

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the
Santayana
Society*

No. 2
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George Santayana in 1950

"I am so glad that you are dressed informally. For I am always, as you see, in my pajamas," said Santayana to Irving Singer in August 1950. See page 27 below. The photograph is reprinted from the 1951 edition of *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, edited by Paul A. Schilpp, by permission of The Open Court Publishing Company, La Salle, Illinois. Copyright 1940 and 1951 by The Library of Living Philosophers, Inc.

Santayana and Panpsychism

Santayana was certainly not a panpsychist. However, I believe that there are panpsychist tendencies in his work. The aim of this paper is to explore these.

It is necessary first to explain what is being understood by 'panpsychism'. I take it as the view that there is a principle by which the physical world could be exhaustively divided (conceptually) into what we may conveniently call basic units each of which has some kind of sentience, though there will be physical individuals, composed of these sentient ones as standing in certain relations, which will not necessarily be sentient. On the version of this view most relevant here, these units will not merely be sentient, but their sentience will constitute their 'real essence', while the real essence of the relations between them will be in some manner psychical. For some versions of this view, the basic units may be continuants, for others they will be momentary (probably not instantaneous) events, though the units of one moment of time may generate those of the next in a manner which constitutes each such event a phase in the 'life' of a continuant. Although mentality constitutes the real essence of the ultimate units of the physical world and of their inter-relations, according to this view, that is not something directly implied by our ordinary physical descriptions. These will either be of physical individuals in terms of how they appear to consciousnesses such as ours, or in terms of their structural properties, these latter in fact being abstract aspects of properties which, in their full concreteness, are psychical, most obviously in the sense of being groups of psychical individuals related in some psychical manner. Among physical descriptions is here understood formulations of the laws of nature, and it will be an essential part of the kind of panpsychism of interest here that it accepts the best efforts of scientists to arrive at these at face value, without any specially philosophical doubts about them. The question arises as to the status of 'consciousnesses such as ours' on this view. There are three likely answers. (1) They might be especially high grade examples of the basic units; (2) they might be in some manner generated by states of affairs consisting in basic units standing in those relations to each other which, at the physical level, constitute the existence of a waking mammalian brain, and might, when generated, act back on the system of basic units, i.e. on the brain; (3) they might be thus generated, but not so as to act back in any way. Of these the second implies that the laws of nature as they apply outside brains are interfered with within them, the third implies that there is no such interference, and the first is compatible either with there being special laws, or some breakdown of physical law, within brains or with nothing of this sort being so. The third option is a kind of panpsychist version of epiphenomenalism.¹

¹ These alternatives are treated more fully in chapter 4 of my *The Vindication of Absolute*

To embrace panpsychism in this sense is to accept one of the propositions distinctive of idealism, namely that the mental is pervasive in the universe, and indeed constitutive of its real essence. But panpsychism can remain essentially unidealist in rejecting any view according to which either the world is my idea, or the world is somehow all included in a single absolute consciousness, or the world is one in which value concepts have explanatory significance.

Santayana certainly rejected idealism, but it seems that his main hostility to idealism lay in his total rejection of any view at all like one of the three just listed. I think that he also - at least throughout most of his philosophical career - rejected a panpsychism which was not idealist. However, I think, first, that the system propounded in *Realms of Being* hovers on the brink of it, and that there are indications that at an earlier time he was quite sympathetic to its claims.

These indications are the notes for lectures given at Harvard in 1909-1910, edited by Daniel Cory under the title 'System in Lectures'.² I have in mind primarily the following passage:

Any act, piece of experience, or event lived through is, in its immediacy, *neutral* in respect to what is called subjectivity and objectivity, psychic and material being. It possesses qualities belonging to both these spheres: often the inherent qualities (or essence) of it are material, but the status and movement of it are psychic. When, however, the order of nature or genesis, and the Realm of Matter, have been discerned, it becomes obvious that much in facts and events is irrelevant to that order, attached to it only adventitiously, and not a part of the Realm of Matter. This residuum is also called feeling, imagination, mind, appearance, thought, etc. It is imponderable, untraceable in space, intermittent, irrevocable and (by definition and by initial contact with matter) inefficacious. The quantity of it is accordingly undiscoverable. It is representable only dramatically. Wherever a represented situation evokes the imagination of it, it is believed to exist or to have existed. It constitutes the *Realm of Consciousness*.

One way of taking this somewhat puzzling and ambiguous passage is as saying that the phases of our consciousness are physical events, in our brains, considered in an aspect of them in which they are imponderable and which is irrelevant from the point of view of investigating their causal efficacy, and that this aspect of them is only representable dramatically, which means something like imaginable empathically. That is very much the status which, in at least one version of it, would be ascribed to them by a panpsychism which embraced the first of the three views I said a panpsychist might take about our consciousness. Now it fits in well with such a thesis about our consciousness to say that all ultimate physical events have an aspect of that sort, though most such events are

Idealism, published by Edinburgh University Press, 1983. See also Chapter 3, 'The Vindication of Panpsychism'. However much Santayana disliked absolute idealism my own version of it owes a great deal to his thought.

² *Review of Metaphysics*, Vol. X, No. 4, June 1957.

not representable thus by us dramatically, or in any way known to us in this aspect, and so do not get counted in as part of the realm of consciousness. It is true that this is not entailed by what Santayana says here, but it is at least suggested. Moreover, there are earlier passages in the lectures where there is some suggestion that Santayana may have thought something of this sort quite probable. Thus he says: 'Our scientific calculations, in no matter what terms, may give us a true assurance on these points (*laws, order or method*) while the *inner texture* of the sensible remains unknown.' (p. 656) This, as Cory points out in a note, may mean that Santayana was half inclined to think that the inner texture of material substance was (apart from its sensory presentation to us) inherently 'sensible', and he draws our attention to an earlier passage (p. 642) where Santayana says that 'substance need not be non-sensible.' If 'sensible' means 'akin to the elements of our sense experience' one gets something very close to James's doctrine of pure experience as the substance of things. James, of course, held that this pure experience was only properly mental when organized in a certain way, and Santayana might have agreed that such an inner sensible core of substance would not be mental in any proper sense. However, if it is essentially of the same generic nature as what, when organized in a certain way, becomes the mental, we have something very close to panpsychism. So it seems that at this time Santayana may have thought that a view at least very close to panpsychism might well be true.

Still, I am not mainly concerned to claim that Santayana would ever have seen himself as sympathetic to a doctrine which could be called 'panpsychism'. My concern is rather to show that in the mature doctrine of *Realms of Being* there are suggestions about what the core nature of the physical world is which come rather close to it. Here, however, the panpsychism in question is one which embraces the third option concerning consciousnesses like ours. I must note emphatically here, to avoid misunderstanding, that my use of *psychical* is not one which Santayana favours. The psyche, as he understands it, is something to be specified primarily in physical terms. One would have to stick to such words as 'mental', and speak of panmentalism, to put what I am saying in his most favoured terminology, but since the expression 'panpsychism' is the usual one (and used by Santayana himself) for the theory I am speaking of, I cannot easily stick to Santayana's strong linguistic preference here.

The basis for my claim lies in his treatment of *natural moments* and their relation to *moments of spirit*. It is presumably beyond dispute that Santayana here holds that the physical world in the last resort consists in innumerable natural moments, each of which exemplifies some essence, and which is related to other natural moments by *lateral tensions* and relations of *forward thrust*, the latter linking the natural moments of one moment of time to those at the next in such a way that the later can be described as being the substance of the earlier ones transformed. The physical world thus composed is presented to us by way of essences which

render something of its structure, and of its significant relations to us, though they also deck it out with features which are not in the least literally true of it.

It is clear enough that moments of spirit (that is, the momentary phases an appropriate string of which constitutes a stream of consciousness) are related to natural moments just as they are related to the experiences constituting the real essence of the ultimate units of the physical world according to a panpsychism which embraces the third option listed above about the status of our consciousness. For Santayana the moments of spirit are in some sense generated by the physical goings on in our brain and somehow 'express' what is going on there, and how it bears on the fate of the psyche (in Santayana's sense) without acting back so as to influence what goes on there. That is just what is said about them according to the version of panpsychism in question with reference to the experiences pertaining to the ultimate physical units. It follows that Santayana approximates to that kind of panpsychism to whatever extent his conception of a natural moment approximates to a conception of them as experiences.

If one looks at Santayana's account of natural moments I think it is hard not to take it that his conception of them is derived from his sense of what our own consciousness is like. They are conceived as intensive unities, in very much the same way as are pulses of experience or feeling by thinkers such as James and Whitehead, with an individuality quite unlike that of any conventionally circumscribed part of the physical world as normally conceived. And consider such a remark as this:

Within each term, [natural moment] we may expect to find a synthetic symbol and counterpart of transition. Let me call it the *forward tension* of the natural moment. This name is not meant to attribute to the elements of the flux any conscious effort or expectancy; they are restless without the feeling of unrest; yet the analogy implied in the metaphor must be a real analogy, since effort and expectancy are creatures and expressions of this very tension in the flux of matter, when it takes the form of a psyche.³

Here Santayana allows that we are to imagine the restlessness inherent in each natural moment by which it drives on to the next in terms of the feeling of our own consciousness as reaching forward to the future. For although we must think of restlessness without the feeling of restlessness, it is certainly not restlessness as that might be defined in terms of matter in motion either as that might reveal itself to observation, or as it might be defined mathematically. Look at the waves of the sea and ask what the restlessness is one might ascribe to them. One might understand it in terms purely of visible movement. Or one might give some description of it in mathematical terms. Neither of these would be the restlessness Santayana has in mind as pertaining to natural moments. In fact, when

³ See page 282 of George Santayana, *Realms of Being*, One-volume edition, (Scribner's, New York, 1942).

one looks at the sea, one normally engages in the *pathetic fallacy* and thinks of it as feeling restless as one does oneself when one tosses sleeplessly in a bed. Clearly it is that kind of restlessness, a quality lying at the heart of it, which Santayana attributes to the natural moments, and in spite of his disclaimer it is hard to see what this can be except something very similar to a feeling of unrest. More generally, it seems to me that the intrinsic efficacy he ascribes to natural moments is something we can only conceive on the analogy of our own effortful striving. Yet there is an oddity here for the efficacy we must conceive of on this basis is regarded by Santayana as only an apparent characteristic of our own consciousness, for the propulsive efficacy which seems to belong to our consciousness is an illusion. That is what makes Santayana an epiphenomenalist. Santayana's explanation of this curious situation is that spirit, since it is derived from matter, has features which give one a sense of the causal push of what is going on in physical nature but that it does not really belong within that causal system. Even if we do not cavil at that, it surely remains the case that natural moments are conceived as having considerable kinship to moments of spirit.

Suppose we allow that natural moments as described by Santayana have some kinship to mental events or moments of spirit, does that make him a panpsychist? The answer is affected by the extent to which we approach the question from a realist, or a more nominalist, view of *generic* universals or essences. Suppose we take it that general terms have an extension determined not by the presence or absence of some quite definite essence, but by a degree of resemblance holding between the quite specific essences involved in the different items to which they are applied. Then the question whether such a general term as 'psychical' or 'experiential' applies to natural moments will be the question whether they are sufficiently like (in virtue of the specific essences involved) moments of spirit to be called, along with them, by some such expression. In that case there will be positions which are not clearly panpsychist or not, inasmuch as they say that there is quite a degree of such affinity, but also quite a degree of contrast. If we look at the matter in this nominalist way, one would be likely to say that Santayana's relation to panpsychism was of this sort. On the other hand, if we think that we can distinguish a quite definite, even if generic, universal or essence which is appropriately labelled by one of these expressions, then it will be a yes or no question whether it is present not just in our consciousness but also in each natural moment. It seems to me that if we look at it thus, Santayana must be thought of as coming rather close to a panpsychist view, granted the mentalistic overtones of his description of natural moments. The only way of his escaping this, I think, would be for him to say that though there is a generic essence common to moments of spirit and to natural moments, this is not appropriately labelled as 'psychicality', but is either the essence of pure being or that of existence (probably chiefly the latter, for it involves a kind of restless itch to be on to the next thing for Santayana, and I take it that it implies, without being

implied by, being). Actually, here again, one might see it as partly a matter of preference whether the view Santayana was taking was panpsychist or not, for one might think that if there is a genuine essence of this sort then the panpsychist is simply one who insists that the ultimate events constituting the physical world all possess it in just the same way as do so-called mental events, and Santayana only disagrees as to whether this is a helpful way of drawing attention to its pervasive presence.

Whatever we decide here, it would remain true at the least that Santayana's view was quite close to a panpsychist one. That being so, I want now to consider some of the reasons why Santayana would evidently not have been happy to accept that.

First, even if Santayana acknowledged that there is something significantly in common between moments of spirit and natural moments, he might have thought that to use any term like 'psychical' to refer to it would almost certainly suggest a view tending towards an idealism incorporating one or more of the other elements I mentioned above.

Second, he might have thought rightly that the typical path to panpsychism lies through thinking that we derive our sense of being from our acquaintance with our own consciousness. Santayana, however, held that what we are immediately acquainted with, or, in his language, what we intuit, are given essences, not spirit, and, in fact, we are not acquainted with moments of spirit.

Third, he might have thought that it would be odd to call natural moments psychical and allow them efficacy while thinking it distinctive of moments of spirit that they were not efficacious.

We can ignore the first reason, as it concerns presentation rather than strict doctrine. As regards the second reason, I have come to think that Santayana is wrong in holding that we are not acquainted with the moments of our own consciousness. However, Santayana had strong motivations to hold this view. For one thing it is essential to the doctrine that *nothing given exists* and therefore to Santayana's treatment of scepticism. Granted this, there really would have been some dissonance within Santayana's system if he had accepted both that nothing given exists and that we get our clue to the fundamental nature of reality through acquaintance with our own experience. One of these two probably had to give way, and it was the panpsychism, anyway objectionable for its idealist feel, which did so. Personally I think that it should have been the other which gave way, especially as despite himself I think Santayana is getting his clue to the nature of natural moments through his sense of what his own flow of consciousness is like.

As for the third reason, I do not think that a panpsychism which allows efficacy to the experiences which lie at the heart of the ultimate units of the physical, but denies them to the higher level experiences which arise out of these and constitute the consciousness of animals, is in any simple way self contradictory, but it is a somewhat strange view. Why should experience lose efficacy as it reaches this presumably more

complex and richly endowed level? So granted that Santayana was an epiphenomenalist he had reason to be uneasy at, if not an absolute commitment to rejecting, panpsychism.

That raises the question of why Santayana was an epiphenomenalist. The explanation, whether it is a justification or not, would seem to include the following factors. First, Santayana does seem to have had a very strong sense of being carried along by factors below the level of consciousness, and of consciousness as simply a report of what was already settled. Clearly, on any reasonable view, especially a post-Freudian one, this has some general truth to it, but hardly enough to deny any independent efficacy to consciousness. A second reason is that Santayana was deeply committed to a naturalistic account of things, and he took this as implying that the reign of the laws of nature must be supreme, and that the human brain was neither the seat of a breakdown of these or even the locus of special emergent laws. A third reason is that epiphenomenalism helps focus attention on what Santayana thought the true glory of spirit, its bringing into focus the realm of essence, and away from the pragmatism which demanded that consciousness must prove itself, if it was worth anything, by its grounding of our action. (Santayana's commitment here sometimes sits uneasily with his view that given essences are our clue to what needs to be done.)

There is something very compelling about an epiphenomenalism which says to the scientist engaged in brain research, (today, we might add, or artificial intelligence) that there is nothing going on in the physical world which he cannot expect to explain without reference to consciousness, but that nonetheless consciousness is there as the seat of all value. So I am quite sympathetic to Santayana's epiphenomenalism. I cannot, however, think it sufficiently well grounded to be a reason for rejecting panpsychism, and anyway it is not out of the question, as we have seen, for panpsychism to accept it.

One may wonder why Santayana came to reject decisively the panpsychism, or at least panexperientialism, of which there seem to be hints in 'System in Lectures'. For this might have allowed him to stick to the view that the brain was not the seat of any kind of breakdown of standard natural law, while allowing consciousness to have efficacy. (This is one of the appeals of identity theories of the mind and these, *in their more intelligible versions*, such as that of Feigl, are, to all intents and purposes, panpsychist.) One reason is Santayana's deep commitment to epiphenomenalism, as just described. But he may have seen the great difficulties which belong to this view, when it comes to understanding just which events in the brain are, in their inner being, our consciousness. Since all the evidence is that consciousness depends on a pattern of excitations in the brain, the idea that it is the inner being of some one ultimate physical unit is hard to make sense of in detail. It is much more plausible to take it that even granted each of these does have a form of sentience as its inner nature, our sentience is an upshot of a whole complex of interacting such units. As such I do not personally think it

impossible that it should still be the in itself of a physical reality on a somewhat different level, but this could only be claimed if we are prepared to accept some hypotheses about the physical world which would have brought panpsychism into conflict with various theses about physical explanation which Santayana would doubtless have thought essential to a naturalistic view of things.

In conclusion, I would say this. Views about consciousness and its relation to the physical may be divided into three types.

(1) Views which are so reductive that, in effect, the most obvious features of consciousness are lost sight of. Presumably no philosopher would put his own views in this category, but some do, in fact, belong to it.

(2) Views which, with a reasonable conception of what consciousness is, think that at anything below the level of description in the most utterly abstract way, it is unique.

(3) Views which think our streams of consciousness are one special case of the occurrence of the totality of the processes in the world, all of which have a fair amount that is interesting in common. These views may (a) think that what is in common cannot appropriately be called by any such psychological words as 'experience' or 'feeling' and (b) those which do think this.

Santayana's view of consciousness is certainly not of type (1). It hovers somewhere between (2) and (3a). To me it seems that the difference between (3a) and (3b) is largely a matter of the mood in which one looks at reality, and that there is no sharp difference. It follows that on the (3a) side of his thought Santayana is not far from panpsychism.

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Spirit's Primary Nature is to be Secondary

Timothy Sprigge finds a kinship between moments of spirit and natural moments in Santayana's philosophy. He argues that this kinship is one of sentience or consciousness, and that here Santayana comes close to a panpsychist position. That there is a kinship, I entirely agree, and shall try to explain the nature of the link in the later part of this paper. However it is quite mistaken to infer that sentience forms a part of this link.

There is a distressing tendency for readers of Santayana to question the resoluteness of his materialism and anti-metaphysical stance, perhaps because he introduces such ideas as essence and spirit, platonism and transcendental centres. Sprigge does not give this reading to Santayana; in the above, as in his book on Santayana,¹ he acknowledges Santayana's epiphenomenal version of materialism and rejection of panpsychism. Yet it appears that Sprigge shows some "tendencies" towards the reading, and at times "hovers on the brink of it," to appeal to some of his own phrases. These tendencies of Sprigge, I should like to show, do not reflect similar tendencies on the part of Santayana himself.

The ontological categories of Santayana's mature philosophy come to dominate all phases of his thinking, and give rise to a remarkably self-consistent system, as Sprigge affirms.² In terms of these systematic categories, I argue that a panpsychist position is not merely false, but comes close to being self-contradictory. While it is impossible to be sure what tendencies lurk at the back of Santayana's mind, the validity of such an argument indicates that tendencies to panpsychism do not figure in the system he finally enunciates. The argument rests on Santayana's account of spirit; for sentience belongs to the realm of spirit, and Sprigge offers a definition of panpsychism in terms of sentience.

Whatever constitutes existence must be substantial - it must be the source of that movement and change which is characteristic of existence. On the other hand, spirit is by its very nature inert and cosmologically superficial. "The inefficacy of spirit [is] inherent in its nature."³ It is secondary in respect to movement and existence (although not in its moral significance), at whatever level it may appear.

.. the nature of spirit is not, like that of matter, to be a principle of existence and movement, but on the contrary a principle of enjoyment,

¹ Timothy L. S. Sprigge, *Santayana, An Examination of His Philosophy*, (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1974).

² See for example page 3 of Sprigge, *op. cit.*

³ See page 835 of George Santayana, *Realms of Being*, One-volume edition, (Scribner's, New York, 1942). Subsequent page numbers will refer to this text.

contemplation, description, and belief; so that while spirit manifests its own nature no less freely than matter does, it does so by freely regarding and commenting on something else, either matter or essence: its primary nature is to be secondary .. [355]

These, and a host of similar statements, are intended to show that spirit in humans is inefficacious and epiphenomenal. Because Santayana claims to espouse common sense, and because he knows that his account of mind runs counter to common sense, he frequently returns to this theme. His dominant argument, especially in the later works, appeals to the nature of spirit, where spirit is taken quite generally; spirit at whatever level is inefficacious. Of course this also entails that it cannot provide the basic units of existence. Thus his argument that the human spirit must be epiphenomenal is at the same time an argument that spirit in general cannot be substantial; it is an argument against panpsychism. Santayana's opposition to panpsychism has the same foundation as his well-known support for epiphenomenalism.

I find this foundation more secure and deeply rooted than does Sprigge, who sees clearly the connections of epiphenomenalism to other aspects of Santayana's thought, but who does not trace its roots to the radical importance of the realms of being. For epiphenomenalism follows immediately from Santayana's analysis of what spirit is, and of what a substance must be.

Santayana gives a more explicit rejection of panpsychism in his discussion of the Realm of Matter. [375-377] There he considers the "logical possibility" of an entirely panpsychist universe made up of "psychic mortar no less than psychic stones." His finding is that, by virtue of the static and isolated nature of each moment of consciousness, there has to be a physical matter beneath these moments in order to generate change and continuity. Once again, the very nature of spirit renders it unfit as a foundation for the cosmos.

In the above, I am considering panpsychism in the version offered by Sprigge, with the basic units of the world not merely sentient, but having sentience as their real essence. However Santayana also rejects weaker versions, in which the sentience merely accompanies basic units which are otherwise constituted; spirit can *only* arise at the level of organisms. "For it is contrary to the nature of spirit to arise in dead or inorganic things:" [134] "It can arise only in an animal psyche." [596] " .. it crowns some impulse, raises it to actual unity and totality, and being that fruition of it, could not arise until that organ had matured." [562]

Santayana did not lack exposure to panpsychist thought: a student of Royce, he took lectures from Paulsen, and wrote a dissertation on Lotze. One of the driving forces behind panpsychism is the conviction that matter, as interpreted by materialist science, is not adequate to explain mind or spirit. Whitehead, for instance, could not believe that the particles posited by physicists were ultimate units of being. This kind of motivation is largely absent from Santayana, who never questions the

capacity of matter to generate the complexities of mind. He does not identify matter with the latest posit of the physicists, however, and is critical of anti-materialist arguments which rely on such identifications. [186] By being less eager to hypostasize our present notion of matter, we are more able to appreciate the true fertility of nature.

He does introduce the notion of Will into his philosophy, meaning "the observable endeavour in things of any sort to develop a specific form and to preserve it." [607] No doubt this was in part a response to the same considerations which motivated Whitehead. More important to Santayana, however, was his treatment of freedom, the psyche, and spirit. There Will plays a part similar to the *conatus* or endeavour of Spinoza. In the psyche of every animal, a part of universal Will is manifested. The term is used metaphorically, (although it is "less metaphorical than it may seem" [607]), and he introduces it in *The Realm of Spirit*, not in the earlier *The Realm of Matter*. The passages which suggest panpsychism to Sprigge are, I believe, references to Will. We should note, therefore, that Will is not conscious; Santayana "scrupulously" uses a lower case "w" to refer to conscious will.

Sprigge is mainly concerned with Santayana's later works, and my criticism will not consider the earlier and less precise *System in Lectures*. I question Sprigge's contention there also; but different arguments would be required. Santayana's use of the term "sensible" there is highly ambiguous, as Sprigge says. This is especially apparent when considered in the light of the final category of spirit, upon which my argument rests.

Principally it is the doctrine of natural moments [280ff] which suggests to Sprigge a leaning towards panpsychism. He believes that natural moments, which are Santayana's ultimate units of existence, are patterned on the intensive mental entities called moments of spirit; and to the extent that this is correct, the resulting cosmology must take on features of panpsychism. It is especially the "forward thrust" and "lateral tensions" of natural moments which, for Sprigge, suggest "pulses of experience or feelings." I shall turn to these shortly. However the genesis of the basic notion of a natural moment itself is well enough explained as Santayana's solution to the classical problem of change. How can real change be represented in terms of static essences? - for nothing other than the intuition of eternal essences is available. Two fairly obvious and widely accepted approaches to this problem are rejected. He first dismisses any single representation which incorporates essences realized at two different times, and synthesizes the flow from earlier to later. Any such synthesis, he alleges, must fail as a description of the real flux. "Actual succession is a substitution, not a perspective." [272] A second popular approach is merely to consider the different essences realized at different instants distributed in a mathematical time. Certainly this appeals only to fixed essences. However once again he finds that the reality of change is lost; a pure time, through which flux moves, has to be seen as a prior medium, a substance, quite detached from the flux itself:

Existence can have no general or stable medium deeper than itself, such as an absolute space or time through which it should flow and which in some respects would control its formation. The flux is itself absolute and the seat of existence. [276-277]

Thus natural moments are meant in part to replace such abstractions as mathematical instants, which he considers to be artificial: "I do not think points or instants are *natural* units."⁴

A natural moment, for Santayana, is any portion of matter realizing some essence, for just that interval of time (moment) during which the essence is realized. With this notion, one need not detach a substantial time from the existential flux; indeed the term "natural moment" itself assigns a temporal name to a material entity. In a sense, however, any representation of change must remain impossible. [282] There is no radical solution to this problem, for the flux of existence is at bottom incomprehensible.

The guiding motive in the formulation of natural moments, then, is not an analogy with moments of spirit, but rather it is an effort to deal in the best possible way with an intractable problem, that of representing physical change. This motivation is clearly present in the pages immediately before natural moments are introduced. [267-280] Now I believe that this explanation extends to the forward and lateral tensions. The tendency of idealists and empiricists to treat laws and generalizations as causes is anathema to Santayana. The flux is self-determined, and he insists that there be some explicit indication of this. The forward tension, "a synthetic symbol and counterpart of transition," [282] resides within that moment, and with lateral tension, firmly establishes the seat of nature's instability within nature itself. "The flux is spontaneous in the part no less than in the whole;" [291] the tensions of natural moments

⁴ This is taken from a passage, which John McCormick has kindly sent me, found in a letter from Naples, October 7, 1931. [Butler Library, Columbia University] I give the passage in its entirety, since Santayana's discussion of natural moments is so brief.

When I say [natural moments] are elements of description, I mean that I don't conceive the flux to be composed of solid temporal blocks, with a click in passing from one to the next. That may be Strong's conception, but although I should say that points and instants are necessary elements of description (geometry is an excellent method of description in regard to the realm of matter) I don't think points or instants are *natural* units. Natural moments, on the other hand, though there need be no click between them (sometimes there is a click, as when a man dies, a man's life being a natural moment) yet supply the only possible, and the most intimate, units composing the flux. For how describe the flux except by specifying some essence that comes into it or drops out of it? And the interval between the coming and going of any essence from the flux of existence is, by definition, a natural moment. Be it observed also that these moments are not cosmic in lateral extension; they are not moments of everything at once: so that when one comes to an end, almost everything in the universe will run on as if nothing had happened. Spring every year and youth in every man are natural moments, so is the passage of any idea or image in a mind: but the change (so momentous in that private transformation) is far from jarring the whole universe, but passes silently and smoothly, removing nothing ponderable and adding nothing in the way of force to the steady transformation of things.

are meant to signal this inherent instability, and to locate it properly.

Even if natural moments are not *patterned* on moments of spirit, Sprigge is correct to observe a kinship between the two; he also notes Santayana's account of where the analogy lies. The forward tension of a natural moment symbolizes an unrest, and the feeling of unrest found in spirit, because it is generated by such a tension in matter, must bear a real analogy to the unfelt unrest of that tension. To Sprigge, this account is somewhat odd, in that the felt unrest in the spirit is ineffectual, and to that extent, the analogy with natural moments is faulty. However for Santayana all knowledge depends on non-literal analogies, which is to say analogies that are useful in some ways, and hopelessly misleading in others. Perhaps the oddness noted here is a general feature of Santayana's epiphenomenalism (as Sprigge seems to suggest), and indeed permeates his whole epistemology.

Assume, then, that there is "some kinship to mental events" on the part of natural moments. Having questioned Santayana's own account of the kinship, Sprigge offers an argument leading from this assumption to a panpsychist position. [see page 5 above] This very general argument turns on generic universals or essences, and the question which of these is shared by the two kinds of moments. At just this point, however, he might better appeal to his admirably clear definition of panpsychism, which hinges on sentience. The question would then become whether or not *sentience* is common to both natural moments and moments of spirit. But a claim that natural moments are sentient is one not supported by the text. The following passage vindicates Sprigge's finding of an analogy between moments of existence and moments of spirit; yet it also vindicates my claim that consciousness is not a part of the analogy:

To assert that the substance of anything, much less of the whole world, was psychic, and to call it mind-stuff, would be inadmissible if we meant that minute but conscious spirits were the stuff of it: we have just seen the manifest impossibility of that. But the phrase becomes legitimate and significant if it serves only to remind us that physical, like spiritual, existence must be intensive, centred in each of its parts, and capable of inner change as well as of collateral reduplication.⁵

This last sentence is typical of the passages Sprigge is questioning. It seems to me that Santayana is here referring to Will, and I have not been able to find any passages which make me doubt this supposition. As noted earlier, Will is quite clearly non-sentient, non-conscious. I harp on this point because, as the above passage indicates, Santayana objects to the use of psychological terms in the description of nature if these involve consciousness; but if consciousness is excluded, he becomes more permissive. Such a result is to be expected from his ontology. He gives to spirit an extremely narrow interpretation, and rejects any panpsychist

⁵ See page 379. The comma following "intensive" is missing in the one-volume edition of RB.

world containing spiritual units of existence, or so I have argued. However the narrow interpretation of spirit permits matter to fill a larger conceptual space. Accordingly, he displays a complementary indifference to those forms of panpsychism which use terms from psychology, but explicitly renounce consciousness as a part of them. So long as such theories provide for real change, they can be seen as viable, if misguided, accounts of the world; they are "vanishing" forms of panpsychism, and almost merit the designation "materialist."

When the elements of the psychic universe are admitted to be unconscious, the distinction from materialism becomes verbal. [378]

There is no doubt that Santayana considers making comparisons between some aspects of our experience and the reality outside. The issue raised by Sprigge concerns the nature of this extrapolation; which aspects are genuinely comparable? Santayana is highly suspicious of analogies whose attraction rests on the clarity of some intuition of essence. The lucidity of a concept, for instance a mathematical time scale, can lure a mind (often a logical mind inclined to philosophy) to impose this structure on the world. Rather than the clear intuitions at the surface of experience, a better indication of the nature of things might be expected from deeper, less distinct stirrings in the soul (such as a sense of restlessness). These will be better signs of Will in us, or of animal faith, since they emanate from deeper levels of the psyche.

Thus we should "discount" many of the inferences we are tempted to make about the world experienced, by comparison with aspects of that experience. Our guide must be the common sense world given to us by animal faith, whose existence we can doubt only at times, if at all. That we are forced to this philosophically embarrassing position is the result of his sceptical analysis of knowledge; but his conclusion is that, on questions of knowledge, we must *start* by accepting the world of our animal faith. In seeking the relation between some aspect of experience and reality, then, the existing world is the starting point, and we ask how the experience best fits in with our beliefs about that world. In his critique of empiricism, Santayana attacks the opposite inclination to infer something about the world from an aspect of experience, and to permit the clarity of some intuition to lead us to question some deep or inevitable belief.

Accordingly to the question of what sort of consciousness might be expected to spring from animal activity, Santayana's answer is that something original and unique can be expected – option 2 at the end of Sprigge's paper, without the option 3a. Santayana believes that the emergence of transcendental centres of experience in nature is a remarkable event which adds something wholly novel to a pre-existing, non-sentient realm of matter.

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George Santayana

The following selection is taken from *George Santayana*, to appear in 1985 in the Twayne United States Authors Series; it is printed by permission of Twayne Publishers, a division of G. K. Hall and Co.

The Second World War found Santayana old but philosophically still vigorous in Italy. Cut off from funds and from his intellectual outlets in the United States, he retired to the safety of a convent in Rome. Though there was considerable interest in the expatriate sage after the arrival in Rome of Allied forces, he never regained much philosophical influence in America. Since his death there has been a slow increase of interest in his work. Many of his better known books are now available in paperback. Graduate students are, once again, writing dissertations on the technical aspects of his philosophy. An increasing number of undergraduate courses utilize his major, and in some cases his posthumously published works. Most important of all, many thoughtful laymen read his writings for their intrinsic beauty as well as the moral enlightenment they convey.

Santayana's intellectual heritage is genuinely cosmopolitan. His works show a complete mastery of the philosophical classics. But his reading was far more extensive than even this. He was thoroughly acquainted with the great works of literature of both East and West. He read voluminously in four or five languages and kept abreast of the best scholarly work of his day. He studied the great works of religion in painstaking detail: his *The Realm of Spirit* shows extensive familiarity with Buddhist and Hindu sources and he turned himself into an expert on the Bible in preparation for his *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*. He was well aware of the scientific developments of his day and formed his philosophy in such a way as to make no claim concerning the physical structure of man or the world. He thought it the function of science to determine the facts about nature as best such facts may be known by man; philosophy and religion were to yield to empirical investigation concerning facts, even though they retained their supremacy in the moral sphere.

In spite of his acquaintance with the broad outline of science, Santayana gladly proclaimed himself "an ignorant man, almost a poet." This is no overstatement or false humility. The heart of science is in its details, and Santayana never had any interest in the narrow specifics of the physical order. He thought that scientific views would come and go with the passage of time. He lacked the mathematical background to comprehend them and the sustaining interest in minutiae to permit him to get absorbed in them. His belief in the autonomy of science functioned like a double edged sword. On the one hand, it served to control the excesses of philosophers in trying to compete with science on the basis of mere speculation or moral demands. On the other hand, however, it placed sharp limits on the scope of science, restricting its valid

application to the sphere of nature alone. By ceding matter to science, Santayana felt liberated from having to attend to the details of either. He felt he could concentrate on the investigation of the moral life.

This relative inattention to detail also shows itself in Santayana's treatment of philosophical themes. In his opinion, philosophy is not the science of careful argument but the art of vision. His attempt was to focus on what he called "the large facts," the main rhythms and requirements of nature as they impact on human life and personality. There are few explicit arguments in his philosophical works. It is not that he paid no heed to carefulness and precision in thought. On the contrary, his philosophical system has a remarkable unity and coherence. It is just that he thought arguments were like the beams that hold up a house; while essential to a sound structure, they are not to be displayed as decoration or as the furniture of rooms. As a result, only the conclusions of his arguments appear in his books. The arguments themselves can be reconstructed, but in his view their only value is utilitarian.

Santayana's philosophical heritage fully reflects his own commitment to philosophy as articulate vision. As a graduate student and in later years, he studied the arguments of others carefully. It is reported that when an impertinent priest attempted to bring Santayana back into the fold by arguments of a Thomist persuasion, the old philosopher quoted him the details of the view from Aquinas in Latin. Much as he was at home with arguments, he felt no temptation to follow those who developed their philosophy in lockstep with the march of reasoning. He felt that arguments could rage forever on each contested principle or view. No philosophical position could ever be supported to the satisfaction of each opposing camp. In the end, everything would hang on our basic principles and personal commitments. It is not that these cannot be criticized; on the contrary, they must be if one's philosophy is to escape the fate of "dreaming in words." But any such critique must itself presuppose some ultimate principles as yet uncriticized. He argues in the first chapter of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* that there is no indubitable starting point, no first principle of criticism. As a result, there can be no certainty and no agreement in philosophy.

It is better, Santayana thinks, if philosophers own up to the true nature of their enterprise and abandon all pretense of scientific precision, evidential adequacy or universal truth. The task of the thinker is to "clean the windows of his soul," to evoke the most general of essences for moral enlightenment. The chief issue, he says in the eloquent Preface to *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, is "the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe." Given the variety in human nature and the immensity of the topic, it is no accident that philosophers fail to agree and fall shy of ultimate truth. The truth itself will depend at least partly on the soul whose windows we must clean. If we take this simple notion to heart, all moral knowledge at once stands revealed as relative and philosophy becomes a mode of self-expression.

These convictions justify Santayana, at least in his own eyes, in

painting with a broad brush. His treatment of philosophical topics may appear sketchy at times; this, he thinks, is due not to lack of care on his part but to the fact that on certain subjects the human mind is not in a position to know much. In his "Apologia Pro Mente Sua" in the Library of Living Philosophers volume devoted to his thought, he says that in decades of thought he has not had much enlightenment on the difficult subject of the relation of the mind to the body. On the issue of the ultimate nature of matter (as an ontological, not a scientific category), he loudly declares that no enlightenment is possible: this ultimate principle of existence is like the whirlwind whose effects we see but whose inner nature is inaccessible to mind.

As a result of his conviction that arguments fail to convince and details are inaccessible or fail to satisfy, many of Santayana's works constitute descriptions and re-descriptions of his system as a whole. The accounts are remarkably consistent throughout. The variations in his expression of the same ideas are rarely at odds with one another; on the contrary, they are helpful in understanding his real intent. But on the whole, later statements tend frequently to be but alternatives to the earlier ones without constituting any real advance. This, once again, may be justified by Santayana's belief that philosophy communicates not by disclosing facts but by evoking visions. In this light, we may think of the alternative descriptions of his system as varied stimuli intended to engage a variety of minds.

This feature of Santayana's philosophy, no less than many others, brings to mind his similarity to Plato. Plato's deepest doctrine was also that philosophical enlightenment could not be taught but only evoked. His impatience with the poets was perhaps a family feud; he himself became a poet the moment he moved past mundane arguments and neared the ultimate. Plato's conviction that we have only myths to convey the deep lessons literal language cannot bare appears to have been generalized by Santayana into a view of all language and thought. For him, language, a human creation, functions as an instrument in the service of cognition and, in the end, of life. It never captures the essence of its object. Language is always symbolic; its adequacy is measured by how well it expresses the thoughts of the speaker or how well it enables us to grasp and use the object it reveals. A description, then, is not like a flashlight which discloses the corner of a room the way it is. It is closer to the vision of the jaundiced man, in which the internal state of the agent and his instrument are inseparably reflected in the object.

Santayana also agrees with Plato that there are real forms or structures without which nothing could exist. Plato thought of these forms as the prototypes of natural kinds and attributes: there was a form of man and a form of dog and a form of oak tree, as well as forms for justice, wisdom and virtue. These forms or universals existed, in Plato's opinion, both as structures and as standards for the objects in our everyday world. Ordinary objects could exist only by "participating in" or borrowing their nature from these eternal, unchanging essences. Yet, at

the same time, existing entities always fell short of fully manifesting the nature of the perfect forms. The measure of the faithfulness with which a changing thing displayed its proper form was at once the measure of its perfection. The aim of each thing inhabiting this twilight world of ours was to become more nearly what it can and ought to be, viz. a perfect thing of its kind or a full embodiment of its form.

Plato thought of these forms as general in nature. There was only one form of man. Each of us participated in this form to a greater or lesser extent. The more nearly we approximated to this ideal of what a man should be, to true humanity, the more perfect we would be. The standards existed eternally and altogether independently of the world or of our minds. If anything, they served as necessary conditions of the existence of ourselves and of the things around us. But nothing we could do would affect them; they were simply forms available for shaping the world, if only the world would adopt them for the purpose.

Santayana studied Plato and Aristotle intensively for a year at Cambridge, when he took a year of leave in 1897. He was deeply impressed by Plato's treatment of universals but at the same time found himself repelled by the moral absolutism into whose service Plato, the social reformer, pressed them. Why should we suppose, Santayana asked himself, that forms are restricted to a small number, each endowed with moral prerogatives? In Plato's dialogue, *Parmenides*, the young Socrates is depicted as balking at the thought that there might be forms for hair and dirt and mud. Why, Santayana demanded to know, should we not say that every actual and every conceivable property and relation and thing has a corresponding form or essence? And, most importantly, why should we suppose that there is only one form of humanity, implying that there is but one manner in which human life may be perfected?

The democratic pluralism Santayana learned from William James showed itself quickly at this crucial juncture in his philosophical development. He could not make himself believe that all human psyches were of one sort, that everyone worthy of the name would have to share identical human values. He found hints even in Plato that human life might find fulfillment in a variety of different ways. In the *Republic*, Plato distinguished three classes of individuals; members of each pursued happiness in their own divergent ways. Persons of desire found fulfillment in the production, consumption and accumulation of worldly goods; persons of courage sought excitement in action and adventure; persons of wisdom gained their satisfaction in knowledge and the attendant well-ordered life. Of course, what Plato gave with one hand he took away with the other: he thought that these types of human beings were themselves aligned in order of ultimate perfection. The person of philosophical wisdom constituted the closest approximation to what a human being should be; the consumer was a poor, distorted actualization of human potentiality. Santayana could not in good conscience believe this. It is not that he had a high regard for the man who spent his life scratching his itches or consuming beyond his needs. But he did have a vivid moral

imagination and this enabled him to place himself in the shoes of others who lived by alien values.

This empathy for alien souls, without a personal identification with their goals, enabled him to appraise others more justly than a fervent moralist. If the essence of humanity is what makes us human, is there no essence that makes us individually who we are? If forms are to be conceived as features or characteristics, no matter how complex, each of us must have a unique essence. Each person must, then, be a perfect exemplification of himself, and if he changes, then a perfect replica of the new essence he assumes.

This single move from the generic essence of mankind to specific essences for individuals radicalizes Santayana's philosophy. For the moment each of us is acknowledged as fully embodying an essence, forms cease to function as standards of perfection. Nothing can serve as a standard if we cannot fail to live up to it; since in at least one sense we cannot fail to be who we are, our form will structure us without providing a guide for action or a goal to reach. On a more careful analysis of the moral life later on, Santayana reintroduces an account of how our natures demand certain actions and of how individual moral failure is possible. But the rejection of Plato's claim that forms are generic at once prepares the ground for Santayana's moral relativism.

It also opens the door to an actual infinity of essences. If each characteristic or feature of every existent is an essence, there is literally no end to the essences there are. We can see how essences must be infinite in number in a variety of ways. If each number is an essence, evidently essences must be infinitely numerous. Similarly, even if there are only a finite number of things in the world, each can be seen to have an infinite number of properties in the following way. No item is identical with any one of its features, *f*. The item is, of course, also not identical with the property of not being identical with *f*. This generates another property and so on, *ad infinitum*. Another way to get to the idea that essences must be infinite may start by viewing the entire history of the world as a monstrously complex essence. Each change in this complex essence, no matter how minute, generates a different total essence. Since essences differ if any of their constituents or the order of their constituents differ, the most insignificant imagined change of the least molecule makes for a different total world-essence. There is no limit to the changes that are conceivable in this way, and each of them yields a slightly different possible world.

Santayana's indebtedness to Plato, then, is extensive. It is by reflecting on the Platonic realm of forms that Santayana came up with two of his most characteristic and most remarkable philosophical views. The infinite realm of essence is conceived by him as enjoying the same ontological status as Plato's realm of forms. Each essence is eternally and changelessly self-identical. Each serves as a possible character of existence, but has a sort of being which is independent of nature and of mind. And Santayana's moral relativism is clearly connected to his

rejection of Plato's view that as a result of generic forms, existence falls into natural species. The proliferation of human natures opens the door to individualism which is as radical as any found in the annals of philosophy.

Santayana's debt to Aristotle is no less evident than the Platonic traces in his thought. The entire tone of Santayana's moral philosophy is Aristotelian. The sharp contrast between moral and intellectual virtue recurs in Santayana in the form of the distinction between the life of reason and the spiritual life. The Greek notion of reason as moderating and harmonizing the passions is prominently present in Santayana's account of the moral life. And the topics treated in Aristotle's great *Nicomachean Ethics* not only recur in a number of Santayana's books, but virtually each discussion of them reflects Aristotle's arguments or conclusions.

Aristotle's influence is most pronounced, however, in the basic categories in terms of which Santayana chose to think. For one, Santayana was satisfied that individual existents were composites of matter and form. The form, of course, was an essence selected for embodiment from among an infinity of alternatives. The matter was conceived by him as the sheer thrust of existence, "the insane emphasis" that accrued to certain essences. Since no essence could render itself or another existent, essences could not account for the raw energy or selective force of the material component. Matter, for Santayana, had no intrinsic properties at all; at any rate, no conceivable property of it could account for the role it plays in the world. Viewed in this light, Santayana's matter closely resembles Aristotle's prime matter or pure potentiality. I say that the two notions closely resemble one another instead of being identical because Aristotle thought of the potential as somehow passive, while Santayana maintains that matter is the sole source of existence and activity. This last disagreement is of central importance for Santayana's metaphysics: it is what makes him a materialist who denies any efficacy to essence and to mind. Apart from this difference, however, Santayana agrees with Aristotle that matter in its purity is the faceless counterpart of form.

Santayana also borrows from Aristotle the concept of activity. Activity in this sense is contrasted with process and differs widely from what we normally understand by the word "action." In its simplest signification it is something we do for its own sake. Since in such cases we aim simply at what we do, there is no distinction between the means and the end we intend, between the doing and the deed that is accomplished. Such activity represents something that is self-contained, something that aims at no product beyond itself. It is on this model that Santayana conceived of mind. Consciousness, he thought, is a dead-end in the causal processes of nature. It is an activity in Aristotle's sense, the second actuality of a natural body. This flowering of human organic processes is both an end-product without further issue and an end-in-itself, and as such intrinsically valuable.

This conception of mind suggests that Santayana's ultimate view of nature was framed not in the terms of modern science but in those of potentialities actualized. He thought of existence simply as actualized potentiality and defined matter as the "indefinite potentiality of all things." There is evidence that he believed causation itself was but a process that converts potentialities into act, albeit in a way that necessarily remains hidden to the mind.

Reflection on this approach to a philosophy of nature might suggest that Santayana failed to profit from the advances of modern science. In a sense, this is absolutely true. In one place he remarks that in his youth there was widespread belief in "sovereign laws" of nature and in the ultimate adequacy of science to discover them. All of this seems to have fallen apart later, following the contributions of Einstein and Heisenberg to physical theory, combined perhaps with a better understanding of the nature of the scientific enterprise. In Santayana's work there is little reference to the findings of science. The scientists in whom he shows an interest, such as Freud, deal largely with psychological matters, matters which are of importance to Santayana because of their bearing on the nature of man. Physical theory interests him very little: he thinks it too far from the central task of philosophy, which is an exploration of the nature of the good life.

But there is an even deeper reason for Santayana's return to what we may think are pre-scientific categories. In the end, science has not succeeded and cannot succeed in revealing to us the mystery of existence. We can learn more and more about the physical structures that surround us and such knowledge is superbly useful for the manipulation of the environment. But it never penetrates below the level of conjunctions and law-like regularities. The bafflement of the primitive man at existence itself, at seeing anything come into being or recede into nothingness, stays with us in spite of everything science tells us about the world. Scientists attempt to show how one type of event causes another by interposing another sort of event between the two; ingesting a poison is supposed to cause death by immobilizing the muscles or the lungs. But what such an account misses is the ultimate mystery that surrounds the generation of anything. No matter how many types of events are interposed between the cause and the effect, the problem of how one can go from the first event to the very next, no matter how close or how similar to it, remains unsolved. How can anything ever give rise to anything else? Though science may provide us with an exhaustive account of the details of change, the ordinary man and the philosopher will end no less baffled by the metaphysical problem of how life and death, coming into being and passing away, how change itself is possible.

The categories of potentiality and actuality are thought by Santayana to be less alien to the average mind than the language of laws and functions employed in the sciences. These categories, frankly interpreted, forever remind us that we do not understand. They are adequate to summarize the patterns and tendencies of human nature and the human

world. Beyond that, they do and pretend to do nothing. This lack of pretense is itself a boon; at least we avoid the temptation of supposing that we can be omniscient or that science will meet all human needs and eliminate the symbolic life of the mind, religion and philosophy. Santayana's return to Aristotelian categories, then, is not an attempt to deny the usefulness or the validity of science. It is, on the contrary, the result of an effort to put science in its proper, human context so that we may celebrate it without illusions and live without becoming its dupes.

This notion of the ultimate metaphysical inadequacy of science reminds one of the attitude of Schopenhauer. In differentiating the physical world of space, time and causal connection from the underlying, primordial world of will, Schopenhauer explicitly limited science to the exploration of the laws of phenomena. The ultimately real world of will was one to which each of us could have internal access. It made for all the change that occurred in the physical world but could itself never be captured by any external method of investigation. Santayana himself flirted with using the term "will" and "primal will" to designate the ultimate generative principle of all things. This is not an unattractive designation; the word "will" suggests just the sort of unpredictable, creative energy that seems to underlie the world. But Santayana clearly disagrees with Schopenhauer on the issue of access to this force; though he thinks that it runs through our bodies, he is convinced that we can have no cognitive contact with it at all. And there is a further disagreement if will is taken too literally or in too mentalistic a way. For Santayana thinks there is little reason to believe that this primordial energy resembles anything conscious or mental. It is gregarious in hurrying from form to form, but it has no purpose, no intelligence, no aim.

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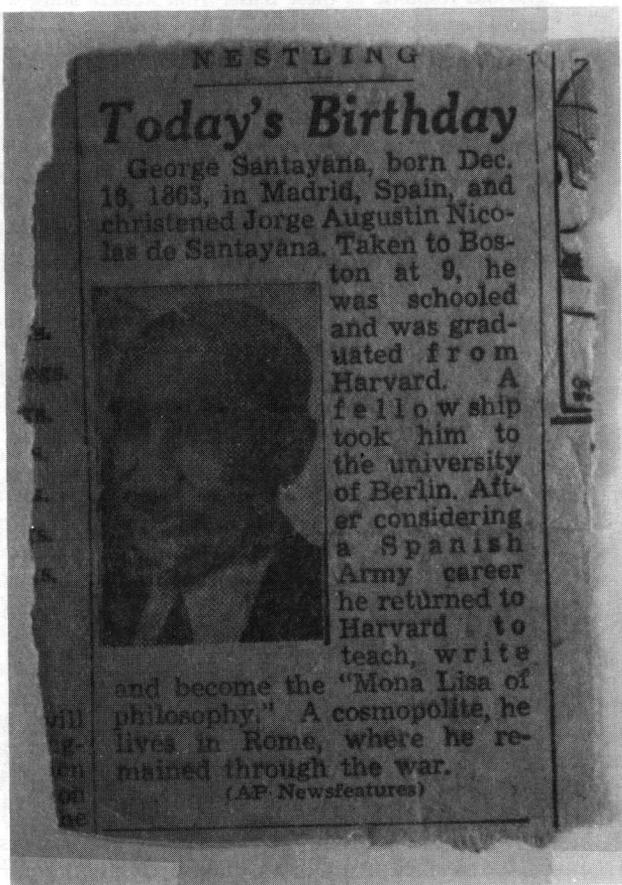
Report on the 1983 Annual Meeting

The Santayana Society celebrated the one hundred and twentieth birthday of George Santayana at its December 1983 meeting in the Sheraton-Boston hotel.

Hilary Putnam of Harvard University opened the program, with greetings from his colleagues of Santayana's university. Next, Francis Sparshott of Victoria College, University of Toronto read a birthday poem. These are printed below.

Then William G. Holzberger of Bucknell University discussed the history of his four-volume edition of Santayana letters. The project was initiated by Daniel Cory, who had previously published selected editions of Santayana letters in 1955 and 1963. Appreciating the care and thoroughness of Holzberger's *The Complete Poems of George Santayana*, Cory requested Holzberger's aid in collecting, editing, and publishing an edition of letters that would be as complete as possible. When Cory died in 1972, the full task was undertaken by Holzberger. Through extensive research, over 2000 letters have been located and prepared for publication. In addition, there are explanatory notes for the letters, that provide valuable source material as well as identifications of persons and issues. The University of Illinois Press has agreed to publish the edition of letters. Holzberger closed his address with quotes from numerous letters illustrating the artistry of Santayana as a master writer.

Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., of the University of Tampa, gave a brief response based on Santayana's own account of three stages of his thought: (1) materialism -- no longer wavering between alternate views of the world, (2) the forms of the good are divergent -- enabling one to overcome moral and ideal provincialism, and



One of the editors found this undated clipping in an old copy of *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* in a Boston second hand book store during the 1983 Meetings.

(3) each form is definite and final -- leading to the view that integrity or self-definition is and remains first and fundamental in morals. These three elements are found in the marginal headings of Chapter XI, *Persons and Places*. The headings have never been published, but they are restored in the critical edition of *Persons and Places* to be published by MIT in 1985.

Champagne was then served, and toasts were offered by John Lachs of Vanderbilt University and by Irving Singer of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. The two toasts also appear below. The audience was delighted with a gracious response to these toasts from Robert Sturgis, a Boston architect, who is a grand-nephew of Santayana. The chairman was Paul G. Kuntz, of Emory University.

Greetings

***to the Santayana Society's Santayana Anniversary Celebration
on behalf of the Harvard Department of Philosophy***

It is a great honor to participate in the celebration of the 120th anniversary of the birth of George Santayana. There is a sort of reflected glory that one feels in celebrating the heroes of our profession. Santayana's glory was a source of pride to American philosophers, and that glory also reflected on Harvard University in a most pleasing way. (We at Harvard have always felt that reflected glory is better than none.) Of course, Santayana was, with James and Royce, a member of the Great Department. On a more personal plane, let me mention that there were three philosophers I read avidly in college who were *not* assigned in any of my courses: Santayana, James and Kierkegaard! It is bitter to reflect that I was trained to think that the appeal of all three was due to something other than a contribution to "philosophy" (and a sad example of the blindness that philosophical factionalism can induce).

It seems to me that there is something highly paradoxical about Santayana's present position in philosophy. He was, in many ways, far ahead of his time; yet he has not been acknowledged or "rediscovered". Like many philosophers of our own time he was (or said he was) a materialist ("I am a materialist -- apparently the only one living", he wrote ruefully) and, if not quite an "eliminationist" with respect to the mental, he was (or said he was) an epiphenomenalist. Why he remains deified rather than studied is a question to which I shall return. The fact is that even in his own time Santayana was not universally appreciated. James once described Santayana's philosophy as "the perfection of rottenness".¹

The key to the ambivalence (in James' case it was more than ambivalence) seems to me to be Santayana's enormous *purity*.² Purity, of

¹ *The Letters of William James*, ed. by his son Henry James, Vol. II., p. 122 (Boston, 1920).

² Paul Kuntz has suggested to me (in a letter) that the temperamental disagreement between James and Santayana is, at bottom, the disagreement between an active "Protestant" sensibility and a contemplative "Catholic" one. What I call "purity" here is closely related to the ideal of contemplation. Kuntz's view may be confirmed by James' own description of the philosophic disagreement at Harvard in 1900 ("... these are so many religions, ways of fronting life, and worth fighting for"; letter cited note 1.)

all virtues, troubles us because it casts such an unflattering light on the way we mostly live our lives. It may seem odd to describe Santayana as exemplifying purity: we tend to think of the author of "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" as aristocratic (a bit of a "hidalgo"), worldly, in short anything but *pure*. But the appearance of worldliness is superficial, in Santayana's case. (Another philosopher who possessed this quality of purity to an astonishing degree was Rudolf Carnap. The shining simplicity with which Carnap could ask, "We are all concerned to discover the truth, aren't we?").

The depth of Santayana's commitment to the ideal of purity in life and thought is everywhere apparent on a close reading of his work. It appears in his poetry (of "the flickering colors of the soul", he writes, "Bid them not to stay; for wisdom brightens as they fade away"), and, movingly, in his novel *The Last Puritan*. Let me recall for you the scene in which Oliver, the protagonist, reacts to the realization that he is not going to achieve anything in the way of ambition, worldly success, or even finding a wife. Oliver reports an enormous sense of relief, of a burden removed, and Santayana puts into his mind the thought that blessings come disguised as misfortunes: "if only we do not look backward to the burning city of our vanity". And let me recall for you how many cities of vanity Santayana himself walked away from (even if they weren't exactly in flames): Harvard University, the Great Department, the United States - to end by literally cloistering himself, living in a convent (while still a materialist and an atheist!). And let me also call attention to another work of this "materialist": the remarkable *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* - one of the first, and arguably the greatest, appreciations of the New Testament as epic literature. Perhaps no philosopher since Spinoza (also a materialist, if not an atheist) has been more wholeheartedly devoted to the ideal of pure contemplation than George Santayana.

Another reason Santayana remains to be rediscovered and reappropriated may be the difficulty of his writing. Like James he is a very difficult writer who is not appreciated as such. Henny Wenkart³ has suggested that his deliberate use of the language of high metaphysics ("realms of being", "essences") to express ideas in fact antithetical to the high metaphysical tradition is a kind of "deconstruction", and that (like Wittgenstein ?) he wished to transcend the "metaphysics/anti-metaphysics" controversy, rather than "do" metaphysics.

However, this is a Birthday Celebration, and I was not invited to give a lecture but to deliver greetings! Speaking now, as I was invited to do, "on behalf of the Harvard Department of Philosophy", let me say that my colleagues and I are immensely pleased that the Santayana Society has seen fit to honor George Santayana on the 120th anniversary of his birth and in this city. Our pride is that of grandchildren when they see their

³ "What Santayana Meant by 'Moral': an Example of his Use of the Method of Ironic Redefinition", delivered at the New York Bicentennial Symposium of Philosophy, 1976. Also, "Santayana's Linguistic Parody of the Metaphysicians" (unpublished).

grandfather honored. We cannot claim that he would have approved of us, motley crew that we are, but I think that we all share some of Santayana's impatience with received ways of doing and viewing philosophy. May the study of Santayana's work long continue, and may we all partake, to some extent at least, in the purity of Santayana's spirit.

Hilary Putnam

Harvard University

First Toast

I invoke the spirit of George Santayana! honored guest, leave your friends with whom you are in eternal dialogue in limbo and join us in our celebration!

There are two essences that bear the name of Santayana. One is a trope whose embodiment began a hundred and twenty years ago. The other is the complex and well-structured essence that was the object of his deliberate thought.

There is much to admire in George Santayana, the person. To be sure, he was monkish and more lonely than flesh should be. But the man had antique virtues, knew the meaning of generosity, discipline and excellence. He understood what we cannot seem to learn, that philosophy is a high profession which demands unity of thought and soul, that practice of our principles without which we remain a band of pedants and sophists.

And yet, because there are many good persons and only a very few fine philosophers, we celebrate not Santayana the psyche but Santayana the pure spirit. Thought is private reflection on the world; mastery of it is a matter largely of depth of insight and scope of vision, and only minimally of cleverness in argument. Each time philosophy deteriorates to adolescent combativeness, setting theses to defend and to attack, we can turn to Santayana for due perspective on our petty exertions. His work is a permanent reminder that loss of sanity need not accompany the growth of mind, that technique is no substitute for sound judgment, and that we can see whole without absurd pretensions.

In a world too ready to tell us what to do and how to think, Santayana is a priceless exemplar of autonomy. Skepticism, a measure of disillusionment, and distance are the only safeguards against the contagion of public moods -- of fashion -- in social opinion and philosophy. Like the ideal teacher, Santayana never inculcates, only invites us to search and get our own results.

To honor him, therefore, we need not share his views. We must simply clean the windows of our soul and observe the world with candor and with courage. The essence that is his philosophy will then shine in the realm of truth, and if not, then at least in our souls as an object of exquisite grace.

I raise my glass to the two Santayanas! May we learn from the one's antique virtues and the other's modern thought!

John Lachs

Vanderbilt University

Second Toast

I am very happy to be with you at this celebration of Santayana's 120th birthday. One hundred and twenty is indeed a round and glorious figure. But in the infinite pluralism of the realm of essences, all other numbers have equal importance -- for instance, 121, 122, and so forth. It would be both suitable and felicitous if we could celebrate Santayana's birthday every year. I offer that as a proposal for the future.

In Ficino's Academy in Florence, Plato's birthday was celebrated annually on a day in November, although no one knew the exact date on which Plato was born. Santayana was born on December 16, two weeks earlier than the day we have chosen. Nevertheless it is fitting that our celebration should occur in conjunction with meetings of the American Philosophical Association. Although the reaches of his mind were international and ecumenical, Santayana must be considered an American philosopher of his generation.

At the same time, we should recognize that for twenty-five years after his death -- in other words, until quite recently -- Santayana's works were largely neglected by professional philosophy in America as well as by the popular culture. A few years ago I was astounded to see his photograph [see illustration on page ii above] in the office of one of my colleagues. When I asked him where he had found such an interesting shot of Santayana, he replied, "Oh, is *that* who the old man is. I don't know how it got here. It was in the office when I first arrived." He quickly gave it to me, firmly, as if eager to emancipate himself from the threatening presence.

I have cherished the photo ever since, not only because I feel that I have rescued it, but also because Santayana is shown dressed in bathrobe and pajamas. The one time I visited him, in August 1950, my wife and I were touring Italy on bicycles and I was wearing shorts. When Santayana opened the door to his room in the sanatorium of the English Blue Nuns in Rome, his first words were: "I am so glad that you are dressed informally. For I am always, as you see, in my pajamas."

The extent to which the popular culture ignores Santayana's work is evident from the fact that his once best-selling novel *The Last Puritan* does not exist in an inexpensive edition. His ideas survive mainly in a few well-turned epigrams, such as the famous line from *Reason in Common Sense*: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." These words appeared in large letters on a placard just behind the altar in Jonestown, Guyana. After the massacre they were visible in

photographs of the site that appeared in newspapers. They were, in fact, the only text to be seen.

This desecration of Santayana's message, as well as the unfriendliness toward his philosophy in professional circles, may soon be rectified. The mere existence of this Society is a step forward. The collection of Santayana's letters, which William Holzberger has just described, will have an effect; and above all, the great edition of the complete works, which will be coming out for the next ten years or so, can well exert an enormous influence upon many different kinds of audiences. In the universities Santayana's philosophy has managed to endure through the dedicated efforts of men like John Lachs, Paul Kuntz, Morris Grossman, and Corliss Lamont (who could not attend this celebration but asked me to convey his cordial greetings to the Santayana Society). They have trained a few scholars in the next generation, such as Herman Saatkamp, the editor-in-chief of the new edition. I now see the possibility of a major rebirth of academic and philosophic interest in Santayana's thought.

My expectation is partly based on healthy changes that have occurred in American philosophy during the last few years. More than at any time since Santayana's death, work is once again being done in the kind of humanistic philosophy that Santayana supremely represents. By "humanistic philosophy" I mean philosophy that addresses questions about the nature and quality of human experience, about problems of living a good life, of creating or discovering values and expressing them in action as well as through works of art. In Santayana's time the subject-matter would have been called "morals" -- the French still use the word *moralité* in this way. It includes what philosophers nowadays call normative ethics. It is best investigated by thinkers who are at home in all the areas of the humanities -- in literature, history, and the arts as well as in the broadest spectrum of philosophical speculation.

In this realm of the intellect Santayana's contribution is most outstanding, and, I think, superior to the work of any other American philosopher. I do not wish to minimize the importance of his achievements in other branches of philosophy -- in ontology, epistemology, technical aesthetics -- but Santayana's greatness as a humanistic philosopher is what I admire most of all. On this memorable occasion I raise my glass and propose this toast as a gesture of homage to that aspect of his genius.

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Massachusetts Institute of Technology

SANTAYANA

The ocean's peace deceives. Our empty canvas
drifts into drought, the wheel betrays that helmsman
who cleared the mouths of heresy, the whirlpools
of hesitation.

The Middle Sea, tonic of ancient gamuts,
rang his heart home; but loud above its burden
he heard the reef's white noise. Ironic backgrounds
cancelled his cadence --

a vast blue ocean, the green earth beyond it
heavy with voices and an unlearned wisdom.
His father and his mother lost those islands
and left them empty.

Avila bore him, but could never hold him;
Spain was not Spain enough, clear streams turned westward
out of the hills and sought through devious deltas
a grey Atlantic.

His spirit on the waves mapped antique orders,
checkerboard essences he had no faith in:
animal mistrust ran its hot eraser
round the wax contours.

Squeezed between James and Royce, those firm believers,
his mind slipped down the corridors of Harvard,
a citrus pip between the grubby fingers
of Yankee know-how.

Writing in Rome, his pen ran blue with Boston:
steadfast and classical, like all romantics,
kept for his core a mad, dramatic wholeness
put to good uses.

I saw him mantled in the shawls of age,
Don Quixote sane....Odysseus left Calypso
to farm in Ithaca. Trees round his grave bear
lemons and olives.

Francis Sparshott

ANNOUNCEMENT

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

SANTAYANA SOCIETY

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ANNUAL MEETING

Chair: **John Lachs**
Vanderbilt University

Categories of the Four Orders:
Revisiting Santayana's Realms of Being
Paul G. Kuntz
Emory University

Orders and Categories
in the Metaphysics of Justus Buchler
Beth J. Singer
Brooklyn College

8:00 p.m. 29 December
Murray Hill Suite A
New York Hilton Hotel

BIBLIOGRAPHIC CHECKLIST

SECOND 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. The following articles, reviews, and books are classified only according to their year of publication. Readers with further information or corrections are invited to send these to Herman J. Saatkamp, Department of Philosophy, University of Tampa, Tampa, Florida 33606.

A special note of thanks is extended to David Wapinsky who has undertaken an extensive search for additional bibliographical material. His listing will be included in the 1985 *Bulletin*.

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The Santayana Edition

Persons and Places, the first volume of the edition, is to be published in 1985 by MIT Press. It is a significant editing achievement representing five years of extensive research and intensive editing.

Unlike many editing projects, the volume will be substantially different from any previously published versions. It restores significant passages that had been omitted from all prior publications including lengthy sections on Spinoza, John Russell, Lionel Johnson, and members of Santayana's American family, as well as 718 marginal headings. All this material was part of Santayana's holograph and was deleted from other publications for a variety of reasons including: Santayana's wish that portions be published only after his death, publishers' sensitivity about potential lawsuits, printing and production convenience, and a general desire to "soften" some of Santayana's remarks. Restoring these passages provides the first unexpurgated version of Santayana's autobiography and thereby the first chance for Santayana to speak for himself.

The volume will also have a different "look" than any previously published versions. Restoring Santayana's marginal headings throughout the text gives an appearance to each page that is found in most of Santayana's published works but was omitted in the autobiography, and of course the marginal headings also provide valuable information and often an indication of Santayana's tone. Santayana's British spelling has been restored as well as his idiosyncratic use of certain punctuation, and there will be numerous photographs published with the text. All in all, the thrust of this volume is to produce a work that is as close to Santayana's final intentions as possible.

The volume will also include extensive supporting material. Richard C. Lyon has written an introduction that is, in itself, a significant event in Santayana scholarship. In addition to providing insight into the life and work of George Santayana, the Introduction enables one to understand the literary place of *Persons and Places* as an autobiography. There is a

Textual Commentary explaining the editorial principles employed and the decisions made. The editorial apparatus includes a variants list, emendations list, notes to the text, and discussions of adopted text. Also, there is a section identifying persons mentioned in the autobiography as well as a genealogy of Santayana's Spanish and American families. And there is an extensive index.

Work on Volume II, *The Sense of Beauty*, is on schedule and publication is expected in 1986. The introduction is by Arthur C. Danto.

Work on Volume III, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, is also on schedule with publication planned for 1987. Joel Porte is the author of the introduction.

Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr.

University of Tampa