstein, one of the

¹ See page xiii of Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (Cambridge University Press: Cambridge 1989). References to this book will consist of page numbers only.

most important influences on Rorty, held the same three beliefs.² While agreeing that contingency may lead to uncertainty, and the latter may lead to malaise, I contend that a particular philosopher may accept all three without having in mind any such progression emanating from the contingency. To appeal to this composite notion of contingency in a discussion of Santayana, who *does* have a physics and uses the term 'contingent' in the classical manner, is likely to run roughshod over the careful distinctions he wants to make. In particular, it tends to ignore and discount the materialism which dominates his philosophy (as indeed do analogies between him and Wittgenstein). Rorty is a great believer in the potency of a vocabulary, and I think that incorporating the three under the single designation of contingency puts a spin on the situation which rather distorts Santayana's position. Matters remain much clearer with the old traditional usage.

Santayana has quite different reasons in each case for holding the three beliefs. He attributes his strong conviction that all events in the material world are contingent to the doctrine of essence, for essences invariably open up alternative possible paths for events to follow at each stage. He also appeals to a trumping argument that any pattern we might find among events itself may rest at a deeper level upon contingency. His scepticism about literal knowledge of facts has an entirely different ground, being founded upon his naturalist picture of animal life immersed in the cosmos. Creatures have no contact to their surroundings save through special sensory organs which generate in the mind essences that are original and dependent on the nature of mind no less than on the external reality. Only prejudice leads people to identify these essences with the real constitution of external objects. And he attributes the malaise of modernity to different sources again; it is not a consequence of the contingency of events, but of a continuing demand for what was lost with the loss of dogmatic religious beliefs, and a failure of modern society to know its own mind and its needs and preferences. The three beliefs are different in their origins and separate in Santayana's thought. Nothing is gained, and much is lost, when these three beliefs are merged under a single designation.

Although Rorty has now repudiated the comfortable assurances he had earlier thought were bestowed by philosophy of language, he nevertheless retains many of his old linguistic presuppositions. For example, the beliefs of different societies and at different times are characterised purely in terms of the vocabulary used to express the beliefs, with no thought that different opinions might be expressed within the same language, or that the same opinion might be expressed in different languages. As well, his reasons for dismissing truth are thoroughly and explicitly linguistic: "Truth cannot be out there — cannot exist independently of the human mind — because sentences cannot so exist, or be out there" (5). In brief, truth depends on language; sentences are primary, and the truth expressed by them secondary. According to this psychologistic theory, there could have been no truth about the planet earth prior to the evolution of animal life capable of uttering those truths. Presumably, we can today describe the earlier era truthfully, up to a point, having now a linguistic competence along with

² This note began as a comment on the above Hodges/Lachs paper, but drifted astray. I am most grateful to David Dilworth for copious electronic conversations on these and other issues; we are grateful also for contributions by two of his students.

scientific evidence about the earlier times. Thus truths about early terrestrial events cannot be seen as eternal, but in fact they must come into being; moreover, they do not come into being at the time when the events take place, but rather at whatever time appropriate language begins to be used. Rorty's desire to get along without truth may indeed have merit, if no treatment of the topic better than this linguistic positivism is available.

For Rorty, the belief that truth is "out there" is "a legacy of an age in which the world was seen as a creation of a being who had a language of his own" (5). Here also, his speculations are too much biased by a preoccupation with language. For some religious persuasions, God is omniscient about the truth, but for others God is not. Whether God requires some language to know the truth is not obvious; but the traditional acceptance of truth does not treat it as a feature of language, and allows for truth whether or not an omniscient God is assumed, or any God at all. Santayana's treatment of truth in terms of essence, whether it be adopted or not, blasts the misconception that truth cannot be treated properly without language.

The classical school which repudiates truth is that of the Sophists. Here are some remarks Santayana makes in a chapter of *The Realm of Truth* entitled "Denials of Truth."³

The Greek Sophists were great men of the world addressing little men of the world ... They might cast ridicule on all reported knowledge, and raise a laugh: they could hardly expect to carry their audience with them, if they denied the existence of that audience, or the intimate shrewd ratiocinations of each man in the crowd, hugging his own thoughts and his own interests. Therefore the unchallenged and unexpressed presuppositions of all criticism in this school must be the existence of conventional human society and the intelligent egoism of each of its members. All else in heaven and earth might be challenged with applause, if reduced to these comfortable and convincing terms. (RT 126)

While this is a description of the ancient Sophist, there are unmistakable similarities with the position of Rorty; and when Santayana considers as well some modern influences, and in particular that of idealism, the picture moves even closer to Rorty's announced position. If the age of the sophists had "had a turn for introspection and autobiography, it might have erected a doctrine of the march of experience." Something like modern psychologism might have emerged:

If nothing be real except experience, nothing can be true except biography. Society must then be conceived as carried out in a literary medium, with no regard to the natural basis of society. (RT 127)

Here we draw very close to Rorty's well known position that the community of society is contingent and without a natural basis, that there is no truth apart from human biography, and that philosophy is to be replaced by literature. Nature is not a part of this philosophy, only biography, experience, and literature. Rorty takes from us two of the main supports of intelligent action, a reliance on the regularity of events and a denial of truth. A malaise may surely be expected to arise from such a position.

Rorty disdains the advice of Epicurus about not fearing death, calling it clumsy.

³ See Chapter XIII of George Santayana, *The Realm of Truth*, (Constable, London, 1937). This book is referred to as RT below.

“When I am, death is not, and when death is, I am not,” says Epicurus. What is lacking here, in Rorty’s opinion, is a clearer account of the ‘I’; the fear of death, at least for the strong poet, is a fear of failure to attain a unique form of expression, to become different from everybody else. The influence of romanticism is all too evident here. It is surely demeaning to allow to the strong poet (or the strong anyone else) no goal more positive than that of being different. Uniqueness might be the goal of a romantic, who sets no intrinsic value on any accomplishment; but it is within the powers of human nature to create ideals, and to bring them to fruition.

One ideal of our civilization since antiquity, and reflected in the statement of Epicurus, stems from the belief that we share with all animal life an inborn fear of death — this is a part of our shared nature. But the inevitability of death can be understood by humans, and thereby in part dominated; the animal fear of death may sometimes be treated with contempt by noble souls. Rorty’s radical contingency appears to disallow this antique wisdom.

The substantiality of the material world and the fragility of the mental life which has emerged within it serve to explain the contingencies Rorty finds in language, selfhood, and community. He is considering them in terms of their descriptions and not in terms of their reality, descriptions with all the fluidity of the play of appearances. From Santayana’s point of view, his discussion is entirely internal to the realm of essence, without the reference to external realities which give to discourse its consequence; it treats language as an idol, and casts aside truth, the psyche which informs human nature, and the physical foundations of society. For Santayana, our theories about these externals are understood in advance to be inadequate as literal descriptions, being subject always to the contingency of nature. However, the externals are retained. Rorty has inherited a verbal philosophy which refuses to recognize these as realities so long as there is no adequate description of them; he does not accept them, as Santayana does, because they are already assumed by animal faith, are described symbolically by essences, and are justified by the successful application of that faith. With no such faith, philosophy become a mere conversation.

Certainly Rorty is not the only bookish philosopher who places everything in the context of language and theory with little consideration of our situation as organisms in the material cosmos. Santayana teaches that the neglect of physics is endemic in modern philosophy, the single exception among the major philosophers being Spinoza; the predicate “has no physics” is widely applicable. Those with empiricist leanings as well as those in the continental school are led by their epistemological rejection of substance to ignore that we are all animals struggling to survive in a physical setting, and not detached minds. Modern philosophy, he says, is religion attenuated, and not the scientific philosophy appropriate in this era.

Thus Rorty’s lack of a physics is not at all unusual; what is notable is the candour and brilliance he devotes to drawing the sceptical consequences from this destructive hypothesis. From his insight into the radical conclusions to which one is led when our material setting is ignored, one may better understand Santayana’s insistence that substance should be re-introduced into discourse in order to give philosophy the balance and measure it merits.

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Concept and Aesthetics in George Santayana

Angel or demon, what unearthly spell
Returns, divinely false like all things fair,
To mock this desolation?

(G. Santayana, *Odi et Amo*)

In our time — and for our purposes I am referring to the last quarter of a century — art, settled, like every other aspect of our society into its corresponding crisis, has attained a status of compulsive complacency.¹ Bereft of all possibilities, it has relinquished its worries as well. Art cannot advance, for progress has been shown to be an illusion; it is unable to regress, for every stone age painting or African mask has long been not only modern, but an inspiration for modernity; to establish itself in a market in which nothing arouses attention or acquires a high price except as novelty is impossible, while to die out would not prove easy for it either, inasmuch as its agony, death, burial and sumptuous or ironic funeral have been something relatively frequent ever since Hegel decreed that all its reality belongs to the past. Those who said that everything is art, pointing to a portrait in the exhibition hall, a tack in the cork of a bulletin board, a couple of stones piled up with careful neglect or the graffiti in the subway, have grown hoarse or become mute from boredom: indeed, even children know that all this and every other thing is art, so it makes little sense to continue proclaiming what no one contests.

Whether on account of their own weariness (*fastidio*) or that of their audience, another group is falling silent as well, namely those who said that nothing was art, but rather business, or class struggle, or sublimation of repressed sexuality, or manoeuvre of the will to power, or a hypostasis of the ludic instinct: would someone perchance dare to claim that that which we designate with the prestigious and silly title “art” is something more than a necessary product of one, several, or even all of these decisive moments (*instancias*)? Since everything is art, since nothing is art, the rest is silence. It is no longer that art is in crisis, an apocalyptic triviality which would merely relate it to the world economy, political parties, philosophy and the mail, but that the crisis itself has become art, and as such partakes of its overwhelming beatitude. The fact is that the universal deterioration has ceased to impress us. Some years ago we were saying, with satisfaction or dismay, “This can’t last much longer!” but with time we have become convinced that it is we ourselves who are not going to last too long, while everything else will go on as always, scraping along be the skin of its teeth, that is to say, perfectly. This holds true for art, as for everything else. Each has concentrated on attending narcissistically to the process of its own decadence, bored of contemplating the general decadence: the spectacle thus gains in velocity what it loses in amplitude.

On the theoretical plane it is also inaccurate to say — as do the usual optimists — that we are living in an age of confusion. In order to suffer from confusion it is

¹ This paper is a translation, by Mr. Renzo Llorente of SUNY at Stony Brook, of the essay “Concepto y Estética en George Santayana” of Fernando Savater. The original is published in *Instrucciones Para Olvidar El Quijote y Otros ensayos generales* by Taurus Ediciones, S. A., Madrid, 1985

necessary to uphold several contradictory criteria, and, at present, no one has any, as a result of which one can attend to all without conflict. Moreover, the hallmark (*lo proprio*) of confused eras is the distress which the confusion provokes, and the desperate longing to escape from this condition by whatever means, whereas today no one would exchange the sweet *melée* that prevails for a handful of clear and chastened principles. The only people who now alarm us are those with a clear vision: I swear, theirs is a frightful certainty! ... We have passed from the tyranny of the dogmatics to the empire of the indolent. Naturally, the former serve as an alibi for the latter, insofar as their diffuse and pleasant abuses have not as yet provoked a campaign of extermination against them. All is well, then. In the absence of doctrines with an aptitude for pre-eminence, there triumphs a simple prefix: *post*, which, applied to any once weighty (*duro*) term — industrial, vanguard, modernity, ... — serves as a kind of wink with which to deflate, while still conserving, the old, already deboned concept. In an age of crisis and of tolerance — however repressive the latter might seem to our ancestors in the Earthly Paradise — nothing is lost, all is recycled and transformed.

To reread Santayana in this framework is so unjustifiable an enterprise that it may well prove opportune. No one less “post” than he; on the contrary, he is eminently “pre” in every respect and we might even term him a “precursor,” if we grant that one can also be a precursor of all that has yet to occur. A bachelor in the style of the classical philosopher whom he always sought to be, his numerous progeny are the sons who were never born, the abandoned roads, the previously excluded perspectives. He was a precocious and dauntless adversary of twentieth century aesthetics, doubtless because by the end of the nineteenth century (*The Sense of Beauty* was published in 1896)² he had already made out its principal features with remarkable acuity. If one had to summarize his stance in a single expression, we should say that he was an *anti-barbarian par excellence*, as today my friend the poet Luis Antonio de Villena also wishes to be. Yet one can observe a difference in their respective ways of confronting barbarism, which difference will perhaps serve to illustrate Santayana’s untimely thought.

A militant opposition to barbarism — which might in its general features be that of Villena — starts from a cultivated stance in favour of refinement, exquisiteness, the effete curio (*rareza*), luxury, the rights of the ornamental over the utilitarian, compliance instead of ill-tempered confrontation, individual expression — however much it may deviate from the norm — over against any docile acquiescence before that which is accepted by the majority. In a word, if we examine and assess these traits historically, this belligerent stance against barbarism is decadence. Santayana, on the contrary, holds that decadence is not the opposite of barbarism, but rather its logical complement. To combat barbarism is *also* to combat decadence. In the celebrated poem of Cavafis, the decadent inhabitants of the city end up missing the barbarians who do not arrive, for in a certain sense they represented a solution to the inhabitants’ languor. Santayana would have admonished them: “Do you not realize that the barbarians have already arrived? The barbarians are but those who await the

² A critical edition of *The Sense of Beauty* was published by MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass. in 1988, edited by Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. and William G. Holzberger. We cite this text as SB.

barbarians, those who need them.”

The very title of his only work devoted specifically to aesthetic theory suffices to reveal for us Santayana's position: beauty has a *sense*, that is, it is something which is significant and can be apprehended by thought, not an ineffable event or a revelation that transcends our modest human capacities (*pequenez*). It has sense for human beings, thus it is not something in itself, separated from their pleasures and ends. It is bound up with the complex framework of that which has worth for men and women and that which they are capable of thinking. As Jerome Ashmore has correctly shown in his *Santayana: Art and Aesthetics*,³ there exists a certain evolution in Santayana's aesthetic views (*planteamientos*) over the course of his work, which comprises numerous publications throughout more than half a century. Still, it is not difficult to establish a series of essential points to which he consistently remained faithful. In my view, they are the following:

- (a) Aesthetic values are not absolutes, that is, they cannot be separated from all the other human values, although they are different and specific.
- (b) Aesthetic values do not belong to another, transcendent and ineffable, world, but are one more human manifestation in our world and, therefore, like any other reality in humans' lives, are subject to the dictates of morality and reason.
- (c) Aesthetic values are not purely subjective, and hence incommunicable except by pseudo-mystical effusions, but objective, and, therefore, although exceedingly diverse, interpersonally valid.
- (d) What we habitually call “art” — not in the Greek sense of *techne*, but in that of the Fine Arts, ornamentation, etc. — comprises no more than a small facet, and, therefore, not the principal one, of the beauty whose sense we try to determine.

These points having been established, perhaps it has become clearer what Santayana understood by modern barbarism, which is — as I have already noted — at one with and inseparable from its decadence. It is barbarism to believe that beauty can preserve itself unscathed on the margin of utility and nature, that it can be based upon the absurd of the criminal, that it is a purely personal effusion, with no responsibilities before any other forum than that of the artist's conscience, that it comes that much closer to genius or the sublime the more it approaches the inarticulate.

As noted, Santayana declares in several places in his writings on aesthetics that he deems noxious the assimilation of “lover of beauty” with “aficionado of works of art,” or simply “art” with “fine arts.” Perhaps there was a good deal of the Bostonian in him after all, and this last puritan, so fascinated by the beauties of classical art, felt obliged in his theorizing to fling his arrows against the purely ornamentalist and *aestheticist* conception of art. In *Reason in Art* he had already affirmed that “An artist may visit a museum but only a pedant can live there”;⁴ in his last book, *Dominations and Powers*, he goes decidedly further when he asserts: “A genuine lover of the

³ Printed in Cleveland by the press of Western Reserve University in 1966.

⁴ See page 299 of *Reason in Art*, Book IV of *The Life of Reason*, found in the fourth volume of the Triton Edition of Santayana's works, Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1936. We cite this as LR4

beautiful would never enter a museum."⁵ (277). For Santayana, the museum represents pure aesthetic abstraction, the gratuitous decontextualization of the work of art, uprooted art.

To be sure, his is no *anticulturalist* prejudice against museums, as is perhaps the case with a few good savages of spontaneous creation (*espontaneismo*) in the art of the present; quite to the contrary, for Santayana the museum is "aculturating" (*aculturador*), rather than too cultural; culture is the painting in the church or the sarcophagus in the cemetery, where these works fulfil a more eminently artistic function than that of being stored away so that they can be admired by those who know neither where they come from nor why they were created. Beauty is pleasure considered as a quality of the thing that produces it, although there is of course no beauty without the people who experience that pleasure. And what produces pleasure for man is that which accords with his nature, with his psychological dispositions or perceptual categories, as well as that which reinforces and expands his possibilities for a harmonious life. If human beings did not have a passionate interest in living more and better, nothing would appear beautiful to them: thus to speak of disinterested beauty is a contradiction in terms. When Schopenhauer, for example preaches the disinterested pacification of the will as the basic principle (*fundamento*) and result of aesthetic contemplation, is he not perhaps simply suggesting that there is no pain or worry in the world that is not alleviated if we succeed in contemplating it from the mind's aesthetic repose, which for a moment adopts the perspective of a *de facto* impossible invulnerability, and thus fortifies us, helps us to continue living? Hence, as Santayana notes in "What is Aesthetics?":

to attempt, then, to abstract a so-called aesthetic interest from all other interests, and a so-called work of art from whatever work ministers, in one way or another, to all human good, is to make the aesthetic sphere contemptible. There has never been any art worthy of notice without a practical basis and occasion, or without some intellectual or religious function.⁶

Art is not an end in itself, but is, like every other facet of human activity, in the service of our passions and our needs; the aesthetic is a value which is never given alone, in its purity, but is rather a kind of highlight (*subrayado*) of a special type that accompanies each and every human creation. The aesthete, personal enemy of Santayana the theorist, is bent on isolating and hypostasizing (*sustantivar*) beauty as a distinct value, separable from any function of the work in which it is incarnated or, even better, more perceptible the more antifunctional the work in question. What the aesthete longs for is a work of art whose only mission would be to reveal pure beauty; he thereby becomes guilty "of that substitution of means for ends, which is called idolatry in religion, absurdity in logic, and folly in morals" (SB 81). Barbarism, for Santayana, is not the incapacity to enjoy beauty, but the nonsensical insistence on believing that it must be enjoyed as a separate, unique and transcendent value. Indeed,

⁵ See page 277 of *Dominations and Powers*, (Scribner's, New York, 1946)

⁶ See page 29 of *Obiter Scripta*, edited by Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz, Constable and Company, London, 1936. We cite this compilation of interesting short papers as OS.

there even exists a degradation of the human type who devotes himself to achieving this dehumanizing objective. "In the mere artist, too, there is always something that falls short of the gentleman and that defeats the man" (LR4 361); fortunately, however, the majority of artists "are craftsmen working under the patronage of industry, religion, custom, sentiment, or pride. They are not aesthetes ... " (LR4 252). Santayana nonetheless traces the portrait of the artist-aesthete in a curious essay from 1927 (reprinted in OS) misleadingly entitled "An Aesthetic Soviet," which has nothing to do, of course, with the artistic values of, or in, the Bolshevik Revolution. The soviet of aesthetes is a sort of club or assembly of pure artists, convincingly and even perversely of the *modern style*, who reject the previously mentioned patronage, seek the beautiful image in pure immediacy for its own sake, scoff at the obligation to follow natural models and ignore the social consequences of their creation. Santayana takes aim at them with his own antithetical criteria, mentioned above, and demonstrates (or believes that he demonstrates) the sterile contradiction in their attitudes, but in the end concludes with a certain paternal wink toward them, for their activity can serve as a rejuvenating contrast in the face of traditional artists, and "after all the irresponsible aesthetes are the children of light" (OS 198).

The aesthetic antiornamentalism of the author of *Reason in Art* is so consistent that for him the most important and representative of the fine arts is Architecture, which precisely on account of its excessive functional evidence played the role of Cinderella in both Hegel's and Schopenhauer's counterposed, though similarly romantic, aesthetics. For this rigorous classicist — or rather, for one nostalgic for a classical ideal which he himself already regards as lost — it is precisely romanticism which is the great nemesis to be denounced. On one occasion, Santayana points out that the two great evils of artistic interchange are "the sentimentalism of the spectator and the romanticism of the creator." Whence it happens that his judgement on some of the most antiromantic manifestations of contemporary art — what Ortega called "dehumanized art" — are more merciful than we would have expected, given his tastes. In his essay from 1933 entitled "Penitent Art," he summarizes his considerations on the pictorial vanguard of his time (reprinted in OS). In his view, it is not a matter of recovering a lost innocence — a notion contradictory in itself — but of imposing on oneself a penitence, or purge, for the past ornamental overload. Just as a worldly woman can, with the onset of old age, do penance to show her repentance for the excesses of make-up and dress which in her later years sought to provide her with youthful freshness, even if this does not restore her native grace, so in modernity the art of pure colour, that is cubism, attempts to find salvation through the path of the emancipation of the medium, while the art of caricature, Klee or Miró, seeks to redeem itself by searching for the essential gesture below the appearances of the human. Whatever there is in these movements that may prove regenerating is due precisely to their explicit renunciation of sentimental and romantic effusions. At the very least they attempt to rescue themselves from that unctuous modern democratic world, whose herald was Walt Whitman, in which men and women will be "vigorous, comfortable, sentimental and irresponsible."

For Santayana, the poet is a prophet, for there exists an intimate link between the functions of poetry and those of religion. The prophets of the barbaric new artistic order, in which there arises a mixture of the decadent and the overwhelming (*arrollador*), the exaltation of strength and complacency in one's own weakness, are

Walt Whitman and Robert Browning, to the criticism of whom Santayana dedicated one of his most celebrated texts, "The Poetry of Barbarism".⁷ Let us look first of all at the splendid description that Santayana sketches of the ignominious (*denostado*) type of individual, who without doubt represents for him the contemporary man at the beginning of the twentieth century,

and not only on the aesthetic plane: For the barbarian is the man who regards his passions as their own excuse for being; who does not domesticate them either by understanding their cause or by conceiving their ideal goal. He is the man who does not know his derivations nor perceive his tendencies, but who merely feels and acts, valuing in his life its force and its filling, but being careless of its purpose and its form. His delight is in abundance and vehemence; his art, like his life, shows an exclusive respect for quantity and splendour of materials, His scorn for what is poorer and weaker than himself is only surpassed by his ignorance of what is higher. (IPR 108-109)

It is obvious that the reaction that a penitent art managed to sketch slightly later, as against this undisciplined sumptuousness, could count on the melancholy sympathy of Santayana.

Returning to Whitman, his essential characteristic is grand (*soberbia*) superficiality. In his poems,

the world has no inside; it is a phantasmagoria of continuous visions, vivid, impressive, but monotonous and hard to distinguish in memory, like the waves of the sea or the decorations of some barbarous temple, sublime only by the infinite aggregation of parts. (IPR 110)

This epidermic whirlwind does not fail to possess political connotations, and it is not for nothing that the poet of *Leaves of Grass* is the predestined bard of the young and potent Yankee republic: "There is clearly some analogy between a mass of images without structure and the notion of an absolute democracy" (IPR 111). Robert Browning, on the other hand, does not linger in the chaotic exaltation of the exterior world, but rather focuses with specular firmness on the diversion of his impassioned intimacy. "His imagination, like the imagination we have in dreams, was merely a vent for personal preoccupations" (IPR 118). This enthusiasm for personal matters prevents Browning from valuing the order of institutions and civilized norms in which they must inscribe themselves, less still do they permit him to attempt to harmonize them rationally. He knows and praises every form of vitality except the highest of all, which is intelligence. His poem are never complete or clean; they are made turbid by the fiery fumes of a pampered subjectivity. At any rate, Santayana knows very well that this type of appraisal is not exactly self-evident to those who receive the work of these poets, let alone does it diminish the complacency with which they are read.

The defects of such art — lack of distinction, absence of beauty, confusion of ideas, incapacity permanently to please — will hardly be felt by the contemporary public, if once its attention is arrested; for no poet is so undisciplined that he will not find many readers, if he finds readers at all, less disciplined than himself. (IPR 107-108)

In "The Poetry of Barbarism," as in "Penitent Art" and some of his other essays,

⁷ This paper appears in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. The critical edition of this was published in 1989 by MIT Press in Cambridge, Mass., edited by Herman Saatkamp and William Holzberger. We cite this by IPR.

Santayana exercises the function which he considers to be the truly useful and appropriate one for those interested in aesthetic appreciation (*valoración estética*), that of the critic. The critic is the positive reverse of the aesthete, for the critic attempts to link the perception of beauty to the remaining interests and values of the rational life, instead of seeking to sever all ties and consigning it to a gaseous and irresponsible limbo. In a natural and necessary fashion, without any shame or subterfuge, the critic is a moralist: "Art being a part of life, the criticism of art is a part of morals" (LR4 336). The barbarians, again, deny this assimilation, some affirming in their overweening brutality that the most beautiful may turn out to be bad for some, while their decadent accomplices think that the bad is the most beautiful. Yet

it is mere barbarism to feel that a thing is aesthetically good but morally evil, or morally good but hateful to perception. Things partially evil or partially ugly may have to be chosen under stress of unfavourable circumstances, lest some worse thing come; but if a thing were ugly it would *thereby* not be wholly good, and if it were *altogether* good it would perforce be beautiful. (LR4 335-336)

Criticism is a reasoned appreciation of human works, subjecting them to criteria of beauty, adequacy, difficulty, originality, truth, and moral significance. All of these criteria are inter-related, and their greater or lesser relevance in each case will depend on the primordial purposes with which the work has been conceived. As for that which bears concretely on art, the critic must reject the demand, so in fashion beginning with romanticism, that the intimacy of the artist is that which deserves primary, if not exclusive, attention. "To understand how the artist felt, however, is not criticism; criticism is an investigation of what the work is good for" (LR4 315). For the critic knows that "the rose's grace could more easily be plucked from its petals than the beauty of art from its subject, occasion, and use" (LR4 217). The aesthetes insist above all on the rights of subjectivity to its full *expression*. Yet this expression cannot appear suddenly out of the void, nor can it relapse into it. To the idealist thinkers like Benedetto Croce or Bernard Bosanquet, who affirmed the absolute priority of the spirit and identified "spirit" with "expression," the naturalist Santayana replies that their conception involves a contradiction: if the spirit is the primary thing, it cannot be expression, because expression is expression of *something*, of something anterior to itself and of a different nature. Either art is free and pure spirit, and hence not expressive, or it is first and foremost expression and as such it will be no more than an expression of that range of interests, passions, beliefs, and longings which form our natural and social lives and which must be investigated by reason.

Certainly, some of these critical considerations on art as revelation of the objective, rather than as a pure expansion of the personality of the creator, coincide with Claude Levi-Strauss's polemical opinions on modern painting set forth recently in his article "Le métier perdu" (featured in number 13 of "Le Débat") and subsequently elaborated on in several chapters of his book *The View From Afar*.⁸ For the great anthropologist, too, the decomposition of the pictorial image, that reduction to a kind of perceptual outline of the painting that no one dares to paint, derives from the hypostasis of an

⁸ Basic Books, New York, 1985. A translation of *Le Regard Éloigné* by Joachim Neugroschel and Phoebe Hoss.

egotistic expressivity which, for having paid no humble attention to the objective, does not succeed in expressing more than its monotonous deficiency. "Man's delight in his perception contrasts with an attitude of deference, if not of humility, toward the inexhaustible wealth of the world" (*The View From Afar* 334). It is interesting to note that the loss of the old pictorial profession, enquirer into the truth of things, coincides, according to Levi-Strauss, with the impressionist movement, the very movement which must have determined Santayana's opinions on the plastic arts set forth in *The Sense of Beauty*. As was to be foreseen, the sort of strictures (*descalificaciones*) that have rained down on Levi-Strauss are not so different from some of those which Santayana himself earned in his day and after: according to these strictures, the latter thinker is a kind of involuntary precedent for the prosecutors of socialist realism, inveighing against degenerate art, while the anthropologist is a reactionary who yearns for those methods of control which have imposed such grave aesthetic mutilations in the countries where they have been applied. Apart from the conceptual limitations and the excessive emphasis of both thinkers' views, I believe, nonetheless, that both Levi-Strauss today and Santayana in the past have aimed for something more defensible and profound than the artistic censorship imposed by commissars of any stripe.

Although Santayana's concern with non-fragmentation and a harmonious integration of the various aesthetic values is quite evident, it would not be appropriate in his case to speak of the total work of art. We should say rather that he conceived of the work of man as a totality, of which artistic beauty is one of the ingredients. Art in itself cannot be an autonomous totality without lapsing into perversity or fraud; its true role is to form part of a complex of adequately harmonized values and purposes. Perhaps, however, as can be glimpsed in some of the philosopher's last writings, when he dedicated himself to expounding an ontology as well as an aesthetics of essences, the enjoyment of beauty could be the very intuition of this harmony, *a symbol of total excellence*. Over against the typically romantic idea, subsequently expanded and exacerbated, that the artist answers to himself alone and that in his hands the horrible and the grotesque, the ridiculous and the wicked, can be transformed into maximum beauty, Santayana maintains that we cannot in the name of any aesthetic principle welcome the absurd or the perverse, for the same reason that we are never totally content with physical pain that is inflicted upon us. Certain essential aesthetic questions are not simply questions of taste or, if one prefers, much has been written on tastes and it would be opportune to write much more: such must be the task of the critic. According to romantic or apocalyptic doctrine, although perhaps it has never been stated so explicitly and in all its crudeness, if the misfortunes of human life were one day to disappear, art would lose its raw materials. Indeed, if the road leading to the highest aesthetic peaks is a contorted subjectivity, the more misfortunes besetting the creative individual the more pathetic, and therefore more expressive, will be the resources at the disposal of his art. Santayana rises up in revolt against this conception and his voice reaches us today from such a distance that we cannot but be captivated by the strangeness of its message:

Nothing but the good of life enters into the texture of the beautiful. What charms us in the comic, what stirs us in the sublime and touches us in the pathetic, is a glimpse of some good; imperfection has value only as an incipient perfection. Could the labours and sufferings of life be reduced, and a better harmony between man and nature be established, nothing would be lost to the arts; for the pure and ultimate value of the comic is discovery,

of the pathetic, love, of the sublime, exaltation; and these would still subsist. Indeed, they would all be increased; and it has ever been, accordingly, in the happiest and most prosperous moments of humanity, when the mind and the world were knit into a brief embrace, that natural beauty has been best perceived, and art has won its triumphs. (SB 161-162)

What is this fortunate age? In the inventive memory of the cultured Western man who claims the classical for himself with an almost desperate emphasis, as is the case with Santayana, it can have only one name, between myth and *logos*: Greece. "A race which loves beauty holds the same place in history that a season of love or enthusiasm holds in an individual life" (LR4 348). Greece was the joyful, golden and adolescent romance in the biography of humanity. The classical perfection of its art lies not only in its aesthetic qualities, but precisely in the fact that the Greeks never believed that there was a uniquely and discretely aesthetic quality. The miraculous equilibrium of form was the harmony of the *polis* and the impenetrable or deadly smile of the god. Did it really once occur? Is it a retrospective dream, the primal myth (*el mito originario*) that we have invented for ourselves in order to justify our spontaneous, insatiable nostalgia without origin? In an essay from 1925, entitled, significantly, "The Mutability of Aesthetic Categories,"⁹ George Santayana recalls the paradise, programs a utopia, and repudiates his age, to which our own still belongs, in a single phrase: "Among the Greeks the idea of happiness was aesthetic and that of beauty moral; and this was not because the Greeks were confused, but because they were civilized."

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⁹ *The Philosophical Review* 34, (1925), pp.281-291.

Concerning the Nature of Intent

ὁ τὰ ψυχῆς ἀγαθὰ αἰρεόμενος τὰ θεϊότερα αἰρέεται· ὁ δὲ τὰ σκῆνεος τὰ ἀνθρωπιῖα. (Democritus: Fragment B37)

He who chooses the good of the soul chooses the more divine things, and he who chooses those of the body chooses human things.

Chapter Six of Santayana's *Reason in Science*,¹ entitled "The Nature of Intent," may for some appear irrelevant to a text the theme of which is science.² But if one were to ask: "What does intent have to do with science?"; and if one were to keep up the inquiry, an answer would soon present itself. One would find that this chapter marks both a culmination and a transition. In respect to the preceding chapters of the text, intent acts both as a limiting factor to, and within this limit, a justification for physical science. If physics remains virtual, then physics is justified; that is, it is justified on the ground that it would then offer a practical and sufficient representation of "the conditions surrounding life" in which a "suitable attitude" towards nature and the conditions of existence can be maintained (RS 168-169). Further, in respect to the later chapters, it marks a transition to dialectic proper and to Santayana's three moral categories: prerational morality; rational morality; post-rational morality. This sets the groundwork and justification for morality in general; but in particular, for rational ethics.

Further, if one were so inspired as to follow this inquiry through, one soon finds that the influence of (if the term may be used) the doctrine of animal intent is central to the life of reason, both as it is embodied and lived and as it works out its role in Santayana's pentalogy, *The Life of Reason*.³ For it becomes clear that there is a strong coincidence — if not a positive identification — between the doctrine of intent and the motto of LoR: ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωῆ. The translation which Santayana gives for this quotation from Aristotle is: "For...the act proper to the intellect is life." (RS p.175) This of course is not a strict translation.⁴ As with many of his restatements of passages quoted from other languages, Santayana renders them in a manner appropriate to his desired usage in respect to the current context. In this case, the context is that of intent, the doctrine of which he is putting forward in order to argue that "the intellect's essence is practical." (RS 172) This argument further underlies his attempt to show, as we shall later see, that physics should remain virtual and dialectic explicit.

Now, if his motto is to be taken seriously — as it ought probably to be, since it

¹ Santayana, George. *Reason in Science*. Volume Five of "*The Life of Reason*." Dover Publications, Inc.: New York, 1983, pp. 168-169. Hereafter cited in the text as RS.

² *Science qua Wissenschaft*.

³ *The Life of Reason* to be cited as LoR.

⁴ A stricter translation would perhaps be: "For the ἐνέργεια of mind is life." Substitute for ἐνέργεια action, operation, energy or whatever else would be appropriate. This would take into account the use of the subjective genitive, which Santayana translates as a species of dative. I have attempted unsuccessfully to find this quotation in Aristotle.

appears, for one thing, on the title page of each volume of LoR, and since it clearly acts as a kind of first or regulatory principle — then there is an overarching concern in LoR with this motto. Indeed, it can most certainly be viewed as a kind of framework within which reason is constrained (practice) if it wishes to be relevant to life, and upon which reason is grounded (matter), and by which it is directed (intent).

This paper, then, will be concerned with elucidating these two themes: the relevance of the doctrine of intent to natural and ideal science and its relevance to the motto of LoR.

* * * * *

Santayana maintains that physics ought ideally to remain virtual and dialectic explicit; but that current trends in intellectual life reverse this ideal. Why? What does he mean by 'virtual' and by 'explicit'? Does he offer any exemplars of this, individuals who articulated a virtual physics or an explicit dialectic? Let us begin at the beginning of Chapter Six:

Common knowledge passes from memory to history and from history to mechanism; and having reached that point it may stop to look back, not without misgivings, over the course it has traversed, and thus become psychology. These investigations, taken together, constitute physics, or the science of existence. But this is only half of science and on the whole the less interesting and fundamental half. (RS 167)

Upon interpretation, this passage indicates that the text is at a transition point. And, recalling that Santayana distinguishes science into physics and dialectic, from this alone it is clear that RS is divided into two tasks or parts, into an account of physics and an account of dialectic. Of course, when Santayana treats of physics in the preceding chapters he also speaks of dialectic, since it is by means of intent-laden dialectic that physics elaborates concretions in existence. Mathematics, geometry, logic, and the terms of language, common or scientific, are all elaborated dialectically. Thus physics is in the main dialectical and dialectic is primary. Without dialectic physics would not be a valid discipline of study, because it would then have no terms with which to elaborate concretions in existence.

Further, not only do we find that dialectic is more fundamental than physics, but we also find that “dialectic is better than physics.”⁵ In what sense and why is dialectic better than physics? For the moment we can assume that if dialectic is better, then it is better because dialectic is or can be more efficacious than physics in relation to the 'progress' of *The Life of Reason*. This is a safe and a not unwarranted assumption. For it is almost axiomatic in LoR that whatever facilitates the growth of reason is more fundamental (better) than that which either does not or does so to a lesser degree.

Granting this, let us return to and continue the previous citation:

No existence is of moment to a man, not even his own, unless it touches his will and fulfils or thwarts his intent. Unless he is concerned that existences should be of specific kinds, unless he is interested in form, he can hardly be interested in being. At the very least in terms of pleasure versus pain, light versus darkness, comfort versus terror, the flying

⁵ RS. Gloss on p.167.

moment must be loaded with obloquy or excellence if its passage is not to remain a dead fact, and to sink from the sphere of actuality altogether into that droning limbo of potentialities which we call matter. Being which is indifferent to form is only material for being. To exist is nothing if you have nothing to do, if there is nothing to choose or to distinguish, or if those things which belong to a chosen form are not gathered into it before your eyes, to express what we call a truth of an excellence. (RS 167-168)

Does this passage help us here? In many respects it does. Physics is concerned with outlying substances and mechanisms. But since “no existence is of moment to a man...unless it touches his will and fulfils or thwarts his intent,” it can be inferred that if any of the substances with which physics deals does not have a relation (positively or negatively) to a man's will or intent, then that substance is of no moment or importance to man. Clearly, this relation is a practical relation. Since it is practical, it therefore is or can be efficacious.

Santayana further elaborates on this by showing that the relation between external existences and intent is not only practical but also dialectical. That is to say that it is a relational interest in (specific) *forms*, in the (moral, logical, æsthetic) *character* of existences. In short it is an interest in essence. In order to exist, and to keep on existing, an animal must necessarily distinguish forms that will fulfill from those that will thwart its intent. It must distinguish between what is good for it and what must be avoided, otherwise it would willy-nilly stumble through existence and surely die of starvation or fall off a precipice. “At the very least in terms of pleasure versus pain, light versus darkness, comfort versus terror, the flying moment must be loaded with obloquy or excellence” Thus, in order *to do* or *to choose* or *to distinguish* anything, the animal must have an interest in the forms of existences, in the essences of substances. And insofar as the animal's interest in form expresses its intent, that is insofar as it is intent on the *forms* of substance, the object of its intent acquires in ideation an ideal relation — either moral or æsthetic or practical — to its spirit. But all ideal relations are dialectical relations of essences and, carried by intent, are elaborated dialectically. Whatever existence, therefore, with which the spirit has an intentional relation must needs also have a dialectical relation. For it is by means of dialectic that intent is clarified and its objects — posited by animal faith — are formally distinguished and classified according to whether these objects are to be pursued or avoided.⁶

⁶ Familiarity with the later Santayana, most notably with *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (Dover Publications, Inc.: New York, 1955 [Hereafter cited as SAF]), may led one to suspect that animal faith and intent are closely related, if not identical. In this paper it is taken for granted that there is a distinction between intent and animal faith. But even though this distinction is not here argued for, it should be clear from their definitions and functions that, although they may work in collaboration, they are decidedly different. First, animal faith is “prior to intuition”; but intent is a part of intuition, of consciousness. Second, animal faith is the psychical affirmation positing substances and is the ground for belief in substance; while intent informs essence with, if you will, a peculiar reassurance to animal needs and aspirations. Both are vital; but animal faith looks to substance, while intent looks to essence. Animal faith is psychical; intent cognitive. “Intent is action in the sphere of thought” (RS 172). “What renders the image cognitive is the intent that projects it to be representative” (RS 174). Now, it is possible that in LoR intent does double-duty; that is, it may also have the function of animal faith, since animal faith has not yet been formulated by Santayana; but it seems clear from SAF that they have different aspects even

Existence thereby acquires an ideal, a moral aspect which is quite alien to it in its substance. But even though, in the order of existence, "Existence naturally precedes any idealisation of it which men can contrive (since they, at least, must exist first),...in the order of values knowledge of existence is subsidiary to knowledge of ideals." (RS 168) Since, therefore, knowledge of existence is *subsidiary* to that of ideals and since knowledge of existence is physics and that of ideals dialectic, physics is *subsidiary* to dialectic. It aids or ought to aid dialectic in a subsidiary, a tributary manner. Thus natural science, as viewed by Santayana, is clearly secondary and of an inferior status to that of ideal science.

Further, even though without knowledge of existence, "nothing can be done;...nothing is really done until something else is known also, the use or excellence that existence may have." (RS 168) But a knowledge of "the use or excellence" of an existent is a knowledge of ideals in relation to the order of values. And we have already seen that "in the order of values knowledge of existence is subsidiary to knowledge of ideals." The knowledge of the use or excellence that an existence may have is, therefore, primary, as opposed to the mere physical, secondary knowledge of an existent thing. Hence, dialectic is primary, physics secondary. It is primary in both a practical and moral sense, in both determining an existence's use(s) or excellence(s). Physics is subsidiary to this determination. Hence, dialectic is better than physics.

It can be asserted that all life is essentially (self-) activity of substance. Wherever we should look, in our own peculiar scale, in either the macrocosm or microcosm, relative to life forms, we shall 'find' the activity, movement and/or metabolism of matter. And conversely, where there is no movement, it is not possible to have life. There can be movement without life; but necessarily, there can be no life without movement. A life without movement is a breathless corpse. And whether we determine that nutrition or reproduction is primary, in both cases we have a form of movement and activity. Prior to reproducing the organism, the material psyche must have stored up enough energy for the chase and reproductive expense; prior to making some external substance part of your own, you must have been born. "The self-maintaining and reproducing pattern or structure of an organism, conceived as a power, is called the psyche."⁷

Now, it is the material psyche that determines the objects of cognitive intent; and intent in spirit is the vital expression of the activity of the material psyche. If the psyche is 'desirous' of food or carnal activities, it sends out its imperatives in the form of conscious intent. The psyche's activities are practical in aim; it wants to eat, to play, to sleep, to fight and to keep on eating, playing and fighting. Therefore, since "intent is action in the sphere of thought," thought is practical in aim. (RS 172)

If, then, "the intellect's essence is practical," its essential, proper occupation is practice (πράξις), is life (ζωή). For, if the "intellect has intent" (RS 173) and intent is the expression of the psyche, the intellect, then, is the expression of the psyche. Again, if the psyche is intent on life and living, then the intellect, as an expression of the psyche, is consequently intent on life and living. But since "intent is

though, as was said above, they may collaborate in result. Further research may clarify this.

⁷ Santayana, G. *The Realm of Spirit*. Triton ed. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1940. p.167.

action [ἐνέργεια] in the sphere of thought [νοῦ]"; and since "intent is a recognition of outlying existences which sustain in being that very sympathy by which they are recognized," (RS 175) action in the sphere of thought is a recognition of outlying existences; or, what is the same thing, action in the sphere of thought has an overt concern with life. Hence the motto: ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή.

Now, since "the act proper to the intellect is life," trivially, acts improper to the intellect are non-life, are impractical. For instance, counting the grains of sand on the sea shore, or arguing how many angels do or can stand on the head of a pin, or, perhaps, even this paper itself. Such inane excursions into futility may not initiate the proper occupation of mind. On the contrary, they may merely stultify it, filling it with such nitty-gritty trivialities as to baffle common sense and to distract spirit from formulating a "suitable attitude" towards nature, or pursuit of the ideal.

This is the situation in which Santayana finds physical science: that is, he finds it too explicit. And insofar as it is explicit — insofar as it painstakingly, minutely, dissects nature into numerical equations, it fails to produce a picture of the world that is useful in action and conducive to everyday life by representing "the conditions surrounding life" so that they may be "rightly faced by instinct." (RS 168-169) "Physics thus becomes inordinately conspicuous...for lack of a good disposition that should allow us to take physics for granted." (RS 169) Should physics offer us a notion of reality in which we could become "practically well adjusted to its issue we might [then] gladly absolve ourselves from studying its processes." (RS 169)

To keep on studying the processes of omnificent matter, the substance of which "in extent and complexity so far outruns human energies," (RS 169) may disclose data that are "delightful to know and to keep in mind, but much also (the infinite remainder) is obscure and uninteresting." (RS 169) In short, as Santayana sees it, physics ought to offer a representation of nature in which we can attain "a suitable attitude towards it, by the attitude which reason would dictate were knowledge complete, and not by explicit ideas." (RS 169)

At this point we may digress into Santayana's more mature ontology and perhaps see that his usages of 'virtual' and 'explicit' here are roughly equivalent to his later usages of 'symbolic' and 'literal', respectively. If so, then we may also connect here what would later in his career be the function of scepticism, or transcendental criticism of knowledge, in relation to the purgative effect which it can have on the mind by ridding it of gratuitous dogmas, such as those of positivism, or empirical criticism of knowledge. This is most notably the case with SAF. The positivistic standard that only clear and distinct (explicit) ideas can give true (literal) knowledge of fact is, as scepticism shows, too high a standard. The term Fact, for Santayana, means an event in substance, an event which either has occurred, is occurring or will occur. Consequently, all facts are physical. Therefore, a fact can never be a datum of immediate intuition, since all that is ever present to it is one or another essence, and not a substance.

A fact, however, as an event in substance, does exemplify an essence; and the *form* of that event may be exemplified in intuition. As such, an essence exemplified in intuition reveals only its internal relation, its intrinsic character. It is all surface, merely foreground. That is, it contains no relation to anything external to it. Consequently, stare as long as we may, we shall never acquire knowledge of fact if there is not another element which posits substance, as it were, behind the given form giving the

essence a material background. And this is the function of animal faith. Since, therefore, it is by means of animal faith that the given essence in intuition acquires a background, intuition is an indirect acquaintance with things; it is merely symbolic and not literal, virtual and not explicit. Consequently, "knowledge is faith mediated by symbols." (SAF 164)

The positivist, whose "malicious" psychology acknowledges only immediate 'experience', does not allow matter to enter his equations, since matter is by definition the not-given. But in staring at his ideas and elaborating them dialectically — and he may do so for as long as he pleases — he never quits the realm of essence; he is merely contemplating a surface, however beautiful, or admiring a ghost, however evanescent. And unless he makes a leap of faith, which in intention (perhaps even in inattention) he is not willing to admit but which he is continually and instinctively doing, his theoretical world dwells in the foreground only. Prior to acknowledging this leap, which no matter how much he protests he makes even when he eats his food, the positivist is merely hypostatizing some one essence. But the faithful sceptic, if he be at all inclined to wake him up, may then call his bluff, challenging him "to produce any knowledge of fact whatsoever." (SAF 4)

To return from the later Santayana to LoR, he undoubtedly has in mind as exemplars of virtual physics the naturalism of the Ionians, Lucretius, and perhaps Spinoza, who in erecting their systems of nature on the edifice of matter, produced symbolical, sometimes allegorical visions of nature which, though usually characterized as naïve, were at once sophisticated and imaginative. The human animal's character and place in nature was fixed as a part of nature, as opposed to being apart from nature. "Perhaps," he says in *Soliloquies in England*, "the deepest assumption of classical philosophy is that nature and the gods on the one hand and man on the other, both have a fixed character; that there is consequently a necessary piety, a true philosophy, a standard happiness, a normal art."⁸ Such systems as these of our great naturalists/materialists were not only endeavors to see the world aright; but they were also meant to be cathartic and to free spirit so far as is possible from the every-day trials and tribulations of living in a strange world, either through laughter, *katastematic* pleasures of the mind or through intellectual love of *Deus sive Natura*. They wished only to live well, as so many of us do, and to turn life into a rational art, as more of us should. But to turn life into a rational art requires, for Santayana, that we practice explicit dialectic.

For Santayana, dialectic has been distorted in a manner opposite to that which physics has been. Whereas he sees physics as attempting to be too explicit and being idolatrous of facts, he sees dialectic as being merely virtual, and treating ideals irresponsibly and unæsthetically, if indeed ideals are treated at all. And in relation to art, religion, and morals, the case would seem to be the same: dialectical relations of ideal terms, so far as they are not elucidated, are not brought to their fullest, ideal expression.

An interesting comparison here with Santayana in relation to the lost of the ideal perhaps would be Nietzsche. *Gott ist tot*, cried Nietzsche in his aphorism "New

⁸ Santayana, George. *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*. Ann Arbor Paperbacks: The University of Michigan Press, 1967. p.166

Struggles.”⁹ He goes on to add a *requiem æternam deo* in the parable of “The Madman”:

How shall we comfort ourselves, the murderers of all murders? What was holiest and mightiest of all that the world has yet owned has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood off us? What water is there for us to clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Is not the greatness of this deed too great for us? Must we ourselves not become gods simply to appear worthy of it? There has never been a greater deed; and whoever is born after us — for the sake of this deed he will belong to a higher history than all history hitherto. (GS 181)

I have always interpreted this passage to state that God ‘died’ under the blade of science (or, perhaps, rationalism) which, in its attempt to sublimate spirituality into fact-mongering, has issued in an age of nihilism; so too, *mutatis mutandis*, for Santayana. There is interesting one difference — among the many — between Nietzsche and Santayana: Nietzsche the raving romantic rejoiced in this while gaily prancing like a good little satyr to the glorious beat of dionysiac drums, singing *écrasez l'infâme*, and consequently, creating an idiosyncratic (*pathos*) mythology (*ethos*); Santayana, on the other hand, wept at the loss of the ideal, as he indicates in a letter to James, on December 6, 1905:

I have read practically no reviews of my book [*The Life of Reason*] so that I don't know if any one has felt in it something which, I am sure, is there: I mean the *tears*. “Sunt lachrimæ rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.” Not that I care to moan over the gods of Greece, turned into the law of gravity, or over the stained-glass of cathedrals broken to let in the sunlight and the air. It is the ideal. It is that vision of perfection that we just catch, or for a moment embody in some work of art, or in some idealised reality: it is the concomitant inspiration of life, always various, always beautiful, hardly ever expressible in its fulness. And it is my adoration of this real and familiar good, this love often embraced but always elusive, that makes me detest the Absolutes and the dragooned myths by which people try to cancel the passing ideal, or to denaturalise it. That is an inhumanity, an impiety, that I can't bear. And much of the irritation which I may betray and which, I assure you is much greater than I let it seem, comes of affection. It comes of exasperation at seeing the only things that are beautiful or worth having treated as if they were of no account.¹⁰

The loss of the ideal, indicating the illiberal state of the modern mind, has led to or has been caused by an adoration of (explicit) physics, of modern science and of its nifty by-products, issuing in an age of consumer mentality, vulgar materialism, and moral barbarism; an age in which almost all people are *τεχνίται* of some discipline in the narrow. Imagination and reason are constrained to the temporal and ephemeral with the result that both have lost sight of the eternal and ever-present. *Non diutius sursum corda*, we no longer lift up our hearts to the eternal. Science, which to a great degree — especially since Darwin — has supplanted religion as a means to

⁹ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Gay Science*. trans. Walter Kaufmann. Vintage Books: New York, 1974. Hereafter cited as GS.

¹⁰ Cory, D. *The Letters of George Santayana*. Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1955. pp.81-82.

truth, refuses to legislate morals;¹¹ nor, for that matter, can it fill the spiritual gap which to an extent it has produced. For in clarifying existence and the nature of the universe, science, like the systems of Epicurus and Lucretius, has filled in a number of the cosmological gaps in which superstition and mythology once lived. But in removing God or the gods from the picture, or in consigning them to the spaces between worlds, science, in filling one gap, has produced two more: a moral and a spiritual one. For individuals still have an instinctive psychic need to lift up their hearts to something believed to be eternal; but while science is normally conceived to be the main — if not the sole — avenue to the truth, other possible and perhaps more fulfilling routes are discredited on account of their supposed naïveté.

In an very interesting and revealing passage, given in the form of a wonderful metaphor, Santayana indicates his position in relation to (virtual) physics and (explicit) dialectic: That the mind, in defining and embodying intent, addresses the eternal (essence and truth) and thus becomes spiritual in relation to life in the ideal by taking on an ideal shape.

A further bad consequence of this illiberal state is that, among those who have, in spite of the times, adoration in their souls, to adore physics, to worship Being, seems a philosophical religion, whereas, of course, it is the essence of idolatry. The true God is an object of intent, an ideal of excellence and knowledge, not a term belonging to sense or to probable hypothesis or to the prudent management of affairs. (RS 170-171)

A tincture of hyperbole is often mixed on Santayana's palette; and his instinct for sheer poesy can be quite enlightening, especially when the moral is displayed in such uplifting colors. The above passage, surely, has this effect. People simply worship the wrong God (physics, Being, substance) and thus they become idolatrous. That which ought to be worshiped, "the true God," is "an ideal of excellence and knowledge"; it is "an object of intent." Thus, ideally, the objects of intent are or can be objects of excellence and knowledge. The passage continues:

After we have squared our accounts with nature and taken sufficient thought for our bodily necessities, the eyes can be lifted for the first time to the eternal. The rest was superstition and the quaking use of a false physics. (RS 171)

Thus after physics has become virtual, the mind may address the eternal and dialectic, we may assume, can become explicit. "The eternal" here refers to "the true God." Since the object of intent is said to be the true God, the object, then, is eternal; and for Santayana only essence and truth are eternal; consequently, the objects of intent are essence or truth, as one would expect since the "intellect has intent" (RS 173) and is thoroughly dialectical, elaborating concretions in discourse (forms, ideals, essences).¹²

[This] appeal to the supernatural which while the danger threatens is but forlorn medicine, after the blow has fallen may turn to sublime wisdom. This wisdom casts out the fear of material evils, and dreads only that the divine should not come down and be worthily

¹¹ Of course we have the so-called pseudo-sciences such as eugenics which perhaps on debatable premises attempt to legislate breeding practices and other forms of social engineering.

¹² This, perhaps, may be further evidence that intent and animal faith are functionally different. Clearly, intent is a cognitive relation to form; but animal faith is a psychical relation to substance, a kind of flying hypostasis of form.

entertained among us. (RS 171)

This “sublime wisdom” helps life “to take on an ideal shape.” And “ideal life, insofar as it constitutes science, is dialectical.” (RS 171) If we turn to the concluding paragraph in Chapter Seven of RS entitled “Dialectic,” we shall, perhaps, discover at what all of this is aiming: Socratic method and rational ethics (morality).

The sincere dialectician, the genuine moralist, must stand upon human, Socratic ground. Though art be long, it must take a short life for its basis and an actual interest for its guide. The liberal dialectician has the gift of conversation; he does not pretend to legislate from the throne of Jehovah about the course of affairs, but asks the ingenuous heart to speak for itself, guiding and checking it only in its own interest. The result is to express a given nature and to cultivate it; so that whenever any one possessing such a nature is born into the world he may use this calculation, and more easily understand and justify his mind. (RS 208)

This passage speaks for itself. It ties, on the one hand, Socratic method to explicit dialectic and, on the other hand, explicit dialectic with rational ethics (morality), since Socratic method was an attempt rationally to clarify the intent of his interlocutors and thus for them to know themselves, their interests, giving them ideal shape and faithfully embodying them.

Always for Santayana creative imagination and the articulation of ideals are the highest expression of life that we may attain. This is the goal of the Life of Reason as it is lived and embodied. Through the clarification of our intent by means of explicit dialectic we may attain momentarily and “for a season” entrance into that ideal realm. And in so practicing and perfecting the life of spirit, we (like Goethe's Faust) may bid the moment to tarry and dwell on its intrinsic beauty; we may lift up our hearts to the eternal. Society, Religion and Art may cease to be decadent and issue in an age replete with inspiration, a second Renaissance.

All that is needed to accomplish this task, according to Santayana, is the sincere endeavor to clarify intent. “The sincere dialectician, the genuine moralist, must stand upon human, Socratic ground.” (RS 208) One must learn to know one's self. Just as Socrates tells Cebes in the *Phaedo* how he lost his “extraordinary passion” for natural science because such a branch of knowledge seemed incapable of explaining the most important of things: how to live well. So too for Santayana, for whom explicit physics is a distraction from the pursuit of the ideal and consequently from the proper occupation of the mind: ideal life. “We have no time or genius left, after our agitated soundings and bailings, to think of navigation as a fine art, or to consider freely the sea and the sky or the land we are seeking.” (RS 170) It is enough for Santayana that physics may offer a representation of nature in which “a suitable attitude toward it [can be maintained], by the attitude which reason would dictate were knowledge complete, and not by explicit ideas.” (RS 169)

The ancients were happily inspired when they imagined that beyond the gods and the fixed stars the cosmos came to an end, for the empyrean beyond was nothing in particular, nothing to trouble one's self about. Many existences are either out of relation to man altogether or have so infinitesimal an influence on his experience that they may be sufficiently represented there by an atom of star-dust; and it is probable that if, out of pure curiosity, we wished to consider very remote beings and had the means of doing so, we should find the detail of existence in them wholly incommensurable with anything we can conceive. Such beings could be known virtually only, in that we might speak of them in the

right key, representing them in appropriate symbols, and might move in their company with the right degree of respectful indifference. (RS 170-171)

Thus Santayana would bid us follow the ancient sages in seeking wisdom or a happy and ideal life. We should then take to heart Democritus, who wrote that it is better to be than to seem good. We must, as did Heraclitus, seek within ourselves, or as did Socrates, if we are already really good, be a maieutic midwife to the thoughts of others. "After we have squared our accounts with nature and taken sufficient thought of our bodily necessities, the eyes can be lifted for the first time to the eternal." (RS 171) To live the life of spirit, to practice explicit dialectic, and to clarify our intent is the route to this realm. We should, as did Epicurus, cultivate our own gardens so that they may be idyllic havens of beauty or Delphic monuments to inner peace.

Ideals are not forces stealthily undermining the will; they are possible forms of being that would frankly express it. These forms are invulnerable, eternal, and free; and he who finds them divine and congenial and is able to embody them at least in part and for a season, has to that extent transfigured life, turning it from a fatal process into a liberal art. (RS 209)

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The Santayana Edition

Renewed NEH funding brought two new aspects to our work, one expected and the other not. First, as anticipated, our accomplishments increased. We published *The Last Puritan* in hardback (1994) and in paperback (1995), and the General Editor and MIT Press agreed to the publication of a compact disk edition of *The Works of George Santayana* by IntelLex Past Masters Series using Folios software. This CD version will have the first four volumes of the Edition, and other volumes will be added as they are completed. Sales of the Edition are steady, and the first volume is now out of print. In addition, considerable progress has been made on *The Letters of George Santayana* and *The Marginalia*.

NEH's political fragility is the unanticipated aspect of renewed funding. Throughout this year, forceful efforts to eliminate both NEH and the National Endowment for the Arts have been well publicized. Critics cited the "objectionable" art funded by the NEA and the National History Standards funded by the NEH. The overall value of the two endowments has largely been overlooked, along with the considerable support both received through matching and cost-sharing funds. The Santayana Edition alone received \$90,000 in Federal matching funds and \$90,000 in gift funds since 1983. These funds supported the \$780,208 in outright NEH funds received since 1977, which were supplemented by institutional cost sharing that surpassed the total funding from NEH. This non-NEH support has come from universities (Texas A&M University principally, followed by the University of Tampa and Bucknell University) and from individuals associated with philosophy and Santayana scholarship.

Matching and cost-sharing funds are an indication of the support generated through NEH grants. Without the NEH support generating cost-sharing and gifts at anything close to our current level is impossible. Ironically, if we receive funding through four more years, we will be able to complete the work on ten books. However, funding now appears to be in serious jeopardy. As of July 1995, Congress is considering proposals that cut 30-50 percent from NEH funding in each of the next three years, followed by elimination of the Endowment. The exact legislation will not be determined until later, but the future of NEH is clearly at risk.

Without too much editorializing, there are two points to be made. (1) In terms of reducing the federal budget, abolishing NEA and NEH is like eliminating one cup of coffee per week to save the family budget — it will have little effect in significantly reducing spending. But the more important point is political. (2) The present tide of political ideology suggests that funding for all projects should be home-based, i.e., in the state or the locale where the work is being completed. Perhaps this is a good idea for projects that are primarily focused on a particular locale, but scholarship rarely is. What agency will fund projects of national and international significance?

Obviously, this will be an important year for the Santayana project. In June we completed the arduous task of submitting our 1996-98 NEH proposal. In March or

early April 1996 we will learn whether there will be NEH support for our proposal, but by October or November 1995 we should know the level of federal funding for NEH. The downsizing or possible elimination of NEH threaten the work of all philosophical editions, including those of Dewey, James, and Peirce. But the philosophy editions are few in number compared to the literary and historical editions supported by NEH, not to mention NEH support for fellowships, research, educational programs, and the state humanities councils.

The funeral atmosphere surrounding the arts and humanities in the U.S. is not abstract. Specific scholarship will be lost irrevocably if NEH is not supported. There are many individual scholars and associates whose livelihood depends on NEH funding, not to mention the scholars and staff at NEH and the state councils. I am fortunate to be a tenured professor whose salary is independent of NEH, but there are Santayana Edition staff members whose principal source of income is based on our NEH grant (funded since 1977). The drama of these federal decisions will affect them significantly, as it will many people working at other research projects throughout the nation. Whatever your political persuasion, I hope you will encourage your congressional leaders to consider carefully the future of arts and humanities funding.

Now, on to other news concerning the Santayana Edition. Due to the bankruptcy of our typesetter, we have moved to a full program of electronic publishing. Working with MIT Press we utilize QuarkXPress software to publish the next volumes of the Edition. Learning and using this new program initially increases our learning curve, but in the long run it will greatly facilitate a fast and secure method of publication.

Several visitors have come to work at the Edition's location during the year, including Cayetano Estébanez from Valladolid, Spain. Cayetano is a professor in the Department of English Philology at the University of Valladolid. A grant from the Spanish Ministry of Education supported his two months at Texas A&M University and one month at Harvard University. He is completing a book on Santayana's literary works.

During 1994-95, I have been on leave from my teaching responsibilities, and it has been a delightful year. Apart from having more time for the Santayana Edition, I spent portions of the fall in Madrid and Avila completing research on Santayana's letters and giving lectures. For one month in the spring I was in Moscow, St. Petersburg, and Kraków giving lectures on American philosophy and Santayana (incidentally, being treated royally by my hosts, who included Tigran Yepoyan whom some of you will remember from the 1992 International Conference on Santayana in Avila).

HERMAN J. SAATKAMP, JR.
General Editor

Obituary: Corliss Lamont

Dr. Corliss Lamont, author, teacher, and defender of civil liberties, passed away at his home in New York this past May. He was 93.

For many years, Lamont supported scholars in collecting and editing manuscripts of the classical American philosophers, and he specifically assisted Columbia University in purchasing many Santayana manuscripts. He also provided annual funding for *The Works of George Santayana* through 1993. In his pamphlet, "The Enduring Impact of George Santayana," Lamont writes, "I believe that his [Santayana's] name and influence will indeed be lasting, for three main reasons: first, because of the wide-ranging nature and general excellence of his work; second, because he gives a sound, telling and comprehensive presentation of one of the great living philosophies — Naturalism or Humanism, and third, because his superb literary style makes him a joy to read and will continue to attract people whose specialty is not necessarily philosophy." He wrote to Herman Saatkamp in 1984 pledging annual support for the Santayana Edition for "as long as I am alive." With characteristic humor and goodwill he wrote to Saatkamp in 1991 saying, "I did not realize I would live so long. I am now almost 90." Without his intellectual and financial support, the project could not have succeeded.

Educated at Harvard and Columbia, Lamont obtained his Ph.D. in philosophy from Columbia in 1932. During an active career that spanned nearly a century, he authored 16 books and hundreds of pamphlets, and taught at Harvard, Cornell, and Columbia. In one of his many works, Lamont describes himself as, "a teacher of philosophy and a worker for world peace." This sequence is important since Lamont believed that teaching the proper philosophy was the only way to begin the long struggle toward peace. This 'proper philosophy' according to Lamont was Humanism: a philosophy that is naturalistic, scientific, and democratic: a philosophy which traces its strands of influence from Aristotle to Santayana and Dewey.

Corliss Lamont is perhaps best remembered, though, for his strong and persuasive championing of civil liberties. He not only wrote and spoke on behalf of the liberties guaranteed by the Bill of Rights but endured the harassment of the McCarthy hearings and withstood the CIA's illegal perusal of his private mail. Dr. Lamont battled government agencies that destroyed basic liberties, often achieving victories in court. Lamont also served as the director of the American Civil Liberties Union for 22 years and was chairman of the National Emergency Civil Liberties Committee for 30 years. Among his many honors is the Gandhi Peace Award which he received in 1981.

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ELEVENTH UPDATE

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