

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the
Santayana
Society*

No. 16
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of the
Santayana Society**

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OVERHEARD IN SEVILLE

ANNOUNCEMENT

SANTAYANA SOCIETY

1998
ANNUAL MEETING

“Santayana’s Theory of Time”
Richard Gale
Pittsburgh University

Commentary
Angus Kerr-Lawson
University of Waterloo

Chair
John Lachs
Vanderbilt University

7:30 - 10:30 P.M. 28 December
Farragut
Washington Hilton and Towers

The Society’s annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the December meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) in Washington, D. C.

Ultimate Religion

Immediately upon commencing his address to mark the tercentenary of the birth of Spinoza, Santayana poses the question prompted by the occasion.¹ He asks, "What inmost allegiance, what ultimate religion, would be proper to a wholly free and disillusioned spirit?"² To my mind, no better question could be asked of a philosopher — assuming that we give the name "philosopher" to one who would address such a question with honesty and learning. "What inmost allegiance, what ultimate religion, would be proper to a wholly free and disillusioned spirit?" The question recalls us at once to the most urgent and fundamental concerns, and thinkers who have something helpful to say about them are justly revered. But it is difficult to carry out the mission. Santayana asks for the ultimate allegiance of a free and disillusioned spirit, and such beings are rare. It goes without saying that a moral philosopher must possess a medley of traits: he must be intelligent, imaginative, discerning, learned, and of worldly experience. Unusual as these traits are, the moralist must also be a man of exceptional courage, discipline, and honesty. Only then can he be free and disillusioned. Santayana repeatedly remarks that philosophies have infrequently met these standards. They have typically been shams, as he likes to say it, projections onto the universe of the traits that their authors have craved to find there — concocted of a stew of prejudice, egotism, and weakness. Many thinkers have formulated and achieved an "inmost allegiance," but they have typically accomplished it by some form of dishonesty or evasion.

Few philosophers have exceeded Santayana in the judgment that the world is resistant to human endeavor and unresponsive to the yearnings of the soul. In such an inhospitable world, the temptation to avoid the truth is powerful, and the strength to be candid and forthright is scarce. We might even ask why philosophy should be undertaken at all. Why should anyone expose himself to such a forbidding and dreary prospect with so little hope of reward? Perhaps someone who is fully disillusioned ought to deny the very possibility of an ultimate religion, and many philosophers have taken this path. Santayana believed, however, that such a good can be achieved. In any case, he had contempt for those who lacked the requisite candor. He loathed pretense, and he found courage and honesty ennobling, even in failure.

Spinoza is one of those free and disillusioned spirits. He is praised as one of those rare possessors of the traits of a true philosopher and who in consequence of these very qualities conceived and enjoyed a deep and abiding good, declaring himself blessed. "[T]he singularity of Spinoza, at least in the modern world," Santayana writes, "was that he facilitated this moral victory by no dubious postulates. He did not ask God to meet him half way: he did not whitewash the facts, as the facts appear to clear reason, or as they appeared to the science of his day. He solved the problem of the spiritual life after

¹ This paper is a revision of the paper presented to the Santayana Society in Philadelphia on December 29, 1997. I am grateful for the many comments on my theses made on that occasion, especially those of Henry Samuel Levinson and, secondly, Herman Saatkamp. My revisions are minor, and they do not attempt to accommodate my critics. Such an endeavor would require many more pages!

² George Santayana, "Ultimate Religion," a paper read in the Domus Spinozana at the Hague for the commemoration of the tercentenary of the birth of Spinoza. Published in *The Works of George Santayana*, Triton Edition, Volume X (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1937), pp. 243-257. We refer to this paper as UR; all references having only the page number are to UR. The above quotation is from p. 245.

stating it in the hardest, sharpest, most cruel terms" (246-7). Adumbrating what he takes to be the very core of Spinoza's philosophy, Santayana goes on to praise him more fully, "touch[ing] the crown of Spinoza's philosophy, that intellectual love of God in which the spirit was to be ultimately reconciled with universal power and universal truth" (251).

Nevertheless, Santayana goes on, there is a serpent or two in this garden. The first of them is Spinoza's unwavering confidence that God, or Nature, is both perfectly intelligible and accessible to reason; Santayana insists that no such confidence is warranted. Second, the "moral problem," as he calls it, is not fully solved, for "it is not solved for mankind at large, which remains no less distracted than it was before" (252); and even Spinoza's own triumph is incomplete. He achieved a perfect harmony of the intellect and nature, but the perfection of our animal makeup and its harmony with the world is left unachieved. The spirit, Santayana continues, "cannot rest in the satisfaction of any special faculty, such as intelligence, nor of any special art, such as philosophy. That the intellect might be perfectly happy in contemplating the truth of the universe, does not render the universe good to every other faculty; good to the heart, good to the flesh, good to the eye, good to the conscience or the sense of justice" (253). Although Spinoza himself achieved supreme happiness, he was reconciled to the nature of things only as it is conceived in a reductive manner — as a necessary and rational order; but an intelligible cosmos is not on that account morally good, for example. Complete reconciliation, on the other hand, would not stop short in this manner. "The universal good by which the spirit, in its rapt moments, feels overwhelmed, if it is not to be a mystical illusion, cannot fall short of being the sum of all those perfections, infinitely various, to which all living things severally aspire" (253).

A moment earlier in his address, anticipating the reservations he would press against Spinoza, Santayana had said, "Let us nerve ourselves to-day to imitate his example, not by simply accepting his solution, ... but by exercising his courage in the face of a somewhat different world, in which it may be even more difficult for us than it was for him to find a sure foothold and a sublime companionship" (246). That is, Santayana will offer a sketch of an ultimate religion that will not "whitewash the facts." It will be conceived in terms of his philosophy of spirit, which was launched in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, articulated systematically in *The Realm of Spirit*, amplified and illustrated in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*.³ The essay on Spinoza, while brief and without technical elaboration, faithfully represents the main conclusions of these major works. I will offer a summary account of the position embodied in the essay, and I will subject it to the austere requirements that Santayana imposed on Spinoza. To be blunt about it, Santayana will fail the test. The trouble with his philosophy, however, is not that it fails in this manner, but that the requirements for an ultimate religion are extravagantly high — so high that no free and disillusioned spirit could demand them, much less satisfy them.

By this conclusion I do not imply that the entire enterprise must be given up, leaving us with an ultimate nihilism. Rather, we must think about such fundamental concerns in a way that is truly free and disillusioned. When I survey the resources that might be marshalled in such a grand project, I find none better than those provided by

³ A full understanding of spirit also requires a study of the other three volumes comprising *Realms of Being*, as well as the transitional work, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. Santayana's autobiography, *Persons and Places*, suggests how he himself succeeded in living in the spirit.

Santayana himself! — not by the older man who wrote *The Realm of Spirit*, but the younger one who wrote *The Life of Reason*. The five volumes of this book are a treasury of wisdom, bracing us to think constructively about an ultimate religion.

I. The Philosophy of Spirit

I am daunted by the task of presenting a handy-sized account of the spiritual life. In the generic sense of Santayana's use of that expression, it refers to the entirety of conscious life, whatever its confusions, illusions, distractions, and foolishness — as well as its sometime nobility and triumph. We could substitute "mind" for "spirit." But Santayana also speaks of true spirit or pure spirit, by which he means mind in perfect actuality, and in this final entelechy of mind we find the supreme good. This perfect actuality is a purely contemplative state, also called a purely intuitive state. The object of contemplation is what Santayana calls an essence. Now, an essence, in Santayana's distinctive account of it, is not a cognitive object. It is not a sign of some other event; it is not subject to verification; no inferences are made. It is utterly intransitive. When we turn to matters of significance and verification, we have departed the intuitive state and entered the condition of animal faith, wherein all the active business of conscious life is carried on, including scientific or philosophic inquiry and the creation of works of art.

An essence can be a highly complex datum. It might be Shakespeare's Hamlet (one of Santayana's examples);⁴ it might be the special theory of relativity, the philosophy of Spinoza, or the idea of the realm of truth. It could be a religion, a myth, a poem, a memory, or a history. But as essence, as datum of intuition, it is not cognitive; it is simply, and nothing but, given. "[B]y intuition I mean direct and obvious possession of the apparent, without commitments of any sort about its truth, significance, or material existence. The deliverance of intuition is pure essence. The degree of truth or significance that this essence may have, as revealing a world of action, or as promising other intuitions, is an ulterior question, morally and cognitively important, but itself, when consciously considered, distracting the spirit from its native and present happiness."⁵

Even to think of an essence as an object is to re-introduce animal faith. This is a condition, then, of complete detachment, and — as he put it in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* — "disintoxication" with the influence of values (PSL 179), where he refers to worldly values. Spiritual detachment has its own distinctive goods. It is a condition that Santayana variously describes as "blissful," "joyful," or "ecstatic"; and he likens it to Nirvana, identity with Brahma, and union with God.⁶ It is likewise union with "universal good." This condition is in no way a state of partiality towards any

⁴ *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (Triton Edition, Volume X), p. 172. Cited as PSL.

⁵ *The Realm of Spirit*, pp. 646-47. Cited as RS. This quotation comes from the One Volume Edition of *Realms of Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942). All further quotations from *Realms of Being* will be from this edition.

⁶ See, for example, *The Realm of Spirit*, pp. 738-42, 813.

worldly existent; it is not a judgment of any worldly thing.⁷ Santayana frequently refers to it as a state of perfect impartiality.

Essences are also objects of love. Spirit is consummated in love — love for all things impartially, a love neither carnal nor possessive; in no way an attached love. Indeed, they cannot be loved as things, but “only as ideas” — as essence.⁸ Spiritual love is likened exactly to Christian charity, which, as Santayana reads it, has in its pure form nothing to do with acts of beneficence. “[I]t involved detachment from all that made the glory of the earth, not only from the glories of the heathen or of the natural man, but even from those of the saints, when they were filled with gifts such as prophecy, working miracles, or speaking with tongues. ... Respect for persons and their gifts is worldly; so is enthusiasm for their ambitions” (RS 784). Charity is universal sympathy at “the spiritual level”(RS 783). Universal sympathy also implies a universal suffering, but it is not suffering for any being in particular.

As I understand Santayana, one might have a cognitive idea of a friend, a country, a tradition, or a mass murderer; and as objects of cognition these beings would be judged in varying ways, including total revulsion and condemnation. Such is necessarily the way of animal faith; but given in sheer intuition, they are essence only, and pure spirit does not — indeed can not — respond to them according to their character and behavior as agents in the world of animal faith. Pure spirit loves in a way that is both disinterested and universal. Indeed, pure spirit is in union with universal good, as the latter is defined in “Ultimate Religion”:

[I]t is impossible unreservedly to love or worship anything, be it the universe or any part of it, unless we find in the end that this thing is completely good: I mean unless it is good after its kind and a friend to itself, and unless at the same time it is beneficent universally, and a friend to everything else. Pure spirit would be lame, and evidently biased by some biological accident, if it did not love every good loved anywhere by anybody. These varied perfections are rivals and enemies in the press of the world, ... but to impartial spirit no good can render another good odious. Physically, one good may exclude another: nature and natural morality must choose between them, ... but in eternity the most opposite goods are not enemies; rather little brothers and sisters, as all odd creatures were to St. Francis. (254-255)

From the standpoint of pure spirit, he continues,

Every perfection ... shines, washed and clear, separate and uncontaminated: yet all compatible, each in its place, and harmonious. To love things spiritually, that is to say, intelligently and disinterestedly, means to love the love in them, to worship the good which they pursue, and to see them all prophetically in their possible beauty. (254)

The religion of spirit, as we find it in “Ultimate Religion,” *The Realm of Spirit*, and *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, is also articulated and defended with a second, and parallel, line of thought. Apart from pure spirit, we pursue deliberately cognitive inquiries; and these lead to the same ultimate religion. We can distinguish three interconnected theses that bring us to this conclusion. First, Santayana propounds the idea that mind is thoroughly impotent in the domain of action; spirit has no efficacy in the natural world. It is a product of that world, its fullest actuality, but it can do nothing

⁷ This “mystic union” he understands to be wholly within spirit. See, for example, *The Realm of Spirit*, pp. 809, 810, and 821.

⁸ *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1951), p. 57.

to it. Everything happens to it, and it makes nothing happen. Saying that all our actions are “beyond spiritual control,” Santayana observes, “[W]hen we say we have executed a great work and redirected the course of history, we are like Chanticleer attributing the sunrise to his crowing.”⁹

The second thesis is derived from Santayana’s materialism: all causal efficacy is attributable to matter. Matter, then, wields “omnificent power,” and spirit is helpless to do anything about the course of nature. Our knowledge of this condition makes it possible to be resigned to it. The spirit

lives in a perpetual alternative between I would and I would not. It therefore can hardly conceive anything without gladness or aversion; and this vital bias comes to clearness, as all things come to clearness, in prayer. Yet in prayer all these wishes and sorrows are uttered in the felt presence of omnificent power and eternal truth; so that all preferences are, as it were, suspended and neutralized by the sense of dependence and by the virtual acceptance of the perhaps contrary fact. The very expression Thy will be done which breathes resignation also defines a hope. The will of God on the one hand means whatsoever happens; on the other it means that which ought to happen. In the latter sense it seems as yet not to be done on earth as it is in heaven; and the Kingdom of God seems not yet to have come. But this postponement too must be according to God’s will in the first sense; ... (248)

That is, the course of omnificent power proceeds exclusively according to the nature of blind matter; so the complete resignation of disillusioned spirit is rational. This is the verdict of omnificence that the knowing spirit must accept.

Although he does not do so in his homage to Spinoza, Santayana elsewhere recognizes that there is difficulty in rising above our “natural human feeling” to attain resignation, charity, and union. It is principally accomplished in the condition that he calls “rational prayer,” which is not a petition to a divine personality. The meditations of the “reflective man” are a “life-long prayer” (RS 798), which is spoken in the felt presence of omnificent matter. In rational prayer, one learns renunciation and sympathy. As stated in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, divine union “demands a tragic transformation of man himself, who must sacrifice his animal will and a great part of his nature.”¹⁰ Immediately, he adds, “There is nothing more human or more satisfying than self-transcendence; and the liberation and light that come of renouncing the will seem, when really attained, the fulfillment, not the surrender, of our inmost powers” (ICG 219).

As remarked earlier, Santayana’s is not a religion of universal power but universal love. “[I]f we wish to make a religion of love, after the manner of Socrates, we must take universal good, not universal power, for the object of our religion” (254). Inasmuch as the numberless finite goods are not in harmony with each other, but are often mutually exclusive, how can the idea of universal good be intelligible? Santayana acknowledges that there appears to be a “mystery” of the “logically unattainable” (255), but he replies that the mystery admits of an “easy” solution. Hence the third cognitive proposition affording an ultimate religion: “Spirit is essentially synthetic,” he says (255), meaning that the innumerable objects of love in the natural world may legitimately be conceived in a way to make them a unity. “[F]or the lover, all objects of love form a

⁹ See page 248 of UR. What Santayana calls psyche is the active agent in a biological creature, but psyche is not mind. Unlike mind, psyche belongs to the realm of matter, which is unaffected by mind.

¹⁰ *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1946), p. 219. Cited as ICG.

single ineffable good" (255). The several actual loves of the creatures of the universe are loved only as "sheer" loves, he says, by which I take him to mean that one does not love the specific loves characteristic of creatures, which include greed, destruction, death, and making meals of each other — literally and figuratively. Rather, they are loved with the materialistic equivalent of Christian charity, "no matter," he says, "how repulsive these creatures might be to natural human feeling" (255). Spirit is not thereby incoherent: "If charity be a universal sympathy with the world how does it seem so contrary to more than half the impulses that flourish there? Only because intelligent sympathy halts wherever one good conflicts with another; and this arrest is a consequence of universal sympathy, not a contradiction to it" (RS 788).

When these philosophic conclusions are properly appreciated, we possess what amounts to a solution to the problem of evil, conceived in a wholly secular manner, and spirit is reconciled to the world with love. It is not clear that Santayana saw these as two distinct analyses — one based simply on the nature of pure spirit and the other on the nature of mind and the world; but they are distinct, because they rest on different kinds of claim. Pure spirit, as such, cannot be other than a total suspension of worldly attachments and judgments. To be sure, in our animal faith we make claims about pure spirit, but pure spirit makes no claims. But spirit as animal faith renounces worldly obsessions because it has concluded that our animal evaluations are predicated upon an inadequate understanding of the world; and the synthetic properties of spirit permit a unification of goods that are in contradiction in their own existence.

We might take it as a good augury that both lines of analysis converge on the same result: an ultimate reconciliation and inmost allegiance — an allegiance, indeed, to the love in all things. It is a breathtaking synthesis, and it afforded Santayana moments of sublime peace. But is it really suitable to a free and disillusioned spirit?

II. The Trials of Spirit

It might seem appropriate to pause to analyze "free" and "disillusioned," but I think that is unnecessary. I need only point out that Santayana is problematical in the way that he found Spinoza problematical: he has assumed the truth of propositions that are in fact very much open to question. In addition, he has begged some crucial questions; and his analysis is fatally reductive. In his encomium to Spinoza's matchless honesty, Santayana had repeatedly insisted that we should never rest content with "easy faith" (247). Boldly he asks us to "imagine the truth to be as unfavorable as possible" to our desires and beliefs; so that we may be "subjected to an utter denudation and supreme trial." He adds, "I am concerned only with the sincere confessions of a mind that has surrendered every doubtful claim and every questionable assurance" (247).

Santayana has not, in fact, surrendered all that he might. Among his questionable theses are his position on the impotence of mind and, more broadly, his conclusions regarding the nature of spirit. About the efficacy of mind, I think the issue is best phrased in this way: when we exercise intelligence, is our future conduct any different than if we exercised it not at all — as if we had no mind or imagination; and if it is different, why is it so? On this point, I would take a position decidedly different from Santayana's. If we are determined by events to exercise intelligence, that exercise still makes a subsequent difference, and we learn, accordingly, to continue to use it. I cannot on the present occasion pursue this point; perhaps Santayana would turn out to be right. It is sufficient only to observe that his own position is not put on "supreme trial."

I am also troubled by the way in which he speaks about the nature of pure spirit. He characteristically uses the word “necessarily” in characterizing its nature, as in spirit “necessarily” worships the “eternal beauty, which lies sealed in the heart of each living thing” (257). On the basis of my own experience, I doubt that spirit necessarily loves in this way. (I likewise question the notion that there is an eternal beauty sealed in the heart of each living thing. I will come back to this point in a moment.) More important is the nature of his conviction regarding the synthetic power of spirit, which makes an imaginative unity out of chaos and opposition. To be sure, we have marvellous synthetic powers; but it is one thing to acknowledge them and another to be indiscriminate about their truth value. If universal sympathy “halts” always on the threshold of contradiction, that does not mean that there is no contradiction.

I remarked a moment ago that Santayana has — unwittingly — failed to display the same mettle that he demands of Spinoza. This is evidenced also in some of the key terms of his analysis, such as “the true good,” “impartial,” and “disinterested.” If “true” good must be defined as he does — the universal perfection and harmony of all loves — then there probably is no such being. If there is not, the result need not be to declare that all is vanity, but the devoted attempt to discriminate the goods that a conscientious study of nature discloses — precisely what he had done so brilliantly in *The Life of Reason*. “Impartial” and “disinterested” are also advanced in a question-begging way. I am not markedly unlike others when I use “impartial” to mean judging an issue on its merits alone, rather than to introduce prejudice and favoritism or to be willfully ignorant of the particularities of the case; but I fear that Santayana uses that term, as well as “disinterested,” to mean indiscriminate: that is, to refuse to distinguish one case from another where they are in fact different. Perhaps an argument can be made for Santayana’s usage, but my point, once again, is that he is not self-evidently correct, and he had pledged “to hazard no favored postulates” (247). One might say that the cases are not pertinently different. There is, he said, “an eternal beauty in the heart of all living things.” What is that? If what one loves in all things is their innate life activity, whatever it is, I must ask, “What is lovable about that?” What is the nature of the aims of such impulses that I should “worship the good which they pursue?” What is lovable about the heart of Charles Manson or the murderer of Polly Klaas? And how is their lust in harmony with the loves of their victims? When the actual “love” in such fiends is specified, why should I love it?¹¹

Possibly there is something else in their souls that is worthy of love or of sympathy. In such a case, I might have that sympathy, but only for that something else — not for that murderous and pitiless nature, which I do not love. I cannot resist the conclusion that loving the love in all things is at best a misnomer and more likely an illusion: what one loves is not really characteristic of the alleged being; one loves

¹¹ It is an evasion to say that we worship them “prophetically in their possible beauty,” because their possible beauty (whatever that might be) is in stark contrast to their actual deformity, which is in all likelihood, indeed, incapable of any such transformation. To put it in the way that Santayana does is to confess, in effect, that we do not love them as real beings. Hence we do not love the love in all things.

something else entirely — an essence, for example — and imputes it to a natural being.¹²

The qualms about reduction, I think, are most obvious. Santayana had chided Spinoza for neglecting our animal nature, but the religion of spirit makes the essential demand that we renounce or overcome our animal nature, with all the goods natural to it. He had also found fault with Spinoza for creating a religion that left the rest of mankind untouched, but so does the religion of spirit. We could paraphrase Santayana and say that he has found a world that is good for pure spirit but not for much else. The natural world is none the less ugly for Santayana's philosophy of spirit. To find peace and happiness as he did is nevertheless no small matter; it is a great achievement, and his victory is not to be begrudged. But it fails to meet his own test, and we have still not learned, as we dearly hoped to, "What inmost allegiance, what ultimate religion, would be proper to a wholly free and disillusioned spirit?"¹³

III. The Life of Reason

The idea of an ultimate religion could be defined in such a way that nothing could satisfy it short of an unqualified affirmation of the whole of creation, or failing that, to find that the whole really is good in some way dependent upon a proper understanding of it all. This is a familiar strategy in the history of human thought. It comes, I suspect, of a deep-seated, even unconscious, but powerful, need: We human beings — perhaps without being fully aware of what we are doing — would dearly love to affirm the whole of reality and to declare, "Behold, it is good," as God congratulated Himself at each phase of creation. Whatever the source of this compulsion, it is threatening to philosophy, and one of the disciplines proper to lovers of wisdom would be to renounce it. I believe that Santayana fell victim to this need. It seems to be in evidence in many of the passages I have cited — in speaking of loving "universally" and "unreservedly," for example. When he thinks in the manner that he calls "impartial" or "disinterested," he is actually failing to make fatefully pertinent distinctions: he is able to love the love in all things only by being unjustifiably indiscriminate. In his early writings, he rather haughtily dismissed this sort of thinking with a term that was then used pejoratively: mysticism. To renounce the mysticism that affirms the whole is truly difficult and painful, almost torturous. But mysticism, as Santayana observed, requires a renunciation of its own — the renunciation of reason. With reason, on the other hand, we might discriminate real goods, founded on the real ways of nature. We might at the same time succeed in liberating ourselves from the emotional and intellectual burden of trying somehow to affirm the whole.

Hence the project of his magnificent work, *The Life of Reason*, where goods are discerningly and sympathetically discriminated existences. He undertakes this erotic

¹² Again, it is not always clear what the object of love is. Santayana does not mean only that he loves all essences, or that he loves the love in all essences. Essences do not love, and to impute love to them would in any case be to treat them as objects of animal faith. In all the texts at issue, he frequently refers explicitly to the love in living beings. If the object of love were essence only, then living beings would not be objects of love, and our "ultimate religion" would be without reference to our habitation, the world.

¹³ Santayana's position could be saved by defining "free and disillusioned" in a manner that would agree with his outcome. But this stratagem would not satisfy the sorts of reservations that he had about Spinoza. The stratagem would not be free and disillusioned.

task fortified by what he calls the Aristotelian principle: there is seamless continuity between the natural and the ideal.¹⁴ Rather than think of ideal goods as either original existences or as beings that transcend natural events, Santayana distinguishes them as distinctive orderings and completions of natural processes. The Aristotelian principle is at once a demand for realism and discipline, and it is a resource for action. Nature defeats our wishes when they are heedless of the course of events, and it chastens our folly; but it also harbors the many powers that might be appropriated to bring real consummations into existence. Especially when we are thinking about the good, we are prone to oscillate between fantasy on the one hand and hubris on the other; or we are seized by some fetching theory of the nature of the good, which we accept in the place of a determination of nature's genuine possibilities. A man might go to his grave possessing only theory. To observe the Aristotelian principle, however, one must candidly investigate self and world to see what perfections they afford. Hence Santayana writes,

Against avarice, lust, and rancour, against cruel and vain national ambitions, tenderer and more recollected minds have always sought some asylum; but they have seldom possessed enough knowledge of nature and of human life to distinguish clearly the genuine and innocent goods which they longed for, and their protest against "the world" has too often taken on a mystical and irrational accent. . . . Every man is necessarily the seat of his own desires, which, if truly fulfilled, would bring him satisfaction; but the objects in which that satisfaction may be found, and the forces that must co-operate to secure it, lie far afield, and his life will remain cramped and self-destructive so long as he does not envisage its whole basis and co-operate with all his potential allies.¹⁵

To be sure, the Aristotelian principle alone is no guide to life. Perception and imagination are also requisite, for one must be sensitive to the ideal goods and possibilities that lurk within experience, inchoate and muted. Santayana shows sympathetic insight into the tremblings of the human heart, together with its weaknesses and its aspirations, and he does not despise the most humble of them. He combines this sympathy with matchless erudition and worldly knowledge, while characteristically exposing sentimentality and pretense.

The study of *The Life of Reason* can be one of the most educative experiences. There are ideal values that nature might provide that only the most discerning mind can apprehend; yet once these ideas are taught, they seem anything but esoteric. Santayana displays the real and possible goods in philosophy, science, art, society, religion, and the moral life. His sentences are often like a revelation. One must be critical of many of the particulars of *The Life of Reason*, of course, and there are glaring omissions as well, but I find in it more wisdom about the possibilities, resources, and disciplines of a good life than in any works since those of Plato and Aristotle. He focuses one's mind, moreover, on the sorts of inquiry and personal discipline that must be sustained in order to think intelligently about the nature of a good life. When we ask, "What are the ideal qualities of a human life?" we have little idea of how to think about the question. We speak of happiness and meaning and love, but still we are just amassing a miscellany of feelings. Santayana has a way of approaching just this disarray of passions. Armored with the

¹⁴ *The Life of Reason*, Vol. I, *Reason in Common Sense* (Triton Edition, Vol. III), p. 28.

¹⁵ *The Life of Reason*, Vol. III: *Reason in Religion* (Triton Edition, Vol. IV), p. 166. Cited as

Aristotelian principle, nothing short of an examination of the human condition will do; but it must be done honestly. This is not a project to make the universe somehow answer to our heart's desire. Inasmuch as my topic is ultimate religion, I will confine my attention in the remainder to some of his observations in *Reason in Religion*. In particular, I will discuss piety, spirituality, and ideal immortality. The three of these conditions might constitute a unity in a man's life, attained in virtue of the sorts of ideal loyalties that he entertains.

Insofar as we have piety, our experience is filled with reverence and gratitude. "Piety, in its nobler and Roman sense, may be said to mean man's reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment" (RR 132). Piety is a discriminating experience: not all conditions are worthy of our gratitude. Santayana speaks of several sorts, starting with the most obvious: the persons and events that have helped to form one's own life in a worthy manner. He mentions parents, family, ancestors, and country; but a pious individual, I might add, would be mindful of more than that. One thinks of friends, teachers, schools, places, books and authors who have worked magic for us. All of these win our piety. On a broader level, Santayana takes the example of Virgil's Aeneas, whose sacred mission it was to preserve his ancestral culture and traditions. Those are vague expressions, "culture" and "tradition," but if we think about them in terms of monumental achievements — those of poets or statesmen, for example — then there are objects of intense gratitude and appreciation. Santayana explicitly rejects the idea of "mankind at large" being an object of piety, for the "average nature," as he put it at that time, is not worthy of veneration. This discernment is abandoned, however, when he turns to cosmic piety, where he becomes an uncritical monist. I would see great point in celebrating selected powers of the universe, those that are responsible for intellectual and moral virtue, for example, and for artistic genius, but not the whole gargantuan thing indiscriminately.

Piety is retrospective. Spirituality, which Santayana calls "the fundamental and native type of all life" (RR 44), is prospective. It is to live in honor and aspiration for ideal ends, and in devotion to their realization. These are ends of the sort discerned in *Reason in Society*, *Reason in Religion*, *Reason in Art*, *Reason in Science*, and many another of his works. Spirituality as we find it in *The Life of Reason* is not "impartial" and "indiscriminate," yet ideal ends, if wisely selected, are not impositions on our nature, but fulfillments of it. Spirituality is, after all, "the fundamental and native type of all life." "Ideals are not forces stealthily undermining the will; they are possible forms of being that would frankly express it. ... [H]e 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."¹⁶ As he has just implied, ideal ends need not be so grandiose that they are intrinsically beyond our grasp; they can be reached, sustained, and enjoyed. Good family life is an ideal ordering of nature; so is a true friendship; and Santayana's devotions as a philosopher attained their own completion. In contrast to the usual interpretation of Platonic perfections, the ideal goods of nature are not unchanging; they are not literally perfections and not literally immortal. They are also subject to corruption, loss, failure, and disappointment. But Santayana characteristically refers to them with religious metaphors, his intent being to

¹⁶ *The Life of Reason*, Vol. V, *Reason in Science* (Triton Edition, Vol. V), p. 151.

assign those terms that are expressive of our highest admiration and appreciation, while acknowledging the persistent need for wisdom and effort. Recognition of these contingencies is in fact wiser than imagining a realm of changeless perfection, "where moth and rust do not corrupt"

Although it is not emphasized in *Reason in Religion*, Santayana insists upon the continuities of piety and spirituality, and he thereby focuses our wayward attention on an ordering of goods that would make many minds reverent. The ideal completions that define our aspiration are an outgrowth of the conditions that have formed one's nature. One's definition of a particular ideal and his love for it have emerged from the distinctive conditions of his own life. Accordingly, one's heritage of ideal values is perpetuated, celebrated, and perhaps even enlarged. This fact is heartily acknowledged in other contexts, not least of all Santayana's autobiography. Attachment to a tradition is both steady and inspiring.

The goods cherished by piety and spirituality also confer their own immortality. If the immortality of the soul is not a literal fact, what is it about that idea that is ideal? Once again, Santayana has perceived remarkable possibilities of experience of which we are typically ignorant. "Ideal immortality," he says, "is a principle revealed to insight; it is seen by observing the eternal quality of ideas and validities, and the affinity to them native to reason or the cognitive energy of mind."¹⁷ We have affinities to natural qualities that we call eternal or immortal as terms of praise, as we speak of the immortal Homer, according to him and his poems our highest approbation and reverence.¹⁸ We affirm, in effect, that the meaning of such events for our lives will be neither subordinated nor eclipsed; their meaning is impervious to whatever contingencies may befall us. Hence there is a perfectly intelligible and legitimate sense in which we participate in the immortal. We do not live forever, but we share in that which is immortal. "It may indeed be said," Santayana writes, "that no man of any depth of soul has made his prolonged existence the touchstone of his enthusiasms. Such an instinct is carnal, and if immortality is to add a higher inspiration to life it must not be an immortality of selfishness. What a despicable creature must a man be, and how sunk below the level of the most barbaric virtue, if he cannot bear to live for his children, for his art, or his country!" (RR 181).

Just as Plato had done in *The Symposium*, Santayana recognizes biological reproduction as a way of sharing in immortality, but he has more to say on this phenomenon than had Diotima. He speaks of possessing an offspring, one who issues from oneself and is so like oneself. That alone is a glimpse of immortality, but there is more, for this is "a creature to which all ... [one's] ideal interests may be transmitted" (RR 185). This is a joyous idea. We naturally cherish our works and values and wish them to endure, and this need can take on ideal meaning. What is most precious in one's heritage and spirit can be shared with one's own flesh and blood, who can bear it into

¹⁷ *Reason in Religion*, p. 159. I would edit this statement by adding the words "and moral," to read "the cognitive and moral energies of mind." There are moral, as well as cognitive, affinities. I assume Santayana would accept this as a friendly amendment.

¹⁸ Truth, as Santayana accounts it, is eternal — not in the sense that the conditions denoted by a true statement are eternal, but in the sense that if the statement is true on a particular occasion, it will be true forever of that occasion. In that sense, almost all eternal truths are uninteresting, but some of them are immortal in the laudatory sense.

the future. Now that is a heritage! These ideal allegiances are constitutive, in part, of our self, our identity; they are insofar definitive of our being; and they can be shared with anyone who has like affinities. In this manner, the qualities of a person that are most noble are saved from oblivion. Santayana's summary remarks deserve to be quoted in full:

Since the ideal has this perpetual pertinence to mortal struggles, he who lives in the ideal and leaves it expressed in society or in art enjoys a double immortality. The eternal has absorbed him while he lived, and when he is dead his influence brings others to the same absorption, making them, through that ideal identity with the best in him, reincarnations and perennial seats of all in him which he could rationally hope to rescue from destruction. He can say, without any subterfuge or desire to delude himself, that he shall not wholly die; for he will have a better notion than the vulgar of what constitutes his being. (RR 189).

Living in the spirit, if we use that term in the sense found in *The Life of Reason*, is to have a union of piety, spirituality, and ideal immortality. The aspirations of spirit would preserve and carry forward the objects of piety, which we designate with such terms as "divine," "eternal," and "immortal." Our immortality is to share in these eternal things and to share in their transmission. These are not experiences one has by reading a book. They require pondering, meditation, and deliberate effort as we pursue, extend, and perpetuate the ideal. They also require a certain kind of character: only individuals of certain virtues and temperament, no doubt, can live the life of reason as religion. Still, life in the spirit is an integration and consummation of our natural condition.

There is a medley of questions that ought to be put to Santayana: how are the ideal values of the life of reason ordered? That is, how might they be selected and united in the same soul? And what is the ideal character to sustain the life of reason? Such questions prompt an inquiry into attainable ideals of the self. Unhappily, he has rather little to answer, but he has some illuminating general observations. His habitual stress on honesty has been mentioned repeatedly. He often speaks of the importance of renunciation and simplicity. Life in the spirit cannot be scattered over a great plurality of interests and ambitions. To do anything well means devoted concentration. Whether we are reading the early or late Santayana, distraction is the death of the spirit. It is also worth noticing that for the Santayana of *The Life of Reason*, instinct is the propulsive force of reason and of all aspiration for the divine. Our animal nature, then, is satisfied — not overcome — in the life of reason. Such a conclusion is an application of the Aristotelian principle. As usual, Santayana has an arresting way of conveying the idea: "Love is a brilliant illustration of a principle everywhere discoverable: namely, that human reason lives by turning the friction of material forces into the light of ideal goods."¹⁹

Does my hurried sampling of *The Life of Reason* suggest that it could yield an ultimate religion to a free and disillusioned spirit? The answer to the question depends in part on how we use "ultimate." If we take it to mean "satisfying my every wish, no matter what," or "guaranteeing the righting of all wrongs," then there could be no ultimate religion for a spirit of intelligence and candor. Such a spirit must be

¹⁹ *The Life of Reason*, Vol. II, *Reason in Society*, (Triton Edition, Vol. III), p. 231. Scholars might argue that *Realms of Being* exhibits as much continuity between instinct and spirit as does *The Life of Reason*, but I would contest that finding.

unflinching, selective, discriminating, and possessed of a certain toughness. He cannot believe that there is a mortal solution for every need; and he recognizes that pain, suffering, inadequacy, and despair are rules of life. It will be a rarity for a free and disillusioned spirit to attain an inmost allegiance, but perhaps it can happen from time to time, the fates willing. This allegiance would be to the palpable joys of ideal goods, ordered in a single life — where the ordering is more than a contemplative act. It would be an achieved order, owing to knowledge of nature and ourselves and to overt exertions. A soul would find natural loyalties and completions that elicit his thanksgiving and ignite his aspiration. This much is not to say that his whole life is good, much less everyone else's. To insist on so much is as disastrous a trap as the will to affirm the whole.

Faithful to the spirit of Santayana, let us call this order of goods a religious domain: it is distinguished by objects of piety and spirit. It is essential to remember that this domain is not the whole, and it does not justify the whole. We may love it as we might love other well-defined existences, such as family, a circle of friends, or our work. The religious domain, however finite, would be inclusive of all of these. It is a capacious and congenial realm, transcending the particular events of one's own life. It is populated by beings and ideals that have elicited our homage and loyalty, and we willingly sacrifice for them. This domain might also attain a certain unity, at least a coherence, for it is the disposition of the ideal values that have been ordered in one's own experience — experience of an intense and reflective sort.

From Santayana one might gain the wisdom to embrace the world selectively, and we could learn that there will sometimes be fine selections open to us. One might be enabled to celebrate the immortal domain of piety and spirituality and to affirm that these goods have made his life eminently worth living, even to giving it a feeling of sanctity. That would be religion without illusion, and it would be religion enough.

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Charity, Interpretation, Disintoxication: A Comment on Gouinlock's "Ultimate Religion"

James Gouinlock has presented an appreciative and searching criticism of Santayana's account of "ultimate religion," both Spinoza's and his own. He does this by turning, at least initially, to Santayana's own 1932 lecture about Spinoza on the religion, as Santayana put it, of a wholly free and disillusioned spirit. Indeed, as Gouinlock recalls, Santayana gave *his* lecture on "Ultimate Religion" in Holland in celebration of Spinoza's 300th birthday. I like to pretend that Santayana made this statement about "ultimate religion" in ways that honor Spinoza's life and writing, to *send a heartfelt message of affection and courage in a time of extraordinary viciousness*. Isn't it worth at least musing about the coincidence of this lecture, which investigates the spiritual stance of free and disillusioned people in a morally distracted world, with the eve of the destruction of European Jewry, when the Reich's aspirations to solve Europe's

'Jewish problem' through excision was more than a sneaking suspicion? I may be just kidding myself in this respect. Certainly, Santayana's tone in this lecture was, as Sprigge has suggested, patronizing enough towards Spinoza's Jewishness to be somewhat disconcerting to Jews in the audience, if there were any. (I'm ignorant about this). But just as certainly, Santayana knew and perhaps shared Spinoza's concern for what appeared in his own time to be the transformation of religious cultures of charity and justice into ones of fanatical hatred and slavish, demonizing superstitions.¹

In any case, Gouinlock shows resemblances between Santayana's religious naturalism and Spinoza's, suggests Santayana's indebtedness to Spinoza in various ways, clarifies ways in which Santayana thought Spinoza remained spiritually too narrow and philosophically too positive, then challenges Santayana's own 1932 conception of spiritual life, criticizing it as too mystical, and finally endorses a modified version of the religious life that Santayana had given in *Reason in Religion* over twenty-five years earlier.

I have three responses to Gouinlock's lecture on all of this. One has to do with Spinoza's writings on religion along with Santayana's criticism of them. The second has to do with Santayana's writings on religion, along with Gouinlock's criticism of them. The third has to do with Gouinlock's preferred understanding of a *sufficiently* ultimate religion, along with some rejoinders that take Santayana's use of *feigning*, and his construal of charity, interpretation, and the disintoxication of values, to be important phases or aspects of spiritual life, that Gouinlock either neglects, slights, or rejects.

More than once, Santayana championed Spinoza as the only modern philosopher worth studying. He thought of Spinoza's *Ethics* as offering an admirable sort of philosophical *orthodoxy*. He applauded Spinoza for striving to demonstrate how Nature-or-God works, without invoking any cause or reason apart from (or above or below or in any way transcending) it. He was happy with the notions that neither causes nor reasons are supervised by supernatural powers or transcendent principles or final causes; also that only small-r reasons justify other reasons; also that only small-c causes explain other causes. Regarding our topic, he especially affirmed Spinoza's anthropologically and historically situated accounts of ethical and religious traditions.

But Gouinlock is right, I believe, to point out that Santayana chided Spinoza for "unwavering confidence that God-or-Nature, is both perfectly intelligible and accessible to reason." And there is something to the charge. But what? As I read Spinoza, Santayana's account of his work in this regard is overly rationalist, overshadowing both Spinoza's understanding of God-or-Nature as infinite, as well as his understanding of human intelligence as inevitably subject to an infinity of attributive forms. We must recall Spinoza's assumption that God-or-Nature, being infinite, has an infinity of attributes, even if we are aware of only two, i.e., causality and intelligence.

Spinoza is quite definite that people will *never* 'access' everything there is to understand about God-or-Nature under the form either of body or of mind, much less under the form of unidentified, or yet to be discovered, attributes. Spinoza is confident that successful research can go on indefinitely. He criticizes teleological explanations for presuming an end, i.e. an end to inquiry. As Richard Mason puts it, "Nature was not

¹ This response to the above paper was presented to the Santayana Society in Philadelphia on December 29, 1997. "Ultimate Religion" is again abbreviated by UR.

transparent because of an X-ray intensity of the light of human reason, but because an assumption that nature could be unintelligible could not itself be made intelligible.² Things, including our intelligence, are structured such that people can discover more and more about themselves and their world. But people can never discover enough to declare: 'I've got it!' To such prophets, as Santayana himself points out in his 1910 "Introduction" to the *Ethics*, Spinoza responds: 'I do not believe you; God is great!'

Moreover, Spinoza argues that people may strive for, say, perfect philosophical freedom, or a perfection of active affections, or an affection of well-being. They may do this, given requisite health, through reflections that lead to an understanding of — and a sense of reconciliation with — emotions that move us and from which we suffer. But such a discovery or such obedience to God-or-Nature is always relative to human nature and a matter of proportion between passive and active affections. So there may not be as much to stew about Spinoza's 'confidence' as Santayana does in UR.

Gouinlock is also on target, I think, when he reminds us that Santayana thought Spinoza had not fully solved the 'moral problem', even if he had demonstrated what perfect harmony of the intellect with nature looked like. To my mind, though, it is not all *that* clear what *the* moral problem or its *full solution* would look like concretely on either Spinozan or Santayanan grounds, nor what mankind-at-large amounts to, or could do, or could be done to, as regards moral transformation. For both Spinoza and Santayana, the realtor's imperative — location, location, location — is simply too significant to make much ado in this regard.

If what actually bothers Santayana about Spinoza's strategies for well-being is an absence of concern for affective or emotional life, as distinct from rational or intellectual life, I believe Santayana's interpretation in UR overshadows important aspects of Spinoza's work. Spinoza characterizes intellect as affectional. Its aim is joy, rather than, say, certainty, or even truth (which is the aim, according to him, of philosophy). Spinoza's concerns with the discovery of truth and with passive moral obedience or with active moral commitment, are paramount. Nonetheless, they have prominent roles to play because they are avenues to joy for people not mastered by, or bound to, superstition. Spinoza does not oppose intellect to animal life. He demonstrates its *function in animal life*. That function is not to suppress desire overall, but to subordinate some desires to other desires in ways that are conducive to *more* well-being for this or that person, whether more learned or more ignorant. Spinoza's aim, certainly, is not to leave our "animal nature" unsatisfied or unrealized. To the contrary. Spinoza animalizes and affectionalizes intellect, in order to show how *some* joys exceed others without necessarily suppressing them. Intellect is conducive, for example, to a love of God-or-Nature that may *accompany* other animal satisfactions of animal desires, or moderate *disappointments*. People who are learned and know the causes of their griefs and disappointments may experience a joy through such understanding that the ignorant do not. But the ignorant are not thereby proscribed from genuine piety or from feeling well. In any case, an intellectual love of God, as Spinoza understands it, does not triumph over suffering, or block absurdity, or wipe out evil or otherwise overcome finitude. It helps make these aspects of human life more understandable; it helps make them sufferable. [Santayana recognizes all this, e.g., in his introduction to *Ethics*.]

² See page 253 of Richard Mason, *The God of Spinoza*, (Cambridge, 1996).

Finally, Santayana's criticism that Spinoza's philosophy is *reductive*, as Gouinlock puts it, may actually fail to draw much blood relevant to the subject of ultimate religion. As Mason has recently tried to show in *The God of Spinoza*, it makes as much sense to say about Spinoza that he divinizes Nature as that he naturalizes Divinity. The charge is often made that Spinoza reduces the cognitive or propositional status of claims regarding supernatural powers to the realm of imaginative fiction. There is something to this, but nothing Santayana would find troubling. The typical indictment that pictures Spinoza insisting that *imagination* or *fiction* is inevitably vicious, in ways that neither reason nor intellectual intuition nor genuine faith are, is false. As Genevieve Lloyd has recently demonstrated in *Spinoza and the Ethics* (London, Routledge, 1994), Spinoza pictures imagination, reason, and intuition as complementary or compatible.

Indeed, Spinoza introduces the discipline of "*feigning*" imaginatively, or pretending, as conducive both to a life of reason and to moments of intuitive sublimity, so long as it does not involve its practitioners in *knowingly* declaring falsehoods. According to Spinoza, a lot of pretending — what Peirce might have called *musings* — goes on in the generation of sound scientific hypotheses. The same holds for moral reflection. And for spiritual *disintoxication* of moral values too. Imagination does not inevitably lead to vice or superstition. Sometimes it helps lead to self-discovery, empathy, sympathy, piety, and more workable scientific or theoretic constructs. Sometimes, as Santayana would put it, it enables us to transform our lives from being mere fatal projects into being liberal arts.

Let me turn then, at this point, to Santayana on God and religion along with Gouinlock's criticism of his writing in this regard. Gouinlock rests fairly happy with spiritual life as Santayana presents it in *The Life of Reason*, where he pictures it as institutional, or as providing habits of head and heart for us death-haunted creatures struggling with things or events that impede human joy. On the other hand he faults Santayana's 'later work' about spirit, particularly *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, *The Realm of Spirit*, and *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, as too mystical; too obsessed with 'celebration of the whole'; not selective enough; and not located sufficiently in what Dewey had called *the human abode*.

There is nothing particularly startling about these criticisms, which dot Yervant Krikorian's *Naturalism and the Human Spirit* (1944). I believe, in fact, that assessing Santayana's philosophy of spirit, as Gouinlock does, this is in many ways a viable account. But let's go back to Spinoza's endorsement of feigning, and consider it a precursor of the stance Santayana took in his 1900 *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (IPR). It was there that he echoed Spinoza, by urging those who strove for a disillusioned religion to "let the worst of the truth appear and when it has once seen the light, let it not be wrapped up again in the swaddling clothes of an equivocal rhetoric. ... That Nature is immense, that her laws are mechanical, that the existence and well-being of man upon the earth are, from the point of view of the universe, an indifferent incident — all of this is in the first place to be clearly recognized" (IPR 148). It was there that he questioned whether people *had* to suffer from "the natural but hopeless misunderstanding of imagining that poetry in order to be religion, in order to be the inspiration of life, must first deny that it is poetry and deceive us about the facts with which we have to deal" (IPR 71-72). And it was there that he said of both religious poetry and poetic religion that they initiate "us, by feigning something which as an

experience is impossible, into the meaning of the experience we have actually had" (IPR 87).

Now whether Spinoza would have endorsed the notion of feigning *the impossible* is fairly doubtful, though Richard Mason argues that his commitment to *living under the form of eternity* involves something like it. But the point I'd like to make is that, if not "whitewashing the facts" is step one for Spinoza and Santayana in developing a religious stance for "free and disillusioned" people, such *feigning* is still at the heart of religious imagination as they understand it.

For example, such feigning, I'd venture, typically plays a role in the three religious virtues that Gouinlock endorses from *Reason in Religion* (RR), i.e., piety, spirituality, and ideal immortality. It also plays a rôle, I believe, in the fourth religious virtue highlighted in that part of *The Life of Reason*, namely charity. I don't know why Gouinlock neglected Santayana's 1905 discussion of charity as a central religious discipline; perhaps because he had already reviewed Santayana's claims about charity in some other writings. But charity as it appears there involves the sort of moral and spiritual *disintoxication* that disturbs Gouinlock, and it involves a musement or feigning or *stretching* of imagination to identify with others not ourselves, that opens us up to an appreciation of values we don't have or share [at least yet]. That may be morally impossible, but that's what charitable people do, according to Santayana's *Reason in Religion*.

Santayana goes out of his way in this work to construe religious institutions and practices as providing people with "another world to live in" (RR 6), a cultural space or moment for *time out* from regular moral imperatives, social hierarchies, and practical demands. Institutions of common sense, society, art, and science empower people. Religious institutions, to the contrary, articulate appeals "of a conscious impotence, of an avowed perplexity" (RR 33). The discipline of charity, for example, helps in this regard by reminding us that our loyalties or pious attachments, moral practices, and spiritual paths are contingent. It demands that,

after adopting an ideal it is necessary ... without abandoning it, to recognize its relativity. The right path is in such a matter rather difficult to keep to. On the one hand lies fanatical insistence on an ideal once arrived at, no matter how many instincts and interests (the basis of all ideals) are thereby outraged in others and ultimately also in one's self. On the other hand lies mystical disintegration, which leads men to feel so keenly the rights of everything in particular and of the All in general, that they retain no hearty allegiance to any human interest. Between these two abysses winds the narrow path of charity and valour. (RR 215).

Did Santayana fall off this path into an abyss of mysticism, the way Gouinlock claims? Gouinlock certainly makes a strong case that he did. But I think Santayana maintained his concern to avoid *both* mysticism and fanaticism from beginning to end. Take a look once more at Santayana's construal of charity in *Reason in Religion*. He said there that *charity* was practically necessary because "the texture of the natural world" is constituted by conflicts of interest "in the soul and in society, all of which cannot be satisfied altogether" (RR 216). But *that's* just the sort of satisfaction mystics promise to deliver. To the contrary, Santayana celebrates charitable people who

intend, so far as possible, to secure the particular good which [a] particular interest looks to, and never, whatever measures may be adopted, to cease to look back on the elementary impulse as upon something which ought, if possible, to have been satisfied, and to which we should still go back and satisfy now, *if circumstances and the claims of rival interests permitted*. (RR 215-16, my emphasis)

I don't think anything that Gouinlock quotes from Santayana's later work suggests he ever abandoned this view. Actually satisfying each interest altogether was impossible, *but it was something one might feign, in order to understand the meaning of the experiences one actually had had*. Remember IPR on poetic religion and the role that 'feigning the impossible' had in it. Circumstances and rival interests never permit satisfying each interest in one fell swoop. But Santayana thinks we know this, among other reasons, because we can pretend a full sweep.

Santayana's spiritual life doesn't eventuate in mysticism; nor in *indiscrimination*. I think it can lead, wisely, to the sort of *festive interpretation* Santayana identifies with Hermes, in *Lucifer: A Theological Tragedy* and in *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*. In the latter, Santayana urges people to follow the laughing interpreter by appreciating the innocence of the things they hate and the clearness of the things they frown on or deny. This sort of interpretation, articulated fifteen years after *The Life of Reason*, is unflinchingly discriminating and depends on the ability to pretend, but it does not undercut the differences between love and hate, or between affirmation and denial (see *Lucifer* throughout and *Soliloquies*, 259-264). It is meant to block both fanaticism and mysticism.

Finally then, let me turn to Gouinlock's understanding of a sufficiently ultimate religion and offer some addenda. I say addenda because I find no particular fault with Gouinlock's understanding so far as it goes. I don't reject the virtues he applauds. But I do favor Santayana over Dewey in several regards, including their construals of spiritual life, and I find Gouinlock's view Deweyan. Dewey said in *A Common Faith* that *natural piety* consisted of celebrating and reinforcing "the things in civilization we most prize" (ACF 87), things that, for the most part, are heritages and trusts. Gouinlock says similar things. Santayana, to the contrary, asserted in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* that:

Spiritual life is not a worship of values, whether found in things or hypostatized into supernatural powers. It is the exact opposite. It is the *disintoxication* from their influence. Not that spiritual insight can remove values from nature or cease to feel them in their moral black and white and in all their aesthetic iridescence. Spirit knows these vital necessities; it has been quickened in their bosom. ... But who would dream that *spiritual life* was at all concerned in asserting these human and local values to be alone valid, or in supposing that they were especially divine, or bound to dominate the universe forever? (PSL 30)

The thrust of *disintoxication*, here, in 1927, as *charity* and *festive interpretation* before, is to take the sting of fanaticism out of moral values *without* suffering the moral collapse of mysticism. The same holds over a decade later in *The Realm of Spirit* and in *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, where Santayana celebrates, in a similar vein, the willingness "not to will, but to understand the lure and sorrow in all willing" (*Realms of Being* 731). I commend this sort of striving as I do Santayana's charity and his interpretation. Indeed, I think these activities or dispositions are compatible with Gouinlock's own commitments. But perhaps Gouinlock might have to feign the impossible to appreciate things this way.

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Further *Conversaciones*

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15 December, 1997

Dear Charles Padrón.

Thank you very much for *Conversaciones con Santayana*.¹ I find it intensely interesting, since as David Weissman told you, I had a *conversación* with Santayana in 1931, at the very same Pincio that Irazusta mentions, where he found Santayana correcting proofs. It's evident that Santayana enjoyed working there. The café is near the top of the park, overlooking a long sweep of lawn and shrubs. A very quiet place — the tables are (were?) set far apart, and other people's *conversaciones* are barely audible.

Now what was I doing there? In May of 1931 I graduated from the School of Architecture at Columbia University, and my first husband Henry Mins and I set off for the Grand Tour of Europe and its Great Monuments. Henry, teaching in New York, was granted a year's leave, so off we went, first to Paris where I was born. France was no novelty to me, but Henry had never been to Europe. In Paris we bought a little Renault and after some tremendous dinners with my cousins in Paris, we were off to study the European Wonders of Architecture.

Although we were conscientious about making drawings, making notes, and taking photos of notable buildings, we treated ourselves to vacations along the way, enjoying the countryside, chatting with the people, and eating and drinking the specialities of the region.

Naturally we were in Rome. Henry since student days had been, like Irazusta, "captivated by Santayana." He had a PhD in philosophy and Santayana was his favorite philosopher. He had me reading the *Soliloquies* when I was 16. It says a lot for Santayana that I rarely felt that I was out of my depth. In fact to quote him (I have the *Soliloquies* at hand): "To the ladies when they dip into my books everything is crystal clear." Further, "I find my unsophisticated readers [me] delightfully appreciative, warmly sympathetic and altogether friends of mine in the spirit."

So here we were, two lovers of Santayana eager to meet him. Henry wrote him a letter explaining who we were, inviting him to have dinner with us. It must have been a very good letter because we had a prompt, very kind answer. He wrote that he did not accept invitations because if he should, he would find himself perpetually away from his study with no time to work. He would be glad to have us join him for tea at the Tea House Café of the Pincio. He was there to greet us, standing at a table near the top of the park. We sat down, tongue tied! He immediately put us at our ease with the utmost grace and charm, talking about his childhood, about his experiences as a young teacher.

When we had begun to thaw, he asked us where we had been, what we had seen. He was glad to hear that we had now and then taken time off from our studies. He said: "There's nothing so refreshing, even stimulating, to the ideas as to read, talk, think of

¹ See pp. 14-24 of *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, No. 15, Fall 1997.

something entirely different." How surprising this is in view of the fact that he was famous for his intense concentration on his work. Henry talked about certain chapters in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. I wish I could remember what Santayana said. What I do remember telling him is the deep impression of his words on the subject of tolerance: "you can't blame fish for liking to live in water." And I thanked him and thanked him again for his piece on Dickens. Since childhood I'd loved Dickens, and I had often been taunted by friends when I grew up, about his "foolish sentimentalism." Oscar Wilde said: "It takes a heart of stone not to laugh at the death of little Nell." Well, Santayana on Dickens has given me powerful ammunition against such attackers. I wish I could remember more. Oh, yes — at one point he said: "I have no metaphysics. I leave that to the men of science."

We could have stayed for hours, but it was clear at some point that the time had come to go.

He was handsome, stood straight, his face only faintly lined; a lovely smile; wonderful eyes, kind but searching; a firm, warm hand clasp. I said to myself: "Goodbye, Santayana, I'll never forget you."

Well, I've told you more about what I said than about what he said, but I hope that in some slight way these reminiscences will offer another aspect of the personality of Santayana.

Wishing you all success in your work,

Sincerely,

Eugenia Ames

* * * * *

Dust Jacket Picture of the Aged Santayana

There is something in the shrouding starch of clean linen,
 A safety in the loose cocoon of his expensive suiting,
 His cane propped in the swan shape of the arthritic hand,
 The elegance of an undecayed preparation for death.

Mostly, however, it is the old man's clean white hat
 Unfingered upon his creased, frivolous knees
 That suggests he waits for no particular shape,
 Nor thinks of any crowning glory but his own.

JOHN BRUCE

Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

AFSL	<i>Animal Faith and Spiritual Life</i> , ed. John Lachs	PGS	<i>The Philosophy of George Santayana</i> , ed. P. A. Schilpp
BR	<i>Birth of Reason and Other Essays</i>	POML	<i>Physical Order and Spiritual Liberty</i> ed. John and Shirley Lachs
COUS	<i>Character and Opinion in the United States</i>	PP	<i>Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography</i>
DL	<i>Dialogues in Limbo</i>	PSL	<i>Platonism and the Spiritual Life</i>
DP	<i>Dominations and Powers</i>	RB	<i>Realms of Being</i> (One volume edition)
EGP	<i>Egotism in German Philosophy</i>	RE	<i>The Realm of Essence</i> . Book I of RB
ICG	<i>The Idea of Christ in the Gospels</i>	RM	<i>The Realm of Matter</i> . Book II of RB
IPR	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i>	RT	<i>The Realm of Truth</i> . Book III of RB
LP	<i>The Last Puritan</i>	RS	<i>The Realm of Spirit</i> . Book IV of RB
LR	<i>The Life of Reason, or The Phases of Human Progress</i>	SAF	<i>Scepticism and Animal Faith</i>
LR1	Vol. 1. <i>Reason in Common Sense</i>	SB	<i>The Sense of Beauty</i>
LR2	Vol. 2. <i>Reason in Society</i>	SE	<i>Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies</i>
LR3	Vol. 3. <i>Reason in Religion</i>	TTMP	<i>Some Turns of Thought in Modern Philosophy</i>
LR4	Vol. 4. <i>Reason in Art</i>	TPP	<i>Three Philosophical Poets</i>
LR5	Vol. 5. <i>Reason in Science</i>	WD	<i>Winds of Doctrine</i>
OS	<i>Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays, and Reviews</i> ed. J. Buchler and B. Schwartz		

Overheard in Seville

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Other websites of interest to Santayana scholars include:

- The Santayana Edition:

<http://www-phil.tamu.edu/Philosophy/Santayana/>

- A Santayana discussion page:

<http://members.aol.com/santayana/index.html>

Caresses or Insults: A Note On Santayana's Metaethics

It is generally agreed that Santayana offered a non-cognitive analysis of moral judgements. His statements that "Moral terms are caresses or insults and describe nothing" (DL 38-39), and "The cry ... *How good!* may be sincere, and it may be applauded, but it is never true" (RB 479), express the two central tenets of traditional non-cognitivism. First, our moral "beliefs" are not intentional states about some matter of fact; rather, they are intuitions expressive of the life of the psyche. Second, our moral judgements are not truth-functional. For Santayana the idea of a true moral judgement is unmeaning. Instead of being an attempt to describe the world, Santayana seemed to suggest, similar to Stevenson, that moral expressions have persuasive force insofar as they are "an overflow of the physical basis of thought" and "an audible gesture" (LR5 181).

The point I wish to make in this note is that it is simply not obvious why Santayana offered a non-cognitive analysis of moral judgments. That he did so is, I think, clear enough. Yet his naturalistic account of valuation would seem to support a number of alternative analyses of moral judgments and current trends in metaethics. In order to motivate a presentation of these alternatives I will use as a foil what is today the standard and seemingly ubiquitous objection to non-cognitivism.

Non-cognitivism has few adherents and many critics. And, modern critics are fairly animated in their discontent. Michael Smith, for example, states that non-cognitivism is "outlandish," while Crispin Wright asserts that non-cognitivism allows for a "grotesque lapse of rationality."¹ The problem, more specifically, which both these critics find is that non-cognitivism cannot plausibly explain the disciplined nature of moral discourse. It is said that our moral talk exhibits "all the overt syntactic trappings of assertion — negation, the conditional construction, embedding within propositional attitudes, hypothesis and inference and so on" (Wright 3). Since non-cognitivism appears unable to account for the surface grammar of our moral claims and cannot make sense of the way we engage in moral arguments, it is dismissed from the outset.

One may object at this point that Santayana would have been unmoved by such a criticism. He paid virtually no attention to problems in the philosophy of language and eschewed the idea that by studying language we gain insight into the structure of anything else. I think this a fair criticism and grant that, to a certain extent, I am examining an aspect of his philosophy within a setting he would have found alien. Yet in some ways this objection is beside the point. For even if we grant that Santayana would not put much stock in contemporary metaethics with its linguistic bias, the argument against non-cognitivism does raise certain questions about Santayana's reasons for accepting non-cognitivism; questions which can be framed and discussed within the context of his own system.

For example, one way to account for the propositional surface of moral discourse, but still preserve the naturalism associated with non-cognitivism, is to hold that moral judgements are actually truth-functional but false. I refer to Mackie's projective error-theory. Mackie's theory has it that moral judgments make the claim to objectivity, but

¹ Michael Smith, "Internalism's Wheel," and Crispin Wright, "Truth In Ethics," in *Truth In Ethics*, Brad Hooker (ed.), Blackwell Publishers: Oxford, 1996, p.70 and p.4, respectively.

systematically fail since there is no objective moral reality which answers to our judgements. Could Santayana have held such a theory as an explanation of our moral talk? It seems possible. There are a number of reasons. First, Santayana's criticisms of Russell and Moore in *Winds of Doctrine* are directed at the hypostasis of the good. One who hypostatizes the good is playing the metaphysician by giving moral essences the wrong status, namely, a material embodiment which they do not achieve. Hence the error. Second, in *The Realm of Truth*, Santayana argues that goodness is an essence which, when realized in consciousness, is best thought of as expressing the life of the psyche, but he also adds the marginal comment: "But if turned into a predicate of things dictates a falsehood" (RB 479). With this comment Santayana very nearly states Mackie's error-theory. Finally, there is Santayana's posthumously published manuscript "The Projection of Values," which offers further support to the idea that could have maintained a projective error-theory. In fact, one can plausibly argue that the case for Santayana as a projective error-theorist makes more sense than attributing this position to other philosophers, such as Hume, who are often regarded as exemplifying this position. There is some uncertainty, for instance, just what a philosopher like Hume thinks we are projecting when we make moral judgments. This is not a problem for Santayana. Santayana makes it clear that what is projected is some moral essence. "In primitive or poetic thought," he writes, "it is natural that moral essences should be treated as if they had a personal unity and material subsistence" (AFSL 350). While a projective error-theory is incompatible with non-cognitivism, it seems that Santayana could have recourse to such a theory as an explanation of the disciplined nature of moral discourse. I am not saying Santayana would have welcomed such a theory; but his system would seem to support it and at times he seems to suggest it.

Perhaps the answer why Santayana would not accept a projective error-theory is contained in his statement that it is only in "primitive and poetic thought" that moral essences are stretched on to objects. In a number of places Santayana indicates that once we understand the natural basis of morality, we will cease being confused and superstitious. In other words, the enlightened moralist recognises that morality springs from the psyche with its system of physical predispositions and innate interests and thus ceases to hypostatise the good. Individual preference is recognised as the nerve of morality and the unqualified relativity of values is admitted.

Santayana does state that individual preference, which can not be meaningfully said to be true or false, is the nerve of morality. And he denies that moral essences achieve material instantiation; good and evil enter the world only as the spiritual expression of the preferences and impulses of the psyche. These two tenets of Santayana's account of valuation no doubt form the core of his resistance to moral realism. But the recognition of the natural ground of morality suggests another avenue which Santayana might have taken in his analysis of moral judgements. Moral judgements might be treated, once their true origin and proper scope is recognised, as reports rather than pure expressions of the life of the psyche. This line of thought would build upon Santayana's statement that "truth and error may be possible in morals, in so far as they are truths or errors in self-knowledge" (RB 475). Santayana frequently remarks that genuine goods are aligned with the long-term interests of the psyche, and that it is through Socratic dialectic that we discover what we really esteem and therefore what ought to guide our conduct (LR5 240). Moral judgements might thus be thought of as aiming at truth insofar as they aim to capture the vital direction of the psyche. Of

course one could still maintain that there is an expressive element to moral judgements, just as we might want to admit that there is often an element of commendation. But one would be questioning the idea the moral judgements are only caresses or insults and describe nothing.

Santayana could have maintained, for example, and similar to many naturalists writing today, that our moral judgments are true or false insofar as they accurately state the long-term interests of the psyche. Under this analysis, “*x* is good” might be thought of as meaning “*x* is something which my psyche is physiologically organised to pursue” or some such naturalistic formulation. Accepting this move, moral judgements qualify as statements which attempt to capture the truth about the world — that is, they assert that a thing of a certain character exists — and so accounting for the propositional surface of moral judgements and making sense of the way we engage in moral arguments becomes less problematic.

The immediate reply to such a proposal is to say that Santayana would have rejected it since it runs counter to his ontology. Santayana states that “goodness,” like the beautiful, is an essence which we can discern “in its purity and in its fullness” (RB 8). So to say that “good” means anything else is to put forth a type of reductivism which Santayana, given his realm of essence, found anathema. And, after all, didn’t Santayana explicitly agree with Russell and Moore, though he called it a “trifling observation,” that the abstract quality “goodness” is not a synonym for pleasure and its rivals (WD 140)? It seems then that Santayana would dismiss any idea that moral judgements are judgements of fact expressible in non-moral terms.

While one must grant that Santayana is committed to the irreducibility of essences as they are intuited in consciousness, it is not clear that this rules out the naturalistic analysis of moral judgements. Those who offer such naturalistic reductions often admit that an identification of “good” at the intensional level with anything else is erroneous. However, they point out that synonymy is not necessary for property identity. The suggestion is that while “goodness” and some naturalistic description might not be intensionally equivalent, they might be thought of as coextensive. There is then a sense in which moral judgements can be true or false, while the irreducibility of moral terms is preserved. Under Santayana’s system, we could grant that “*x* is good” and “*x* is something which my psyche is physiologically organised to pursue” are distinct essences, yet maintain that they are both suitable symbols for picking out the same material state of affairs. Though one could not expect a precise reduction of one set of terms to another, it is not clear that there is any obstacle in Santayana’s ontology to such extensional equivalences. In fact, one may see this naturalistic analysis of moral judgements not as foundering on Santayana’s realm of essence, but made viable through his doctrine of non-literal knowledge.

This note has raised more questions than it answers; and it is tempting to say that Santayana would regard this metaethical concern as merely a question of grammar. The true subject of morality for Santayana, as he has stated, is the “actual allegiance in sentiment and action to this or that ideal of life” (RB 473). Still the fact remains that Santayana offered a non-cognitive analysis of moral judgements, while his reasons for doing so, which must be contained within the complexities of his system, are not entirely clear.

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Santayana's Troubled Distinction: Aesthetics and Ethics in *The Sense of Beauty*

Santayana develops what he considers to be an architectonic based on naturalistic principles; as such, his normative philosophies are loosely grounded in physiological well-being.¹ In *The Sense of Beauty*, then, Santayana distinguishes between aesthetics and ethics not according to their different grounds of justification but their different ways of achieving the same material goods: aesthetics deals with “value positive, intrinsic, and objectified,” while ethical judgments recognize value negative, extrinsic, and subjective.² Despite his attempt to maintain meaningful differences between the two disciplines, however, the distinction is blurred in Santayana's early writings: neither is fundamentally intrinsic or extrinsic, both are objective, and aesthetics is primarily neither positive or negative. Because he cannot justifiably maintain the differences that he outlines in *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana must abandon this artificial distinction and ultimately classify aesthetics as a mere subdivision of ethics.

I. Santayana's Moral Theory

Vowing to treat life as a “practical predicament,” Santayana formulates a Hobbesian metaethics based on self-preservation as a primal drive underlying all morally relevant action.³ Instinctual demands determine what the individual ought to do in order to achieve the greatest possible good, which according to Santayana is the orchestration of desires rationally prioritized. Individual happiness as the end of all moral actions results from the harmonious balance among opposed desires and between internal demands and external constraints on desire-satisfaction.⁴ The most rational life is thus the maximal achievement of desired ends both individually and within a community of like persons; a being's rational capabilities “function in rendering that body's volatile instincts and sensations harmonious with one another and with the outer world on which they depend.”⁵ This relation of man to his environment and of man to himself, when fully realized, occasions what Santayana calls *spirit*,⁶ the state of human development

¹ The author is indebted to Ted Cohen and Cynthia Coe for helpful comments on drafts of this paper.

² *The Sense of Beauty; Being the Outline of Aesthetic Theory* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), 31. To be cited as SB.

³ “Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics,” in *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews*, ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz, 213–40 (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1936), 228. The paper was originally published in *The Journal of Philosophy* 22, no. 25 (3 December 1925): 673–88. “Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics” will be cited as DNM. *Obiter Scripta* will be cited as OS.

⁴ Santayana never fully explores the difficult relationship between pleasure, happiness, and self-preservation, except to assume that some measure of survival is evidenced by more immediate feeling.

⁵ *Reason in Common Sense*, vol. 1 of *The Life of Reason; or, The Phases of Human Progress* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1905), 40. The former is cited as LR1, the latter as LR.

⁶ This ultimate expression of practical maneuvering, this balancing of internal forces and outer impositions, Santayana calls *spirit*: “spirituality marks a devotion to selected ideal ends, guided by and based on piety or a recognition of and loyalty to the necessary material forces of life and nature” (Milton

that marks the balance of personal interests and a world of limitations. Patterns of such advantageous behavior establish themselves spiritually — as moral ideals for the individual and religious commands generally:

When the natural basis of moral life is not understood, myth is the only way of expressing it theoretically, as eyes too weak to see the sun face to face may, as Plato says, for a time study its image mirrored in pools, and, as we may add, inverted there.⁷

Religion “theoretically” portrays moral dictates that are “inverted” when understood literally instead of metaphorically. The conditions for happiness, when shared by members of a community, may be calcified into general beliefs about the rightness or wrongness of actions.

What is useful for well-being becomes a moral code — for the individual or the group — by which patterns of life-preserving behavior are endorsed and other, detrimental behaviors are forbidden. The propositional content of moral beliefs can be understood in terms of their being impetuses hypostatized as moral ideals, and their prescriptive nature can be understood in terms of their beginning in the primal drive to happiness. Thus Santayana blurs the is/ought distinction:

What he really esteems is what ought to guide his conduct; for to suggest that a rational being ought to do what he feels to be wrong, or ought to pursue what he genuinely thinks is worthless, would be to impugn that man’s rationality and to discredit one’s own.⁸

Because reason’s guide to action is instinctual self-preservation, the body determines what ought to be achieved. So, because “we must dress in our own clothes, if we do not wish to substitute a masquerade for practical existence,” and because our nature is distinctly animal, physical conditions determine morality (LR1 22-23). Self-preservation is only possible considering the needs of the body, the gauge to what is necessary in order to prolong living. By recognizing this “leadership of instinct in moral life,” the goal of man’s efforts is determined insofar as his body and its biological demands are physically necessitated (LR3 183). “The force of animal necessity and of natural circumstances” structures the conditions under which one’s life can continue and the demands requisite for happiness, and sanctions the full expression of those instincts.⁹

II. Santayana’s Philosophy of Art

Santayana includes artistic expression and appreciation as essential aspects of the life of reason on pragmatic grounds, because of their contribution to the moral life: “art, when successful, clings to the life of the world and sucks in strength parasitically through its practical functions.”¹⁰ This is not a corruption of aesthetic judgments, but its “successful” form as crowning moral utility. To this end, art practically applies itself to

Karl Munitz, *The Moral Philosophy of Santayana* [New York: Columbia University Press, 1939], 101). To be cited as ‘Munitz’.

⁷ *Reason in Religion*, vol. 3 of LR, 141. To be cited as LR3.

⁸ *Reason in Science*, vol. 5 of LR, 240. To be cited as LR5.

⁹ “An Aesthetic Soviet,” in OS, 249-64; 257. The paper was originally published in *The Dial* 82 (May 1927): 361-70. To be cited as AS.

¹⁰ “Hamlet,” in OS, 41-67; 41. The paper was originally published in *Hamlet*, by William Shakespeare, vol. 15 of *The Complete Works of William Shakespeare* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1908), ix-xxxiii.

the human predicament: art vents animal compulsions, practical arts are used to facilitate self-preservation, and fine arts express human ideals insofar as they foster pleasure in individuals and contribute to their happiness. Art is instrumental to a life founded on rational principles and leading to the actualization of human ideals.

Santayana believes that “arts are no less automatic than instincts,” so, because the desire to express oneself in art and to enjoy artistic products are natural compulsions, a moral life must address itself to these desires.¹¹ Determining the criteria for artistic beauty becomes a moral function insofar as beauty realizes human needs. Art is morally justified because of the benefits it bestows on human beings; specifically, because art renders reality in light of human perspectives, art in many forms humanizes the environment, making it more available to action and facilitating (moral) activity. Art consolidates experience and creates a reality that is amenable to human acting: “If art is that element in the Life of Reason which consists in modifying its environment the better to attain its end, art may be expected to subserve all parts of the human ideal, to increase man’s comfort, knowledge, and delight” (LR4 16-17). For Santayana, this ideal moral function embodied in art exists in two fields, the “mechanical” and the “liberal”:

Art has accordingly two stages: one mechanical or industrial, in which untoward matter is better prepared, or impeding media are overcome; the other liberal, in which perfectly fit matter is appropriated to ideal uses and endowed with a direct spiritual function (LR4 32).

Through art, then, the relation of people to their surroundings is rationalized, the environment is appropriated, and their sensations are humanly understood. Art signals an underlying pursuit of ideal ends rationally orchestrated to shape earthly resources to animal needs. Such mechanical arts render the environment intelligible, eventually leading to “liberal” arts, which are enjoyed in themselves. Utility breeds beauty:

For what is practically helpful soon acquires a gracious presence.... Aesthetic satisfaction thus comes to perfect all other values; they would remain imperfect if beauty did not supervene upon them, but beauty would be absolutely impossible if they did not underlie it.¹²

Objects that are conducive to self-preservation — that are “practically helpful” — may become beautiful. The healthful existence of a material organism finds beauty in such ideally useful mechanisms by coming to appreciate intrinsically what had merely instrumental value. Mechanical art becomes valued intrinsically when the pleasure generated instrumentally is considered to be a quality of the art object itself. This “well-known psychological phenomenon, viz., the transformation of an element of sensation into the quality of a thing,” introduces a beautiful form into nature: the subjective experience of pleasure becomes objective because of its projection onto an object (SB 28-29).

Artistic appreciation is a primal reaction to instinctual demands. Though intellectual to the extent that emotional demonstration appeals to a need, “yet this love and imagination are lodged just as snugly in his private animal heart as is the most

¹¹ *Reason in Art*, vol. 4 of LR, 4. To be cited as LR4.

¹² “What is Aesthetics?” in OS, 30-40; 39. The paper was originally published in *The Philosophical Review* 13, no. 3 (May 1904): 320-27. To be cited as WIA.

sordid instinct."¹³ Beauty marks a culmination in the mind whose mental and physical organization projects outward:

The spiritual fruition consists in the activity of turning an apt material into an expressive and delightful form, thus filling the world with objects which by symbolising ideal energies tend to revive them under a favouring influence and therefore to strengthen and refine them. (LR4 33)

Reaching "spiritual fruition," the individual immerses herself in the artistic enterprise in order "to strengthen and refine" the ideal physical state that marks an ideal moral state. Internal regimentation gives rise to artistic production, so the impulse renders visible the moral development of human drives.

III. Judgments of Value

While in what Santayana calls intellectual judgments — or judgments of fact — the active (quasi-Kantian¹⁴) mind responds to given sense impressions, classifying them according to regularity developed as scientific principles, in aesthetical and moral judgments such true principles may, but need not, serve as a means to developing principles in accordance with physiological well-being. Beauty and the good are both determined by instinct, and evaluations of goodness and beauty are relative to the physiology that dictates value. Subjective determinations of the good in accordance with natural activity constitute moral activity intended to preserve the moral creature. Aesthetics and ethics are concerned with value grounded in the harmonization of human needs and measured by happiness. Both appeal to the same normative justification but are characterized differently according to the ways in which they are considered. Although both aesthetic and moral judgments are judgments of value, Santayana distinguishes the two according to whether the object of normative judgment is intrinsic or extrinsic to the activity, whether it is considered objective or subjective, and whether it is primarily defined positively or negatively.

IV. Intrinsic/ Extrinsic

Santayana first claims that aesthetic judgments reflect the immediate experience of beauty or lack of beauty, while moral judgments gauge resulting utility. Ethics implies the theoretical quantification of goodness expected to follow from morally relevant actions, but beauty immediately affects the perceiver and, beyond the pleasure felt with the appreciation of beautiful things, no steps need be taken to yield the pleasure experienced:

Whereas, in the perception of beauty, our judgment is necessarily intrinsic and based on the character of the immediate experience, and never consciously on the idea of an eventual utility in the object, judgments about moral worth, on the contrary, are always based, when they are positive, upon the consciousness of benefits probably involved. (SB 16)¹⁵

¹³ "The Unit in Ethics Is the Person," in *Physical Order and Moral Liberty*, ed. John Lachs and Shirley Lachs, 195-97 (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1969), 196.

¹⁴ Santayana proclaims an indebtedness to Kant when he argues that "to discover a physical object is to pack in the same part of space, and fuse in one complex body, primary data like coloured form and tangible surface" (LR1 162).

¹⁵ It begs the question to assume that the creation of art objects is not done in order to create something beautiful — i.e., with regard to an eventual utility that must be aesthetic. In order to maintain *with regard to the artist* that aesthetics concerns itself with the intrinsic, Santayana must claim that the

Moral goodness is a quality of actions that are predicated on their being a means to happiness, but beauty itself is objectified pleasure. The proper domain of morality thus extends to truth, science, art, and religion as attempts to reach the goodness of a harmony of desires.

Nonetheless, morally relevant activity is “eventually intrinsic” because “the ultimate appeal must be to some irrationally determined need or desire” (Munitz 62). Moral judgments must be grounded in some factual assessment of personal advantage, which itself is an intrinsic good. Beauty without pleasure would not be beauty, and moral goodness without (an eventual) pleasure would not be moral goodness. Moral goods qua goods are intrinsic to the moral agent’s nature and are thereby goods that are not beautiful (as an aesthetic positive) but are nonetheless eventually intrinsically good:

The useful is good because of the excellence of its consequences; but these must somewhere cease to be merely useful in their turn, or only excellent as means; somewhere we must reach the good that is good in itself and for its own sake, else the whole process is futile, and the utility of our first object illusory. (SB 19)

Moral goods, though mediated by utility, are intrinsic goods insofar as they aim at happiness, and would not be moral if they did not. Indeed, Santayana claims that moral goodness may become intrinsic through a psychological process that considers an action’s utility without consciously considering the ground of the normative assessment in its eventual end. Santayana’s differentiation of the intrinsic nature of pleasure in beauty and its non-intrinsic nature in morality rests on “the consciousness of benefits probably involved” (SB 16); in moral activity, however, pleasure may infect the means to pleasure, and recognizing it as a means may be replaced by considering it a pleasure in itself:

For what is practically helpful soon acquires a gracious presence; the eye learns to trace its form, to piece out its characteristics with a latent consciousness of their function, and, if possible, to remodel the object itself so as to fit it better to the abstract requirements of vision, that so excellent a thing may become altogether congenial. (WIA 39)

The usefulness of a thing in causing pleasure may itself acquire a moral goodness, an intrinsic good despite its being a mediate good. The mind may not consciously regard it as a means to pleasure, although it remains a means; it rather has intrinsic moral value.

Struggling against this implication, Santayana contends that beauty is *properly* intrinsic, meaning that, with regard to a beautiful object, one recognizes the immediate experience of beauty without a possible intervening regard for utility. Pleasure is intrinsic to beauty because Santayana defines beauty as pleasure objectified. But in his discussion of the extrinsicity of goodness, Santayana stresses the utility of right *actions*, whereas the proper intrinsicity of aesthetic judgments depends on the appreciation of beauty itself rather than the objects of aesthetic judgments — namely, beautiful things. If, as he does in moral judgments, Santayana directs his attention not to a definitionally true statement — goodness implies pleasure as surely as beauty does — but to the object of the judgment, the beautiful itself is not properly intrinsic to any

creative process is intended to produce an object that incidentally happens to be beautiful and that the positive aim of the artist is rather a moral good. But this would already seem to obviate Santayana’s distinction. Because Santayana had much more to say about art appreciation than artistic creation, however, I will confine myself to another line of objection.

form. Beauty is one's positive response to a form in the phenomenal world. The intrinsic beauty of a form requires that mind-dependent form's eliciting pleasure in the viewer:

Beauty — as the pure aesthetes have discovered — is not intrinsic to any form: it comes to bathe that form, and to shine forth from it, only by virtue of a secret attraction, agitation, wonder, and joy which that stimulus happens to cause — not always but on occasion — in our animal hearts. (AS 256)

Because beauty is pleasure objectified, happiness is intrinsic to beauty, but beauty is not intrinsic to particular forms. Just as the good depends for its goodness on its contribution to overarching advantage within the rational life, so too is any form beautiful only insofar as it calls forth pleasure in the perceiver, who objectifies this pleasure. The object's aesthetic value depends on the pleasure it causes in the subject and, like goodness regarding morally good actions, is intrinsic only relative to the happiness of the subject. There is nothing beautiful in itself — “there is no value apart from some appreciation of it” — just as there is nothing morally good in itself (SB 13); both are judged to be positive values insofar as they effect pleasure. Beauty is pleasure objectified, but a beautiful thing is a means of eliciting pleasure, and the art work itself is only beautiful insofar as pleasure is objectified in it; the beautiful is extrinsic as far as it is considered practically.

For Santayana, judgments of value — aesthetic and moral alike — rest on the intrinsic standard of normative judgments, namely well-being; beauty without pleasure is not beauty, and good with (the net effect of) pain is not good. Both kinds of judgments are intrinsic in one respect and extrinsic in another, and intrinsicity cannot distinguish the two. Beauty is intrinsic insofar as pleasure is immediate to the experience of the beautiful, but pleasure is also intrinsic to goodness insofar as goodness must be eventually intrinsic and such a positive effect may infect one's consideration of the means to achieving it; therefore, Santayana writes: “in finding and declaring a thing *good or beautiful*, our sentence is categorical, and the standard evoked by our judgment is for that case *intrinsic* and ultimate” (SB 9, emphasis added). Extrinsicity results from one's conscious expectation of utility, but such an expectation can be transformed into immediately experienced pleasure resulting from the appreciation of a goodness that — actually, but no longer consciously — is mediated. Additionally, because both moral and aesthetic judgments must refer to an effected pleasure, measuring the judged action or object with regard to its practical utility, both the beautiful and the morally good are, in another sense, extrinsic. In its examination of beautiful things, the aesthetic judgment gauges utility, for forms become beautiful by their appeal to well-being — and this is not a moral act, but an aesthetic act.

V. Subjective/ Objective

The intrinsic/extrinsic distinction is problematized by a tenuous differentiation of the eventually intrinsic and the properly intrinsic, but Santayana further characterizes beauty and goodness as objective and subjective, respectively. Whereas *The Sense of Beauty* identifies moral goodness with relative happiness, the definition of beauty distinguishes it from goodness in its very consideration as object: “beauty is pleasure regarded as the quality of a thing” (SB 31). Because beauty is the objectification of pleasure, and because pleasure is a subjective and relative phenomenon, beauty has its basis in the subjective, just as moral goodness does. But “the transformation of an element of sensation into the quality of a thing” introduces beauty into nature (SB 28-29);

the subjective experience of pleasure seems objective because of its projection onto an object, and is thus distinguished from moral feeling. However, just as Santayana's first distinction fails due to reconceiving goodness as intrinsically pleasurable and considering beauty as extrinsic with regard to its practical justification, this distinction fails due to a similar reconception: moral goodness may be considered objective despite its basis in subjective response.

Although Santayana claims that aesthetic value is objective and moral value is subjective, a closer examination of Santayana's philosophy of religion reveals that moral value too can be objective. Moral values are subject, just as beauty is, to physiological well-being. The good is what the self strives to achieve in order to attain happiness; as a practical gauge of one's moral activity, Santayana discusses moral ideals as objects of behavior: "everything ideal has a natural basis and everything natural an ideal development" (LR1 21). Moral ideals are devised as objectifications of subjective desires (and how they can be fulfilled) most apparently in religion, which Santayana contends metaphorically represents values relative to social and physical requirements: "[Religion] makes absolute moral decisions. It sanctions, unifies, and transforms ethics" (LR3 6-7). Within Santayana's system of naturalized ethics and considering the definition and function he assigns to spirit, moral edicts spring from religion's function "to draw from reality materials for an image of that ideal to which reality ought to conform, and to make us citizens, by anticipation, in the world we crave."¹⁶ Rather than otherworldly pronouncements from an existing god, religions become means to moral perfection, extended and elaborate human myths intended to render a people's own moral ideals intelligible.¹⁷ One's actions are dictated by her own animal instincts, not by removed commandments; such commandments are inventions to understand herself and her environment by explaining in removed terms that which is ever-present. Religion facilitates coordinating otherwise inchoate impulses determined by the "living interest" of the subject (LR1 259); they are subjective, but objectified as religious truths. Religion is the transformation of subjective responses into objective demands — a moral law instead of mere stimulus-response conditioning. Objectified morality is a subdivision of morally relevant judgments, but nonetheless represents "the transformation of an element of sensation into the quality of a thing" — namely, the physical well-being effected by right action transformed into moral goodness, religious commands, divine dictates. The spectacle of an impulse transformed into a moral law parallels the objectification of pleasure; religion is the beauty of morality.

VI. Positive/ Negative

In addition to the intrinsic/extrinsic and objective/subjective distinctions, both of which falter, Santayana also attempts to distinguish aesthetics from ethics by the quality of the values invoked. Moral pronouncements are traditionally prohibitions on

¹⁶ *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), vi.

¹⁷ Although religion is not involved in ethics as a strict and literal interpretation seems to be when it takes, e.g., the Ten Commandments to be categorical laws of human action, it nonetheless plays an instrumental role in the moral economy of the Life of Reason. Therefore, Bertrand Russell incorrectly interprets Santayana's position on religion when he writes: "Santayana also liked religion, but in a very different way [than William James]. [Santayana] liked it aesthetically and historically, not as a help towards a moral life" (*A History of Western Philosophy* [New York: Simon and Schuster, 1945], 811).

detrimental actions, and aesthetic judgments are approbative: "while aesthetic judgments are mainly positive, that is, perceptions of good, moral judgments are mainly and fundamentally negative, or perceptions of evil" (SB 16). Judgments of aesthetic value consider pleasure objectified, while moral judgments decree that one ought not to do that which causes displeasure, which is considered evil. However, this distinction between aesthetics and ethics fails because Santayana's own philosophy of art conceives of negative aesthetic value; to understand such genres as tragedy Santayana must invoke a full treatment of negative aesthetical terms. What Santayana calls evil in art can be neither a mere lack of beauty nor a moral evil; to the extent that so-called evil in art effects understanding of truth and sublimity, it instead must be a substantive aesthetic negative.

Santayana contends that, while beauty is pleasure taken as the quality of a thing, ugliness is merely the lack of beauty: "[aesthetic] value is positive, it is the sense of the presence of something good, or (in the case of ugliness) of its absence" (SB 31). An object is ugly only when one has exhausted attempts to consider it beautiful. If the art object has a real negative effect on the perceiver, it is not ugly but evil and a moral concern: "The ugly ... is not the cause of any real pain. In itself it is rather a source of amusement. If its suggestions are vitally repulsive, its presence becomes a real evil towards which we assume a practical and moral attitude" (SB 17). Santayana claims that ugliness is the "absence" of pleasure, yet he also claims that "the absence of aesthetic goods is a moral evil," because moral evaluations are fundamentally negative (SB 32).

Santayana considers not just distasteful or inelegant compositions to be ugly, but also the jarring pathos of tragedy and truth, the overwhelming sublimity of nature, which resist simple enjoyment and evince rather a violent shock followed by contemplative understanding. If such ugliness goes so far as to pain the observer, the observed quality is a moral evil. But not all art aspires to beauty, so, given that evil in art is not of positive aesthetic value (because it is not beauty) and is of negative moral value (because it causes real pain in the observer), Santayana must explain how a value neither beautiful nor pleasurable can be desired in art. He first claims that evil is admissible in art only insofar as it is "balanced and annulled by positive pleasures" (SB 147). As an example, he cites *King Lear*, claiming that the play is beautiful for its language and the presence of Lear's fool.¹⁸ But for Santayana to claim that evil in art is warranted only when it is outweighed by incidental pleasures is to excuse evil, not to explain it. Santayana then claims that evil in art may be justified by its association with the good or the beautiful, "the continual suggestion of beautiful and happy things" (SB 140). This is a form of expressiveness under which an object or ideal that may cause pleasure in the subject is suggested¹⁹: for example, the suffering body of Christ on the

¹⁸ Santayana first claims that the play's horror is alleviated by the sheer number of evils presented; appreciating the play without experiencing the evil of any one of the miseries is possible only because we cannot focus exclusively on any one of them.

¹⁹ Santayana analyzes expression into two parts: "In all expression we may thus distinguish two terms: the first is the object actually presented, the word, the image, the expressive thing; the second is the object suggested, the further thought, emotion, or image evoked, the thing expressed" (SB 121). Thus, while the actual object presented may be repugnant, he claims, it may produce a positive emotion. But this begs the question: by the very fact that evil in art is evil it must evoke negative feelings in the observer even though it may also produce a positive affect. To justify evil in art by its positive

cross elicits joy in Christians. Through continued association, the value of the thing suggested may enter into the value of the thing that suggests it: "this expressiveness becomes an aesthetic value, that is, becomes expression, when the value involved in the associations thus awakened are incorporated in the present object" (SB 122). Evil in tragedy becomes an "aesthetic value," and becomes morally justified in its representation of moral ideals and its role in the spiritual life. Among other things, evil in art may inform truthful beliefs, describing and delineating facets of the world in which one lives. But for Santayana, the often ugly truth is antagonistic toward beauty in art: "truth is thus the excuse which ugliness has for being" (SB 142). While the depiction of truth may be ugly, however, it certainly is not evil, because it subserves a positive moral end: "truth is a moral, not an aesthetic good. The possession of it is not free intuition, but knowledge necessary to a man's moral integrity and intellectual peace."²⁰ Truth is instrumental to well-being, and, in its depiction of truth, evil in art may have a positive moral function.

Santayana further explains evil in terms of "sympathy" and the sublime (SB 156). He claims that empathizing with evil in art causes one's own emotions to be expressed and emotional health to be sustained. The catharsis engendered by one's association with the tragic may be a means to spiritual health:

Thus a man whose physiological complexion involves more poignant emotion than his ideas can absorb — one who is sentimental — will yearn for new objects that may explain, embody, and focus his dumb feelings; and these objects, if art can produce them, will relieve and glorify those feelings in the act of expressing them. Catharsis is nothing more. (LR4 64)

Evil in art may be instrumental to the happiness of those whose "physiological complexion" demands catharsis, and is justified on moral grounds. One may undergo a venting of emotion upon experiencing the evil in tragedy, or may react by engaging one's own consciousness, leading to a sublime release from interaction with the object (SB 149). By creating the conditions for the sublime and the activity of contemplation, evil in art is morally justified in extending the spirit's function to pure contemplation of the realm of truth. Though there is no apparent physical need to apprehend truth for its own sake — indeed "there is no *reason* why we should love anything" — the spirit finds pleasure in striving toward truth (RT 110); the spirit recognizes truth in an effort to fulfill the intellectual desires of the rational being. "Experience of evil is the commonest approach to this attitude of [detachment]," so evil, although given substantive treatment in Santayana's philosophy, cannot be a negative moral term (SB 147-48). If moral values are considered extrinsically good because of their utility, truth in art is a moral good despite being aesthetically negative.

Evil in art cannot have positive aesthetic value, for evil is not objectified pleasure and thus is not beautiful. But evil can have positive moral value because it may be instrumental in instructing a valuable understanding of the world and inducing catharsis leading to contemplation of truth. Evil in art is neither beauty nor moral evil. Evil in art — *qua evil* — can only be reconciled with its moral utility if one conflates what Santayana calls evil with ugliness, which is not incompatible with positive moral effects. Santayana therefore must have a corresponding negative aesthetic of ugliness to explain

associations is to disregard the very negative associations that make it evil.

²⁰ *The Realm of Truth* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1938), 115. To be cited as RT.

tragedy and the sublime, among other things. Aesthetics cannot be primarily positive because beauty must be counterbalanced with a substantive negative aesthetic leading to positive moral value.

VII. Conclusion

Given that “the architectonic of his thought, his moral philosophy” structures his metaphysics, philosophy of science, epistemology, and aesthetics, Santayana himself sometimes seems to recognize that his differentiation of ethics and aesthetics is tenuous (Munitz v). Art contributes to a moral life because “an ingredient in [man’s] ultimate happiness, is to find satisfaction for his eyes, for his imagination, for his hand or voice aching to embody latent tendencies in explicit forms” (WIA 35). Fine art is practically desirable because it speaks to the need to appreciate beauty and allows the individual to express herself. Aesthetics is a kind of ethics distinguished only in trivial ways: “In moral philosophy, then, there is as little room for a special discipline called ‘aesthetics’ as there is among the natural sciences” (WIA 40). With its incorporation into the Life of Reason, aesthetics, like religion, becomes a culmination of morality as a fuller understanding of the relation of man to his environment and of man to himself, the state of development that poetically orchestrates the demands of the individual with the world. This balance marks the goal of Santayana’s ethical system as perfected aesthetical activity, but it also characterizes a difficulty for a naturalized philosophical theory under which only a difference in typical emphasis rather than in kind can distinguish the disciplines.

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The Santayana Edition

The Santayana Edition is largely on schedule. Our first priority has been the *Letters*. During the summer we sent samples of the first volume to MIT Press, and we continue to work on the details of the software program being used for electronic publishing. The *Marginalia* volume is in the main complete, and we will be seeking a publication subvention that will permit MIT to publish the volume.

An important new development is that the General Editor is now in Indianapolis. Effective 1 August 1998, I accepted the position of Dean of Indiana University’s School of Liberal Arts in Indianapolis along with appointments in philosophy and in the School of Medicine. Through June 1999, the Edition will remain at Texas A&M University with John McDermott serving as Advisory Editor and Kris Frost continuing her excellent work as Associate Editor. I continue to serve as General Editor until the project is moved to Indianapolis in July 1999 when we expect to have a new person filling that role. Thereafter I will be the Consulting Editor for the project.

The move to Indiana is good news. Indiana University and Purdue University at Indianapolis already hosts the Peirce Edition Project. Two major editions being in the same location may permit economies of scale that will add to more efficient and effective editorial processes. I am grateful to Nathan Houser and the Peirce Edition Project staff for their support.

HERMAN J. SAATKAMP, JR

Spirit Within a Life of Reason

Many commentators have found in Santayana's later writings a detachment which they did not find in earlier works, and which they find objectionable.¹ They suggest that he had abandoned his vigorous endorsement of a life of reason in favour of a sterile, disengaged kind of spirituality. So marked is this perception that some postulate two Santayanans having divergent philosophies and embracing incompatible ideals.² His defenders have in some cases accepted the view that in his philosophy he indeed describes two incompatible ideals — the life of reason and the spiritual life — both comprehensive and sharply different from each other; but his commitment was to the former ideal throughout. This view is supported by Santayana's claim that there was no change in his doctrine, only a "change in mood." We agree that Santayana does not at any time abandon the ideal of reason, which for him goes to the heart of the good life, and wish only to clarify the argument. We point to several passages in which Santayana asserts that spirituality is compatible with a life of reason, saying explicitly that he is not talking of two separate and incompatible ideals. It is not necessary to discount his later focus on spirit in an argument that he continues to adhere to the ideal of reason.

Readers of *The Realm of Spirit* might take his account there of what he calls a lay religion to describe his late moral philosophy, and to replace the life of reason as described in the earlier LR. This would be a misconception brought on by selective reading. No such illusion would arise from *Dominations and Powers*, a political treatise which was his last work. This book has been found to be too Machiavellian by some. Thus Santayana is accused of being too spiritual on the one hand, and of being too unspiritual on the other; it is not unusual to find him supporting positions widely held by the philosophical community to be incompatible. The key point here, however, is that neither RS nor DP are *meant to be* full accounts of a moral philosophy. In the Preface to RS, he explicitly limits the scope of his investigation:

My subject is not experience surveyed impartially, as in a book of descriptive psychology, but experience viewed at a certain angle, in the measure in which it torments or educates the spirit. Nor is my subject the whole of moral philosophy or the life of reason; for there all forms of health and government would need to be appreciated, many of which might be, and might be content to remain, purely spontaneous and worldly. (RS viii)

Santayana makes it clear that the discussion will deal only with topics in respect to their spiritual relevance. Although he has reservations about his volumes on reason, and regrets that the naturalism of LR was somewhat hidden in phrases like "phases of human progress," it is evident that he continued to take LR as his chief statement on ethics in the wider sense. RS was meant to treat spirit as a specific aspect of moral or religious philosophy. The subject dealt with in LR is "the whole of moral philosophy," dealing with "all forms of health and government." The individual emancipation or salvation which Santayana discusses in RS is not suited to society in general, both because most

¹ Parts of this note are contained in the paper "Santayana and the Materialism of Old Age," read at the 1992 International Conference on George Santayana in Avila. The author is grateful to David Dilworth for discussions on these and a thousand other topics.

² Justus Buchler's paper, "One Santayana or Two," reprinted in AFSL 66-72, brought this view into prominence. Further criticisms along these lines can be found in PGS, especially in the articles of Edman and Munitz.

will not be so constituted to favour such a regimen, and because the integrity and safety of any society requires non-spiritual armies and police.

His political views are presented in DP; but here also his aim has been narrowed down from the ambitious formulation of a full life of reason. He had since given up the status of “judicial moralist” found in LR.

Neither historical investigation, therefore, nor political precepts are to be looked for in this book. All that it professes to contain is glimpses of tragedy and comedy played unawares by governments; and a continual intuitive reduction of political maxims and institutions to the intimate spiritual fruits that they are capable of bearing. (DP ix)

We note here that he is not speaking of pure spirit, but spirit in general, which is a precondition for all moral distinctions; there is no analysis in the text of withdrawal from society.

The “incompatible ideals” position has the virtue of bringing to the fore Santayana’s principle of the relativity of morals. This might show itself in a difference between the social ideal and that of a few more spiritual members of that society. His naturalistic stance envisages no absolute sanction either for the spiritual life of a saint, or for the committed life of reason. “The philosophers or saints that have renounced the ordinary life of the world for a special vocation,” he says, “have the perfect right to do so, at their own risk, as artists, poets, or explorers have [the right] to sacrifice all else to a single ambition.” On the other hand, “the world too has a perfect right to judge and to control the ways of these inspired people; and although putting them to death is a harsh and imprudent policy, gentler and more efficacious means are not wanting for domesticating and humanising them” (PGS 565). The reader who insists on a binding decision between the rightful claims of the individual here, against the equally rightful claims of society, is not working at the level of Santayana’s naturalism. Nonetheless, it should be observed that he does favour, as the most rational and the most likely to generate happiness, a society which can accommodate a few free spirits in its midst, without destroying its vitality and stability.

One may surely argue that these “philosophers or saints” follow a spiritual life as an ideal. But Santayana believes that those born to be saints are few, and those unsuited to a purely spiritual life of deprivation are many. He is not unconcerned about the latter, among whom he includes himself. In particular, throughout all of his writings, he asks how the fruits of spirit may be accessible to all of these. It is in this context that one may find compatibility between spirituality and a rational ethics. In one passage, Santayana is greatly moved by the message of the *Bhagavad Gita*, in which Krishna tells Arjuna that he is obliged to launch a war, in spite of the large number of relatives and friends on the other side — but that he must fight it with detachment. Arjuna belonged to a warrior and not a religious caste; Santayana sees this as a splendid literary signal that Arjuna is a man of action, not one fated to live the life of a hermit. Such persons are not denied the blessings of spirit, however, and will experience more or less pure moments of spirit in conjunction with their regular activities. By fighting the war, which is a just one, he is merely carrying out his social duty, and fulfilling his inevitable destiny. Only with a measure of spiritual detachment, however, will he retain the capacity to treat his adversary with chivalry and with humanity. Thus Arjuna’s life, at least potentially, can realize the life of reason, and can at the same time manifest a pure spirituality in its sympathies and understanding. Santayana is particularly engaged by this Indian solution to the moral problem, he says, which “has the advantage of not separating natural virtue

and spiritual insight into two different lives or two strands of action or interest; the two may be lived together and in the same moment" (PGS 571).

Santayana accepts the opinion of Hindu sages as orthodox and correct in regard to a life of spirit: they had taken the time required to work out these matters correctly. As to the grounding of spirit, however, he completely rejects the doctrine of Hindu scriptures: that spirit or Atman is the fundamental reality, the only existence remaining once the veil of illusions is dissipated; that spirit is the deepest stratum of the universe. He does not accept the argument offered by Krishna to Arjuna that the relatives and friends which he will kill in the impending war are illusory, and that he will not be killing their spiritual selves. By contrast, Santayana places spirit in the most superficial stratum of the engine of nature, crucial because it constitutes the happiness or the agony of each sentient being, but an effect rather than a cause. The authority which he grants to Hindu thought pertains only to its account of pure spirit, while pure spirit itself can only have a partial authority; the moral demands of struggling peoples will extend well beyond it. We are not pure spirits, and the world goes on, imposing its "swift natural sanctions" upon those individuals or societies which stray far from a narrow path set by natural constraints.

The synthesis of natural interest and spiritual insight which Santayana suggests is that we should be resolute in pursuing our interests, while at the same time be charitable towards others. This formulation has an air of paradox, or of contradiction, if we do not take into account of his special use of the term 'charity'. He is urging us to pursue our self interest doggedly (at the level of matter), but to temper this with charity (at the level of spirit), meaning by this compassion and a sympathetic understanding of the ideals and needs of others.

His critics see little genuine charity, if there is only compassion in the absence of actions issuing from it. To temper a single-minded pursuit of self-interest with no more than thoughts and words of sympathy is surely a piece of hypocrisy. However, this is to miss his use of the word 'charity'. Certainly, as they use the term (and as it is commonly used), actions are required. This puts matters into the sphere of reason, where there will be duty, respect and active sympathy for others in one's family or country. Santayana is not at all excluding charity in this sense, although as a naturalist he believes that at bottom this will stem from an enlightened self-interest (as indeed his critics may do). The following example helps to clarify the scope of spirituality for him.

There would be no spirituality, though there would have to be spirit, in enjoying the food and drink on the table. Spirituality would appear if we began to enjoy these things disinterestedly and impersonally, in view of the *ultimate good* that might flow from their substance and their appearance; in other words, if we enjoyed them convivially, pictorially, intellectually. (PGS 566)

These latter spiritual enjoyments, he believes plausibly, are not the determinants of the morality of hunger and thirst, thanksgiving for plenty and healthiness, or condemnation of over-indulgence.

The life of reason is no more than a comprehensive disentanglement of the web of all interests, leading to advantage and happiness. It would be incorrect to see his moral philosophy as turning away from these sweeping social goals. Spiritual moments of detachment lead not to disengagement and a shift from social action, but rather to an emotional change. It yields a measure of tranquillity and peace, without any physical removal from participation. The detachment:

will neither destroy your natural gifts and duties nor add to them; but it will enable you to exercise them without illusion and in far-seeing harmony with their real function and end. Detachment leaves you content to be where you are, and what you are. Why should you hanker to be elsewhere or to be someone else? Yet in your physical particularity detachment makes you ideally impartial; and in enlightening your mind it is likely to render your action also more successful and generous. (PGS 566-7)

This account is not without its problems. The argument relies on his epiphenomenal treatment of mind, and there is an apparent clash with the last clause above; for it suggests that spirit can “render” a change in the realm of physical acts. Here commentary on Santayana awaits a full and satisfactory discussion of his epiphenomenalism, which will not be undertaken here.³ His overall recommendation, however, is a continued participation in the life of reason, in the presence of a sympathy for others without letting their goals disrupt one’s own. At one point, Santayana urges his pragmatist critics to “admit post-rational sentiment into their life of reason as an element” (PGS 565). This again raises questions about his definitions. We can only note here, briefly, that the life of reason is a social ideal; it might still conform to the ideal of reason, for individuals finding themselves in a society which does not espouse a life of reason, to move in a post-rational direction. In fact, Santayana did so himself.

We have glossed over several points of friction, where Santayana’s views conflict with the conventional liberalism of today’s democratic societies. Is Arjuna really under an obligation to wage war against many of his own family and friends? and must he do it with detachment? That we are entitled to crush our enemies, but should at the same time see their legitimacy and humanity is an aristocratic sentiment difficult to respect in today’s industrial democracies. Chivalry is not a vote getter. As he himself well recognizes, Santayana’s allegiance is to the ancient world, not the modern one.

In PP, Santayana gives a detailed account of his own disengagement at an early age from active participation in society (although no move at all to the life of a hermit). He continues to say that his first choice would have been participation in a state living the life of reason; but modern customs did not suit him. They excluded him, as he notes, from any kind of acceptance as a leader of opinion. He would want to advise, on any political issue, that existing institutions should be preserved, that the fragility of society should be remembered and respected. He was not unaware of corruption or vice or tyranny associated with the old order; only he sensed that what followed would be worse, so long as supposed reforms were inspired by distaste for existing society and were unaccompanied by a viable new vision. But people were not interested in such advice, and conservative opinion had gathered around the business classes. For this and the previously given reasons, it was perhaps not that difficult for him to turn away from the issues of the day, towards a more universal study of philosophy. That he did so is our gain.

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³ Mind is not identical with spirit. It is the psychic action (originating in the psyche) which both enlightens the mind or spirit, and renders the action successful. As elsewhere, the explanation must hang on the marginal motto: “[Spirit’s] supposed effects are the effects of its causes” (RB 635).

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FOURTEENTH UPDATE

The items below will supplement the references given in *George Santayana: A Bibliographical Checklist, 1880-1980* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1982) prepared by Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., and John Jones. These references are divided into primary and secondary sources. Except for the book reviews, the following articles and books are classified according to their years of publication. Readers with additions or corrections are invited to send these to Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., Santayana Edition, Department of Philosophy, Texas A&M University, College Station, Texas 77843-4237.

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