

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the  
Santayana  
Society*

No. 21  
Fall 2003



# Bulletin of the Santayana Society

No. 21 FALL 2003

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	i	Table of Contents
	ii	Announcement
<i>John R. Shook</i>	1	The Possibility of an Empiricist Naturalism: Dewey and Santayana
<i>Richard M. Rubin</i>	8	The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare: Dewey and Santayana On Shakespeare and Religion
	14	The Bulletin and other Websites
<i>David A. Dilworth</i>	15	Santayana's Review of Dewey's <i>Experience and Nature</i> : Pivotal Expression of a Philosophy of Living Nature and Vivacious Spirit
<i>Chris Skowronski</i>	24	Santayana Read from a Perspective of Polish Post-Communism
<i>Angus Kerr-Lawson</i>	31	Two Philosophical Psychologists
<i>Marriane S. Wokeck Kristine W. Frost</i>	38	The Santayana Edition
<i>Kristine W. Frost</i>	39	Bibliographical Checklist: Nineteenth Update
	42	Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

*Overheard in Seville*, which appears annually, is formatted and composed for typesetting at the University of Waterloo's Graphic Services, and is published by Indiana University - Purdue University Indianapolis.

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## ANNOUNCEMENT

*The Santayana Society*  
2003  
ANNUAL MEETING

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.

### Speakers

*Michael Hodges*  
Vanderbilt University  
"A Free Man's Worship:  
Santayana and Bertrand Russell on Transcendence"

*Stephen Faison*  
Vanderbilt University  
"The Notion of Dialogue  
in the Works of George Santayana"

*Herman J. Saatkamp Jr*  
Stockton College of New Jersey  
"Reflections of Twenty-Six Years  
with the Santayana Edition"

### Chair

*Angus Kerr-Lawson*  
University of Waterloo

7:00 - 10:00 P.M. 29 December  
*Grant*  
Washington Hilton Hotel

# The Possibility of an Empiricist Naturalism: Dewey and Santayana

John Dewey and George Santayana were the outstanding defenders of philosophical naturalism during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Yet neither recognized the other's philosophy as a genuine naturalism.<sup>1</sup> The most severe accusation leveled at the other was the harboring of Cartesian assumptions, infecting naturalism with psychological subjectivity. Dewey distrusted Santayana's realms of spirit and essence, and Santayana deplored Dewey's perspectival empiricism. Yet each philosopher regarded his own naturalism as the best way to completely exorcize Cartesian ghosts. Their philosophies compete still for the future of naturalism (and also challenge the reductive materialism dominant after their deaths), but whose philosophy should prevail? Examining their views on experience and nature is a good place to start. Their contentious debates should not prevent us from seeking common ground, since there may be more agreement than either was able to appreciate.

For both Dewey and Santayana, along with Charles Peirce and William James, the primary issues that philosophy must confront revolve around the issues crucial to viability of naturalism and of empiricism. They both deliberately took a contrary stand against Cartesian rationalism and dualism, starting their rebellion by adopting three anti-Cartesian principles. Dewey and Santayana agreed with empiricism's epistemological principle that knowledge arises solely from human experience. Furthermore, they agreed with realism's metaphysical principle that there is an external reality whose existence is not dependent on mind. They also agreed with naturalism's biological principle that the study of human intelligence must start from the fact that human beings are organisms growing and surviving in a natural environment. But after these mutual agreements, discord erupts quickly. Three philosophical inquiries, legacies from Descartes, are discussed in this essay. First, can perceptual experience directly apprehend its external object? Second, could experience be in any sense natural? Third, are meanings in the natural world? Dewey defended affirmative answers to all three questions, and understood (or misunderstood) Santayana to be denying all three questions. If Santayana must indeed take the opposed stand on these three questions, their naturalisms cannot be fully reconciled.

The first inquiry tests direct realism. Dewey, like James, rejected consciousness as an ontological reality, arguing that objects in perception are not subjectively internal mental entities. The only naturalistic alternative, Dewey held, is the position that external physical objects are directly and immediately had in experience. There is a price to be paid for this kind of empiricism to avoid phenomenalism and positivism, and Dewey paid it willingly. This empiricism must adopt the view that perspectival and relational qualities (like displayed color or apparent shape) are just as naturally real as intrinsic and non-relational qualities. It is notoriously easy to demonstrate how perception must fail to apprehend an external object (and thus apprehend indirectly through representations) *if* we premise that the object's "real" properties are fixed and independent of context. However, that premise could not be the conclusion of empirical observation, but only adopted *a priori*; so Dewey concluded that an *empiricist* naturalism must be contextual and perspectival. Santayana took notice of

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<sup>1</sup> This essay is a substantially revised version of a paper delivered at the 2002 Santayana Society meeting in Philadelphia. I am grateful to the meeting organizers and participants, and especially to Larry Hickman and Herman Saatkamp, Jr. for their encouragement and suggestions.

Dewey's contextualism — and summarily judged Dewey's naturalism to be only "half-hearted." Santayana clearly expected a mature naturalism to overcome any entanglement or dependency on so limited and transient a thing as experience. To endorse perspective and context amounted to conceding subjectivism for Santayana. Dewey disagreed, arguing that immediate, direct empiricism is the only way to defeat Cartesian rationalism, subjectivism, and skepticism. In Dewey's view, direct experience is the direct opposite of subjectivism, and additionally rescues empiricism from skepticism.

Dewey's contextual empiricism, while fallibilistic, abhorred skepticism. Dewey took seriously the key epistemological problem of representationalism's inherent instability, depicting it on a knife's edge wavering between solipsistic skepticism and idealism. It is indeed difficult to maintain realism in an empiricist fashion after denying the possibility of having any direct experience of reality. Since upholding realism though rationalist methods was unpalatable for both Dewey and Santayana, they had to answer whether empiricism and representationalism were compatible. Dewey found them incompatible: knowledge of the representationalist's external reality is not possible since no inner idea can ever be verified, and whether an idea even meaningfully refers to any reality is unknowable. Santayana likewise had nothing but scorn for Cartesian inner mental ideas, most noticeably expressed in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923). Dewey could only admire Santayana's rough treatment of subjectivism, as he demonstrated how its skepticism collapses into a solipsism of the present. By rejecting subjectivism, was Santayana now declaring his acceptance of direct perception and immediate empiricism? What a turnabout that would be! This, after all, is the same Santayana who rejected William James's radical empiricism, declared consciousness and thought to be non-material in *Reason in Common Sense* (1905), and dismissed naive realism's defense of direct perception during the 1910s.<sup>2</sup> No, Santayana had been consistently clear: perception's secondary qualities of colors, sounds, tastes, etc., are not in the enviroing natural world.

But what about Santayana's "Three Proofs of Realism" (1920) and the conclusion of *Scepticism and Animal Faith*? Santayana's illustration of the child reaching for the moon, not for his perception of the moon, is far more poetic and powerful than any story about a lecturer dramatically exposing his own hand. Santayana's moral is that we are realists when interpreting others' behavior — why not be similarly charitable in our own case? Santayana's "animal faith" is the instinctive and automatic confidence that our dealings are with the world's objects and not with mere inner ideas. Therefore, might we conclude, Santayana's animal faith in natural things is Dewey's direct perception and immediate empiricism. After all, Santayana's phenomenological account of what perception is like hardly differs from Dewey's meaning of "experience." Could Dewey have seen this?

Dewey read in the concluding chapters of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* many passages like the following, admirably expressing the standpoint of immediate empiricism and direct realism:

...the substance in which I am proposing to believe is not metaphysical but physical substance. It is the varied stuff of the world which I meet in action — the wood of this tree that I am felling, the wind that is stirring its branches, the flesh and bones of the man who is jumping out of the way. Belief in substance is not imported into animal perception by

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<sup>2</sup> See Santayana, "The Coming Philosophy," *Journal of Philosophy* 11 (1914): 449-463, and "Literal and Symbolic Knowledge," *Journal of Philosophy* 15 (1918): 421-444.

language or by philosophy, but is the soul of animal perception from the beginning, and the perpetual deliverance of animal experience.<sup>3</sup>

Elsewhere Santayana also agrees with Dewey that perception is not a passive registering of qualities unadulterated by the organism's own activity. Nothing in perception could serve as an epistemologically pure given for foundational certainty. Santayana consistently rejected the "myth of the given" and he instead pursued a sophisticated theory of knowledge through symbols. Since Santayana could not be justly accused of taking ideas to be substantial entities, much less simplistic representational copies, his theory of signs is no traditional dualistic approach. Nevertheless, Dewey remained unconvinced that, despite appearances, Santayana's notion of animal faith overlaps his own direct and immediate realism.

It was Santayana's theory of significance and meaning which particularly aroused Dewey's suspicion of Cartesian subjectivism. Signs are of, but not in, the natural world, according to Santayana. Santayana found empiricism and indirect realism compatible, by arguing that animal faith authorizes the philosophical position that signs are *about* material entities without also *being* material entities. Signs cannot be substantial efficacious substances, lest they lose their genuine function. Transcendentalizing philosophers mistakenly take the symbols of things to be more real than the things themselves:

The images of sense and science will not delude me if instead hypostatizing them, as those philosophers did the terms of their dialectic. I regard them as graphic symbols for home and the way there. That such external things exist, that I exist myself, and live more or less prosperously in the midst of them, is a faith not founded on reason but precipitated in action, and in that intent, which is virtual action, involved in perception. This faith, which it would be dishonest not to confess that I share, does no violence to a sceptical analysis of experience; on the contrary, it takes advantage of that analysis to interpret this volatile experience as all animals do and must, as a set of symbols for existences that cannot enter into experience, and which, since they are not elements in knowledge, no analysis of knowledge can touch—they are in another realm of being.<sup>4</sup>

There has been no sharp reversal towards direct perception, despite the phenomenology of animal faith. In perception we are dealing, not with natural objects, but signs of diverse kinds. Interestingly, Santayana shares with Dewey (and Peirce and James) the position that most of our experiences are not instances of knowledge. Santayana's account of our intuition of essences (he sometimes talks about 'data') should not trouble a Deweyan pragmatist, although Dewey himself accused Santayana of subjectively hypostatizing to "discover" essences. An immediate empiricist must have, as Dewey did, a category of 'data' which can be used in the process of knowing but are not themselves known.

Although there is insufficient space here to properly discuss Santayana's theory of signs and knowledge, we can see why Santayana was not impressed by Dewey's skeptical worries over indirect realism. Santayana held that our ideas of reality do not have to mirror or resemble any features of reality, much less be identical with them, so asking for verification by checking up on correspondence is irrelevant. Knowledge of nature is symbolic and not any sort of copy. So long as there is an alternative explanation for the "adequacy" of our ideas to their physical objects, Santayana's indirect realism is immune from the verification problem. Santayana did offer an explanation for the adequacy of ideas to reality, which depicts the psyche's functionings generating patterns of spiritual intuitions. If there could be an "indirect"

<sup>3</sup> Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), p. 201.

<sup>4</sup> Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, pp. 106-107.

form of pragmatism, it is Santayana's theory of knowledge, as knowledge can be adequate to our interactions with reality only through a passively indirect route.

Dewey's "immediate" empiricism, from Santayana's viewpoint, fails to appreciate the real nature of signs and threatens to return philosophy to phenomenism. What can be said in Dewey's defense? Immediacy in Dewey's sense primarily meant that the perceptual experience is not an inner state of consciousness pointing outwards towards a physical object never in experience. The perceived object is "immediately" and not "mediately" in experience, and hence the object is what it is experienced to be. This claim caused a great deal of confusion for his readers, because dual senses of "immediacy" were available. Some experiences are immediate in second sense, that they are not relationally linked with anything else (such as another experience, or some physical object). But Dewey's immediate empiricism explicitly holds that most, if not all, perceptions are relationally linked. If we recall Dewey's direct realism, then we can grasp why Dewey held that external things are relationally linked to other things, things either present in the same experience or potentially in future experience.

Dewey well understood that this theory of natural relations is quite incoherent for the tradition of Cartesian/Kantian epistemology, which instead holds that relations are the responsibility of the active mind, not of passive natural things. Natural relations are also impossible for the sort of sensationalistic empiricism grounded on nominalistic materialism, which was the only living form of empiricism when Dewey and Santayana began their careers. Dewey, like James, wanted nothing to do with nominalistic empiricism, save for the innocent admission that the qualities of experience are probably never exactly alike. Dewey and Santayana did agree on rejecting natural necessity, holding that necessity is a feature of logical relations, not natural relations. However, Santayana had great difficulty finding any real relations in initial perception. Hegelians like Royce made their careers from arguing how atomized ideas could never produce lived experience, thus requiring an actively synthesizing mind. James's response was to question whether experience even at the most basic level is ever so atomized, and Dewey followed this radical empiricist approach.

Santayana took a very different route, bypassing the Cartesian/Kantian heritage, by questioning whether consciousness should be responsible for producing anything. If consciousness never is required to do anything, to make any difference anywhere, then disconnected intuitions are no trouble at all, so long as Santayana's account of intuitions matches the phenomenology of lived experience. And we could question that match. But Santayana's ability to challenge to the Hegelians only requires that spirit be relieved of the duty to make anything happen. And that is exactly what Santayana does, by carefully defining matter and spirit so that only matter does anything, through mechanistic causality. Spirit is the realm of intuited essences and contemplated forms. It is a condition of their meaningfulness that everything in the realm of spirit be utterly impotent. Dewey, like Peirce and James, could never agree that meanings are impotent. Thus the disagreement between Dewey and Santayana must include the question of the nature of meaning. To repeat, this is a different issue from any disagreement they had over essences themselves. Even on Deweyan principles, no objection could be adequately raised to Santayana's realm of essence, since pragmatism also needs the logical category of terms. Dewey's objections to Santayana's theory of meaning rather centers on the role of intuited essences in the alleged realm of spirit.

Dewey's philosophy, like James's, held that relations are immediately present in ordinary experience, and thus no postulation of a hidden mental synthesis of atomic impressions is empirically justifiable. Dewey grounded his theory of knowledge on a direct realism of natural relations. He then added the principle that the intellectual

aspect of an experience of a thing is precisely its capacity to suggest another now-absent thing which is potentially within future experience. Taken together, the three principles of direct realism, natural relations, and cognitive suggestiveness is the core of Dewey's theory of meaning and value. Having satisfactorily accounted for natural meaning without using a separate unnatural activity of mind or ontological consciousness, Dewey did not need a transcendent theory of meaning. Dewey refused to explicitly affirm that the object of an idea must transcend experience, because he saw such a doctrine as a revival of the absurd Kantian thing-in-itself. Dewey still felt free to use the term "experience" in a naturalized manner, only standing for a portion or field of nature having an organism at one focus and an object of attention at the other focus. Dewey's empiricist naturalism adds a naturalized empiricism to an epistemological empiricism, holding that experience is naturally real *and* the source of all knowledge. To say that meanings are in experienced natural objects, as Dewey claimed, is at once to claim that meaning cannot attach to forever transcendent entities, *and* to claim that natural objects have meaning, not just the experience of them. To a typical realist, this dual claim is incoherent: a real object, if it had its own meaning, would have that meaning independently, regardless of whether it was ever experienced. Alternatively, a realist could take the opposite position, as Santayana did, that natural entities are inherently meaningless, because only spirit can bind together intuitions into meanings. Dewey pointedly noticed that for Santayana existence is meaningless, in his review of *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. Having decided that the material world is inherently meaningless, how could Santayana do otherwise than locate everything humanly significant and valuable in the realm of spirit?

Santayana's indirect realism therefore doubly defends the realm of consciousness or "spirit" and its intuitions of essences as a distinct ontological reality. Spirit is the realm of consciousness, what we assuredly have all the time while particular natural objects may come and go; and spirit is the realm of meaning, that gives human life its aesthetic flavor and moral value. Santayana often argues as if defending the realm of spirit was primarily for the sake of protecting secondary qualities like colors and sounds (qualia, in updated terminology) but that is only a minor corollary. Questioning the existence of qualia, the sport of contemporary philosophers of mind, could not by itself open any gap between Dewey and Santayana. Although Dewey protested against an ontologically separate mind, Santayana would not accuse Dewey of *eliminating* phenomenal qualities. Qualities may remain after an ontological consciousness has gone — but for Santayana, extracting substantial consciousness leaves only qualities of the thinnest sort. For James and Dewey, extracting substantial consciousness leaves qualities of things where they are found — in natural things. Qualities are natural features of contextually transacting natural objects of sufficient complexity. But Santayana did not consider "natural qualities" to be a viable option. Hence Santayana accused James and Dewey of holding that "nothing but the immediate are real" in the sense that only the Humean menagerie of fleeting phenomena are real. Santayana thus rejected immediate empiricism as hostile to a robust naturalism, and specifically accused James and Dewey of a psychological fallacy of converting reference to things into reference to ideas. Propping up immediate qualities without any substantial reality behind them is precisely the empiricist's game, from Santayana's perspective, and it is a game only. Real things must be more than their functions in phenomenal experience, and natural things are not just the sum of the perspectives which can be had of them. Let the phenomenal world be a world, Santayana says; but such a world is only a foreground, and a foreground requires at least a background. How can an ontological empiricist conceive of the background? Only in essences, decides Santayana, and that is enough to show how the

empiricist illicitly erects essences into existences. But matters are even worse for the empiricist. A genuine conception of *nature* really is neither of foreground nor of background, as Santayana declares in his critique of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*.<sup>5</sup> Nature must be self-contained and complete without being relative to any portion or point of view.

Dewey's reply emphasizes how his version of direct realism is hardly stuck at the surface level, since experience can penetrate into nature's depths. But this reply really does nothing to answer Santayana's complaint. Santayana easily grants that the phenomenal world can be *a* world — Santayana locates it in the realm of spirit. The real question is whether the phenomenal world is *the* natural world, and Dewey's reply does not necessarily establish their equivalence. Following Santayana's difficulties over "immediate" empiricism, Dewey assumed that Santayana's critique is directed only at an alleged subjective phenomenalism. But Santayana's critique goes deeper, to the fundamental question of whether an immediate empiricist philosophy can be a naturalism. On Santayana's preferred definitions, they are incompatible. But how do things stand from Dewey's viewpoint? Santayana was unprepared to recognize Dewey's contextual naturalism as a viable option. Unwilling to locate the secondary qualities of experience in the natural world, they must be non-existent and private to each human spirit. Experience must be subjective in at least this one sense, since each psyche generates its own intuitions. Admittedly, the role that Santayana required for the psyche was not very different from the role that the nervous system played for Dewey. The organic functioning of the nervous system is necessary for experience, and such functioning should not be reductively identified with experience. Where precisely was the source of their disagreement?

Dewey accused Santayana of psychologizing philosophy by assuming (falsely) that the psyche's activities *alone* are responsible for experience, effectively isolating experience and its signs from anything beyond the organism. For Dewey, it is not merely the nervous system's activities that give rise to experience, but the nervous system's activities in concert with the natural processes of the surrounding environment. That is why, for Dewey, experience is not of the internal changes within — experience is of the entire context of transacting natural objects, of which the organism is only one. Dewey's empirically naturalistic claim that experience is *of* nature therefore converges completely with his naturalistically empirical claim that experience is *in* nature. The reason why experience is another name for a portion of nature with an organism at one focus is because experience arises only where an organism's nervous system is *responding* to the surrounding nature. Meaningful experience, and hence values and ideals as well, must be about nature as well as in nature, and therefore meanings can be (partly) responsible for creating changes of nature. This transactional and ecological theory of meaning goes a long way towards explaining how Dewey's philosophy permits purposeful experience to affect nature, offering a solution to the Cartesian and epiphenomenalist puzzle of agency and freedom.

Dewey labeled Santayana's philosophy as a "naturalistic idealism," for its complete isolation of ideals from nature. Dewey took a functionalist approach to values and ideals, holding that their meaningfulness possesses teleological efficacy (in a biological, not Hegelian, sense) in experience since they lead action towards intended goals. Dewey therefore regarded Santayana's realms as unnaturally and paradoxically preventing meanings from affecting a natural world which is conceivable only through essences.

<sup>5</sup> Santayana, "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," *Journal of Philosophy* 22 (1925): 678-679.

No modern thinker has pointed out so persuasively as Santayana that "every phase of the ideal world emanates from the natural," that "sense, art, religion, society express nature exuberantly." And yet unless one reads him wrong, he then confounds his would-be disciples and confuses his critics by holding that nature is truly presented only in an esthetic contemplation of essences reached by physical science, an envisagement reached through a dialectic which "is a transubstantiation of matter, a passage from existence to eternity." This passage moreover is so utter that there is no road back. The stable ideal meanings which are the fruit of nature are forbidden, in the degree in which they are its highest and truest fruits, from dropping seeds in nature to its further fructification.<sup>6</sup>

Failing to grasp why Dewey insisted on locating meaning in nature by taking things to be signs by function, not by existence per se, Santayana could only take immediate empiricism to be illicitly psychologizing philosophy. Dewey, for his part, was unable to see any advantages to treating nature as intrinsically meaningful and transcendent of experience. Santayana's complaint that Dewey's false naturalism is corrupted by social convention could hardly impress Dewey. How else could experience and culture coincide?

Mr. Santayana says that the foreground as conceived by me is a social world, a social medium. This he terms, somewhat invidiously, I think, convention. But, accepting the word "convention," I state what I have already implied, that "convention" is not conventional, or specious, but is the interaction of natural things when that interaction becomes communication. A "sign" may be conventional, as when a sound or a mark on a piece of paper — themselves physical existences — symbolizes other things; but being a sign, the sign-function, has its roots in natural existences; human association is the fruit of those roots. I can understand Santayana's idea that the social medium is conventional in a prejudicial sense only as another illustration of that structural dislocation of non-human and human existence which I have called a broken-backed naturalism.<sup>7</sup>

Neither Dewey nor Santayana could recognize the other's philosophy as a satisfactory naturalism. Each accused the other of harboring remnants of the Cartesian legacy. They disagreed whether perceptual experience could directly apprehend its external object, whether experience could be natural, and whether meanings reside in the natural world. These divergent stances, despite their numerous other agreements, cautions against any attempt to synthesize their philosophies to create a robust and lasting naturalism. For Santayana, an empiricist naturalism is impossible and absurd; for Dewey, an empiricist naturalism is the only reasonable option remaining to an anti-skeptical and anti-idealist philosophy. Dewey's direct and immediate realism is compatible with Santayana's theory of the psyche, but not with his theory of spiritual signs. Santayana's other fundamental commitments, to anti-contextualism and to mechanistic causality, prevented his pragmatic inclinations from dominating his type of naturalism.

JOHN R. SHOOK

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<sup>6</sup> Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 1, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1981), p. 54

<sup>7</sup> Dewey, "Half-Hearted Naturalism," in *The Later Works of John Dewey*, vol. 3, ed. Jo Ann Boydston (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1984), p. 80.

# The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare: Dewey and Santayana on Shakespeare and Religion

My starting point is Dewey's remarks on an early essay by Santayana. My purpose is to examine this dispute over Shakespeare, show how this dispute exemplifies the opposition between Dewey and Santayana on the subject of religion, and suggest how this opposition indicates their profound disagreements on moral, social, and political issues.<sup>8</sup>

## Shakespeare

A discussion of the role of philosophy in literature in the chapter of *Art as Experience* called "The Challenge to Philosophy" provided an occasion for Dewey to comment on Santayana as a literary critic. Having dismissed the idea that poetry is to be judged by the correctness of its philosophy, Dewey turned to the notion that it is important for a poetic work to express some philosophic vision. As his foil, he used Santayana's *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (IPR). In particular, Dewey was concerned with the chapter called "The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare." There Santayana argued that the references to religious beliefs and ideas in Shakespeare's work are largely conventional, drawn from the society around him. There are scarcely any expressions of genuine spiritual passion and where they do appear they are not accompanied by any religious images, as one might expect in an ostensibly Christian milieu.

Santayana took this lack of religious imagery and emotion as a symptom of a deeper problem — Shakespeare, unlike Dante and Homer, had no vision of the place of human life in the universe. It was this objection that Dewey had particular trouble with. In a passage partially quoted by Dewey, Santayana said:

Shakespeare's world ... is only the world of human society. The cosmos eludes him; he does not seem to feel the need of framing that idea. He depicts life in all its richness and variety, but leaves that life without a setting and consequently without a meaning.<sup>9</sup>

This neglect of the cosmos is exactly the criticism Santayana laid against Dewey twenty-five years later in "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," his review of *Experience and Nature*. There, Santayana depicted Dewey as being the philosophic spokesman for the world of practice — of social affairs — to such an extent that Santayana accused Dewey of having a system from which "cosmology is absent."<sup>10</sup>

This accusation took on definite form in another passage quoted by Dewey:

There is no *fixed* conception of any forces, natural or moral, *dominating and transcending* our mortal energies.<sup>11</sup> (Emphasis added by Dewey.)

Dewey then pulled together a few separate passages and summarized them as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> This paper was presented to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Philadelphia on December 29, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> (IPR 154-5). Dewey quoted all but the first sentence in *Art as Experience*, p.320.

<sup>10</sup> "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," p. 678.

<sup>11</sup> (IPR 163). Quoted in *Art as Experience*, p. 320.

The complaint is of lack of "totality"; fullness is not wholeness. "What is required for *theoretic wholeness* is not this or that *system but some system.*"<sup>12</sup> (Emphasis added by Dewey.)

Santayana had entertained the notion that the absence of religion might be a virtue, a sign of Shakespeare's "good sense" (IPR 161), for unlike religious poets "he rendered human experience no longer through symbols, but by direct imaginative representation (IPR 162). In the end Santayana rejected this idea, not only because he counted himself among those "who think that human reason and imagination require a certain totality" — the totality Dewey referred to — but because "the most important thing in life is the lesson of it, and its relations to its own ideal" (IPR 163).

Dewey adopted the rejected position and defended Shakespeare with the following:

There are philosophies and philosophies as well as criticisms and criticisms. There are points of view from which Shakespeare had a philosophy, and had a philosophy that is more pertinent to the work of an artist than one which conceives the ideal of philosophy to be the enclosure of experience within and domination of its varied fullness by a transcendent ideal that only reason beyond experience can conceive. There is a philosophy which holds that nature and life offer in their plenitude many meanings and are capable through imagination of many renderings. In spite of the scope and dignity of the great historic philosophic systems, an artist may be instinctively repelled by the constraint imposed by acceptance of any system. If the important thing is "not this or that system but some system," why not accept, with Shakespeare, the free and varied system of nature itself as that works and moves in experience in many and diverse organizations of value? (AE 321)

Boiled down to bare propositional logic, Santayana had asserted a conjunction: great poetry requires a system and Shakespeare had none. As DeMorgan's theorem tells us, the denial of a conjunction asserts that at least one of the conjoined statements is false. Dewey's reply makes that denial by saying, in effect, that either great poetry doesn't require a system or else Shakespeare did have one.

Beyond the logic, we need to look for the source of the dispute. Dewey's assertion that "the free and varied system of nature itself" is not only an adequate system, but perhaps better than a system that dominates experience by "a transcendent ideal," goes to the heart of the matter. In reviewing *The Life of Reason*, Dewey praised Santayana for recognizing that human life had both a "natural origin and ideal end." In thirty years Dewey's treatment of the term 'ideal' had become more refined. It was useful insofar as it indicated ends-in-view or the great variety of human aspirations, but if it directed attention away from ordinary experience, the word 'ideal' became a distraction. His quarrel, in *Art as Experience*, was with Santayana's notion that "the most important thing in life is ... its relations to its own ideal." His critique concluded with the following:

The value of experience is not only in the ideals it reveals, but in its power to disclose many ideals, a power more germinal and more significant than any revealed ideal, since it includes them in its stride, shatters and remakes them. *One may even reverse the statement and say the value of ideals lies in the experiences to which they lead.* (AE 321) (Emphasis added.)

In writing this, Dewey stood Santayana's position on its head: the most important thing in life was not the relationship to some ideal, but rather life itself. Ideals are valuable not as final goals, but as instruments for making experience more rich and varied.

Although I just pointed out an instance in which Dewey appeared to contradict Santayana directly, the dispute is more a matter of emphasis than direct contradiction.

<sup>12</sup> *Art as Experience* (AE), pp. 320-321. Quotes or refers to passages found in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, pp. 163,164.

For example, Dewey appealed to the “system of nature” as being more adequate than any philosophic system. Doesn’t that sound like Santayana’s insistence in “Dewey’s Naturalistic Metaphysics” that naturalism is a “primary system”? In the “Absence of Religion in Shakespeare” Santayana had written of the importance of having a conception of “forces, natural or moral, dominating and transcending our mortal energies.” Such a conception can have innumerable forms: the God of the Old Testament, the Greek pantheon, or the Hindu godhead, for example. As Santayana’s later philosophy made clear, the only actual force he acknowledged was nature — the realm of matter. He thus read religious imagery as standing for the forces of nature, represented in ways that have a sweeping effect on the imagination. Dewey objected to the phrase “dominating and transcending” as if it meant under the spell of some supernatural incorporeal realm. Santayana meant that there are things we have to deal with that we have no control over and cannot fully understand. Dewey believed in the value of experience itself, as if Santayana dismissed experience as something second rate that he preferred to “enclose” or “transcend.” But Santayana’s realm of spirit is nothing more than the realm of experience. And when he wrote that the “the function of mind is ... to increase the wealth of the universe in the spiritual dimension ... by creating ... those emotions of wonder, adventure, curiosity, and laughter which omniscience would exclude,” he was describing the “free and varied” world of experience that Dewey so prized. Where, then, was the difference?

## Religion

Dewey’s differences with Santayana over art and aesthetics become clearer if we look at how each approached religion. In 1934, the same year that Dewey published *Art as Experience*, he also published a short tract on religion entitled *A Common Faith*. The purpose of the book was to separate the idea of religious experience from belief in supernatural forces. Because religion could no longer be regarded as a source of scientific knowledge, the question remained as to whether there remained anything of value in it. Dewey found several things, among them: a harmonizing element which through imagination provided unity to the soul, an imaginative expression of collective ideals, and a means of gathering and focusing emotional energy for social action.

Dewey quoted favorably the following well-known passage from the preface to Santayana’s *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*:

Religion and poetry are identical in essence, and differ merely in the way they are attached to practical affairs. Poetry is called religion when it intervenes in life, and religion, when it merely supervenes upon life, is seen to be nothing but poetry.<sup>13</sup>

Santayana explained that both religion and poetry have undeveloped forms: religion “when it is confused with natural facts or laws,” and poetry when “it remains an unmeaning play of fancy without relevance to the ideals and purposes of life” (IPR vi). From this common starting point — an agreement that religion is “necessarily false, if treated as science” and that “poetry has a universal and moral function” (IPR vi) — Dewey and Santayana took two different directions. For Dewey the effort was to sift from the various traditional religions, a common element, which could continue to play a valuable role in social life. For Santayana, the concern was to regard the works of the human imagination as expressions of deeply felt ideals. Santayana’s was not interested in synthesizing a common element for practical purposes. Instead he

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<sup>13</sup> (IPR v). Quoted in *A Common Faith*, p. 17.

preferred to let the imagery of each religion stand on its own, both for its immediate effect and as an expression of some overriding human passion.

Immediate effect and overriding passion — for Santayana “religion is noble if treated as poetry” (IPR vi) and fully developed poetry is both pleasurable (i.e., immediate) and beautiful (i.e., overriding). He wrote:

As its elementary pleasantness comes from its response to the demands of the ear, so its deepest beauty comes from its response to the ultimate demands of the soul. (IPR vi)

The two goals — synthesizing a common element and appreciating each religion for the way in which it responds to the ultimate demands of the soul — may be complementary, not opposed, but the difference between them had a major effect upon the meanings Dewey and Santayana gave to some fundamental terms and concepts. Consider, for example, the idea of God. Look first at this often-quoted passage from *The Realm of Spirit*:

When people ask, Does God exist? the question is really verbal. They are asking whether the reality signified by the notion of God, if we understood that reality better, could still bear the name of God, or had better be designated by some other word. (RB 838)

Santayana meant that God, thought of as an omnipotent (or omnificient; i.e., does everything) force, was identical to the realm of matter, even though Santayana did not prefer to use the word ‘God’ to refer to it. Or as Santayana put it himself:

... in thinking of god the dominant consideration is a power at work in the world ... So God in Spinoza becomes identical with Nature, speculatively magnified; and if I retained the word God, as I do not in this connection, my result would even be more scandalous, since God, conceived of merely as power, would become identical with matter, the omnificient substance and force in everything. (RB 837-838)

Dewey’s interpretation of the word ‘God’ is quite different. In discussing the meaning of the term, Dewey rejects the sense in which it designates a particular being that exists independently of human life, in favor of a sense in which ‘God’ means

the ideal ends that at a given time and place one acknowledges as having authority over his volition and emotion, the values to which one is supremely devoted, as far these ends, through imagination, take on unity. (ACF 42)

These clearly contrasting notions of what the concept of a deity means — the “unification of ideals,” on one hand, and the inescapable, unfathomable forces of nature, on the other, spill over into different notions of what ideals are. For Santayana an ideal is a model — a paradigm of existence perfected — even if this perfection could never be physically realized. This is why he wrote in *Reason in Art* that the arts have met with “more success than science or morals”;<sup>14</sup> they are able to achieve perfection, if only in the products of the imagination. To illustrate the extent to which Santayana could carry this idea, let us leap forward twelve years from Dewey’s *Art as Experience* and forty-six years from *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (forty years from *Reason in Art*) to Santayana’s *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* (published in 1946). There Santayana concluded that the idea of Christ represents a kind of human perfection, which reveals to us the meaning of spiritual life:

*In its essence, the vocation of spirit is that of Christ: to be incarnate, to suffer and do what is appointed, and to return, at every recollected moment, to perfect union with God. In its instances, however, the vocation of spirit is different in each soul. In the poet, the artist, or the wit, intelligence and love are disinterested: in so far as they deserve those names, that which lives in them is the liberated spirit. At moments they may touch perfect self-forgetfulness; and no fulfilment can come to the spirit more genuine than that. Moreover,*

<sup>14</sup> *Reason in Art*, pp. 171-172.

the whole evolution of nature and history is centrifugal, polyglot, reaching incommensurable achievements. Life radiates in every way it finds open, and in each species, in each art, flowers into a different glory. To impose one form, one method, one type of virtue upon every creature would be sheer blindness to the essence of the good. *Spirit, then, I reply, has its essence in a single vocation, to reflect the glory of God; but this vocation can be realised only in special and diverse forms. Christ, being God, reflects God's whole glory.*<sup>15</sup> (Emphasis added.)

In Christ, Santayana found the perfection of human life without loss of its humanity. Santayana, of course, did not believe that the historical Jesus was the Word incarnate. Nor did he believe that this Christian ideal is the only or the best way to represent or characterize human ideals. But nevertheless, it represented one rather dramatic form of those ideals, even if this form — God incarnate — was not in fact achievable, except metaphorically in isolated moments by poets, artists, or wits.<sup>16</sup>

Dewey's notion of the ideal was far more earthbound. He asked rhetorically: "Are our ideals genuinely ideal or only ideal in contrast to our present state?" (ACF 42). The implication is that Santayana's notion of an imaginative model against which to compare our present state is not a genuine ideal. Ideals for Dewey do not exist only in the imagination in the sense of being removed from life. Insofar they motivate us and stir us to action they have reality. He wrote:

The aims and ideals that move us are generated through the imagination, but they are not made of imaginary stuff. They are made of the hard stuff of physical and social experience. The locomotive did not exist before Stevenson, not the telegraph before the time of Morse, but the conditions for their existence were there in physical materials and energies and in human capacity. (ACF 49)

Or again:

The ends that result from our projection of experienced goods into objects of thought, desire and effort exist, only they exist *as ends*. Ends, purposes, exercise determining power in human conduct. The aims of philanthropists, of Florence Nightingale, of Howard, of Wilberforce, of Peabody, have not been idle dreams. They have modified institutions. Aims, ideals, do not exist simply in "mind"; they exist in character, in personality and action.<sup>17</sup>

For Dewey reality implies engagement. In *Art as Experience* he wrote: "the value of ideals lies in the experiences to which they lead." Their value — their reality — depends on the interplay between ideals and ordinary experience. The notion that an ideal has reality if someone's attention is focused on it brings to mind Santayana's parody of Dewey's way of thinking found in a footnote to "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics":

<sup>15</sup> *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, p. 251.

<sup>16</sup> In this passage, it may appear that Santayana abandoned his notion of God as the summation of forces (the efficient cause model of God) in favor of in Dewey's sense of God as unification of ideals (the final cause model). If God in this passage is a final cause, it is only because Santayana was explicating the New Testament. Santayana often adapted the vocabulary of another frame of reference in order to summarize it. Santayana's notion that God is fundamentally a force or a "reality confronted in action" does not preclude recognition that God has different meanings in different contexts. His interpretation of religious ideas always took into consideration both natural origins and spiritual goals. On a strictly technical level, there is nothing in the passage that is incompatible with the efficient cause model — God as nature. It is Christ that is the ideal, not God. Christ is a final cause, as he represents the ideal of unification with God. But that unification is with whatever God is, even if God is the Realm of Matter

<sup>17</sup> (ACF 48). The philanthropists and social reformers mentioned are most likely John Howard, William Wilberforce, and George Peabody.

I can imagine the spontaneous pragmatism of some President of a State University, if obliged to defend the study of Sanskrit before a committee of Senators. "You have been told," he would say, "that Sanskrit is a dead language. Not at all: Sanskrit is Professor Smith's Department, and growing. The cost is trifling, and several of our sister universities are making it a fresh requirement for the Ph.D. in classics. That, Gentlemen, is what Sanskrit is."<sup>18</sup>

The parallel is obvious: "You say ideals are non-existent, that they are wholly imaginary. Not at all. Mr. Edison didn't sleep at night in pursuit of his ideals. Miss Nightingale held them before her like a lamp in the dark. That, Gentlemen, is what ideals are." Santayana was accusing Dewey of a kind intellectual subterfuge. The accusation goes something like this: You don't like an idea, but you realize it captures the imagination. So you interpret it to mean something else which you find agreeable. Santayana was content to let ideals reside non-existent in his realm of essence and to entertain them for what they are, bred in different forms in various cultures. Dewey wanted to coalesce various religious ideals into something that had practical value.

Santayana and Dewey had different ideas of democracy: the one exemplified by the word compromise, the other by the word co-operation. We can see a similar distinction in their approach to religion. Dewey sought co-operation among religions. His program was to draw from the superstitions of the past a common element — a common faith. Santayana would let every mythology tell its own tale — the only thing mitigating among them was that all had emerged under natural circumstances and their believers had to live in that natural world.

These parallel contrasts of religious and political ideas suggest that Dewey and Santayana's different conceptions of religion, like their different conceptions of art, political democracy, and metaphysics, had moral and social preferences behind them. Dewey's concern was to make religion part of an overall program for human advancement. This program included cultivating the habit of intelligence as a key part of the human personality. Santayana's emphasis was hardly on intelligent action. His concern was to appreciate how the separate religions in their "errors and follies" express what it means to be human. To make the difference unmistakable, think of Santayana's approving characterization of the vocation of spirit: "to return, at every recollected moment, to perfect union with God." Religious feeling, then, is found in piety and a sense of holiness, and if Shakespeare had none of this, then he revealed an absence of religion. For Dewey, religious feeling came in pursuit of attainable goals in the face of obstacles. This meant self-sacrifice and engagement with the world. Shakespeare, as an eloquent exponent of engagement with life in the world of practical affairs, is a harbinger of religion freed from the superstitious shackles of the past.

Turn then from Santayana's discovery of "deepest beauty" in "response to the ultimate demands of the soul" or his "return ... to perfect union with God," to Dewey's push for religion as a force for change. Dewey wrote:

One of the few experiments in the attachment of emotion to ends that mankind has not yet tried is that of devotion, so intense as to be religious, to intelligence as a force in social action. (ACF 79)

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<sup>18</sup> "Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics," p. 679 footnote.

Dewey's trumpet call for religious fervor in intelligent social action had its loudest flourish in the concluding words of his book, words Santayana might well have read with either annoyance or bemusement:

Here are all the elements for a religious faith that shall not be confined to sect, class, or race. Such a faith has always been implicitly the common faith of mankind. It remains only to make it explicit and militant. (ACF 87)

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<<http://www.math.uwaterloo.ca/~kerrlaws/Santayana/Bulletin/seville.html>>

Articles from 1993 to the present are posted there (in unpolished form). More recent papers are in pdf format, readable by Adobe Acrobat. *The Santayana Edition* maintains a full website dealing with all aspects of the project:

<<http://www.iupui.edu/~santedit/>>. Tom Davis maintains a site dedicated, among other things, to Santayana citations and exchanges of opinion on various issues:

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

# Santayana's Review of Dewey's *Experience and Nature*: Pivotal Expression of a Philosophy of Living Nature and Vivacious Spirit

Spirit lives in moments and in spots; yet from any station it may survey everything, rescuing its causes from ignorance of themselves. By the least joy it can redeem them from futility, and from the least pain it can wring the conscience of the Fates and challenge their selfish somnolence (RB 850).

Dewey published his *Experience and Nature* in 1925. It was a major work in the tradition of American pragmatism. But when Santayana reviewed it in *The Journal of Philosophy* for December of that same year, he came loaded for bear. Both philosophers were claiming the territory of philosophical naturalism. Neither could win the ensuing confrontation as each staked his claim to first principles. Each won in his own way by privileging the hermeneutical circle of his own thought. We today are also winners as we inherit the legacy of their exchanges.<sup>1</sup>

Each philosopher kept a wary eye out for the other until 1952, the year they both passed away. Let us remember that that was only fifty years ago; indeed, in the dusky eyes of the owl of Minerva, 1952 was only yesterday. This fact has prompted me to begin this paper from the perspective of the continued relevance of their debate for today.

But as I weigh the Santayana/Dewey debate now, I see the scale tipping toward Santayana's side. On the one hand I see Dewey's philosophy as closer to, indeed anticipatory of, a range of present-day theories and practices; but on the other hand I regard Santayana's impugment of Dewey's culturally fore-grounded "naturalistic metaphysics" as the more critically prescient, providing a skeptical purchase on a broad range of philosophical practices that prevail today, while offering much more besides.

What was at stake for Santayana on the other side of this watershed of skeptical critique?<sup>2</sup> On the affirmative side of the divide we find his foundational insights concerning *living nature* and *the life of the spirit*. The latter is the solitary,

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was presented to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Philadelphia on December 29, 2002.

Santayana's "Dewey Naturalistic Metaphysics," a review of Dewey's *Experience and Nature* (EN), the review first appearing in *The Journal of Philosophy*, December 1925; page references to the same piece are herein cited from its republication in *Obiter Scripter*, ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz (New York: Chas. Scribner's Sons, 1936.) Santayana's review, to the chagrin of Dewey, appeared again in the volume dedicated to Dewey in *The Library of Living Philosophers* series edited by Paul A. Schilpp.) Dewey's various responses are found in his collected works (to be elaborated): in short form, they consist in Dewey's ingenuous call—like Royce's in a prior decade—for Santayana to "overcome" a pervasive dualism in this thought between essence and existence.

<sup>2</sup> This present paper is greatly indebted to the Dr. Jessica Wahman's dissertation, "Signs of Transcendence: A Naturalist Critique of Transcendentalism," (Philosophy Dept. SUNY, Stony Brook, 2001) which has developed this point at length.

indomitable, sometimes intense spirit of our aesthetic and moral lives. These two complicative concepts of *living nature* and of *vivacious spirit* can fairly be said to be absent in Dewey's thought. Their presence in Santayana is what propelled him beyond the parameters of Dewey's ostensibly rich naturalism. They were foundational for Santayana's *Realms of Being*, his own monumental work that was still on the drawing board in 1925.

### The Relevance of the Debate Today

Let us begin from a brief consideration of the relevance for today of the issues of the Dewey/Santayana confrontation. It helps to shed light on a range of practices in today's philosophical profession—the kind of practices, for example, that comprise our annual APA meetings.

Broadly sketched, a first type of contemporary philosophical practice is a meta-scientific type, a type represented by Peirce and Husserl but also, *mutatis mutandis*, by various shades of logical empiricists (many on the Anglo-American side of contemporary philosophic scholasticism). These types of philosophers are neo-aristotelians (Peirce), neo-cartesians (Husserl), and/or neo-leibnizians (Russell et al.). They seek methodically to establish a transcendental epistemology or grammarology—a “science of the sciences” for “consciousness in general”—by bracketing out the existential life world and attending rather to objective conceptual invariants and propositional or logical constants meant to ground what Peirce called the idioscopic or special sciences. By contrast, and at the other extreme, there is a range of “cultural” or “existential” phenomenologists and epistemologists who have arisen to challenge Peirce, Husserl, and the logical empiricists. This second type of philosopher methodologically invests in temporality and historicity, contextual experience, relativity and particularity, regional group identity and constructive project, and other subjectively lived experiences of the life world.

There are many varieties of this latter kind of “cultural phenomenology” which flourished in Dewey's and Santayana's times and which continues to do so in the academy today. Heidegger's *Dasein*-ontology with its sense of an “authentic German” people and the Kyoto School's “Eastern” apologetics are examples; but it is now a broadly diffused strain that features regional identity matrices. Self-styled “Continental” philosophers ply their trades in this trajectory. But the point is that though they challenge the hegemonic discourses of the meta-scientific-minded claim to an objective horizon of universal speech acts and of other forms of consciousness in general, these cultural or existential phenomenologists, many of them self-styled “political epistemologists,” are also transcendentalist and—yes!—foundationalist thinkers, by way of claiming privileged ontological insight and basis for their moral praxis, their authentically lived commitments.

Now it is fair to say that Dewey was himself a committed historicist and social pragmatist. But he achieved a balanced theory of these tendencies. He rather gracefully split the difference between the hardcore epistemologists and the cultural polarizers. His style of philosophy integrated epistemological, ontological, and cultural dimensions of life.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> We see this integrative paradigm for example in the three schools of Hellenistic philosophy, the Epicureans, the Stoics, and the Skeptics. All three schools divided philosophy into the complicative branches of Canonic (logic and epistemology), Physics, and Ethics. The adherents of these good schools of very long standing would have smiled at the current compartmentalizing of academic philosophy into distinct wings. It is high time to call the bluff of this kind of overspecialization.

Why, then, did Santayana impugn Dewey, and do so while broadsiding the entire tradition of “this-worldly” modern philosophy in its phenomenological, idealistic, pragmatic trends? The reason is that Santayana had another—and, to his mind—wider, philosophical agenda, an agenda that involved certain forms of “unworldly” and “un-modern” emphases which he symbolized by his gradual “retirement” from the academic world. His polemical review of Dewey’s “naturalistic metaphysics” is a prism in which we see refracted that wider agenda.

### Dewey’s “Naturalistic Metaphysics”

For his part, Dewey developed a robust version of this-worldly, historicist, pragmatically constructivist, theory. He was a latter-day Aristotelian, primarily concerned with the work of the practical intellect in the *polis*. Together with George Herbert Mead, his writings reflected on the work of the social sciences. In the wake of Peirce and James, he reoriented pragmatic intelligence toward dealing with “the public and its problems.” He honored the past but regarded its problems and their solutions as obsolescent. He called for “the reconstruction of philosophy *today*” to serve as “a criticism of criticisms” in the contemporary arena. He envisioned “a common faith,” at the heart of which was to function an enlightened educational process, whose keynote is “growth for growth’s sake” “in the search for the great community.” The thrust of his writings was toward liberation of the dormant resources of secular society.<sup>4</sup>

Dewey is still regarded as the “progressive” educationalist *par excellence* of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. His *Democracy and Education* remains a staple of the teachers college curriculum. However, he also has his detractors for promoting a style of “progressive” school learning (e.g., “co-operative learning” and “constructivist learning theory”) which—the charge goes—serves to undermine the time-honored historical disciplines in favor of politicized “social studies.” His call for a “common faith” is judged by some as having been a ruinous recipe for an increasingly gross secularization. There are many other negative ramifications of his general theory of modern cultural transformation. Not the least of these are Dewey’s tendency to conflate morals and politics and his subsumption of the radiations of truth under his utilitarian belief-system.

Writing from his permanent retreat in Europe, Santayana undertook the unpopular job of calling into question the assumptions of Dewey’s “democratic” agenda. In skeptical and polemical mode, it impugned Dewey’s “home vistas” pragmatism not only as lacking an objective theory of truth, but also as propounding a worldview that is conspicuously lacking in the religious, poetic, and personal individualism of his predecessors, R. W. Emerson and Wm. James (OS 216-17). Dewey had even less “feel” for the grand traditions of classical and medieval heritage which Santayana repossessed in such works as his *Three Philosophical Poets*. Santayana therefore ironically typecast Dewey as a “social mystic” the chief effect of whose writings was to carry over the general heirloom of America’s Puritan heritage into the secularized 20<sup>th</sup>-century workplace (OS 228, 234).

As we know, Santayana played a trump phrase “the dominance of the foreground” in this critical portrait of Dewey’s “naturalistic”—that is, “socio-logical”—

<sup>4</sup> With regard to the very EN which Santayana had reviewed in polemic terms, Dewey reaffirmed his basic agenda at the time of its new edition in 1951, maintaining that if he were to give it a new, more appropriate title, he would call it *Culture and Nature*. See the full passage in John Stuhr, ed., *Classical American Philosophy: Essential Readings and Interpretive Essays* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), p. 330.

metaphysics. The phrase serves to generalize the whole issue. Its major premise is that such a near-sighted dominance of the foreground “has always been the source of metaphysics; and metaphysics has varied according as the foreground has been occupied by language or fancy or logic or skeptical self-consciousness or religious rapture or moral ambition” (OS 223). The minor premise is Dewey’s socio-logical American-ism.

For—Santayana continues—such a dominance of the foreground has flourished in all of Dewey’s own home-traditions: it has been the soul of American transcendentalism and of American empiricism; it now animates the American’s entrepreneurial spirit as well as his or her absorption in home affairs; and, more ominously, it is the soul of “that kind of religion which summons the universe to vindicate human notions of justice or to subserve the interests of mankind or of some special nation or civilization” (OS 224). “Pragmatism,” he observes, “may be regarded as the synthesis of all these ways of making the foreground dominant: [it is] the most close-reefed of philosophical craft, most tightly hugging appearance, use, and relevance to practice today and here, least drawn by the lure of speculative distances” (OS 224).

But it is noteworthy here that in his review of EN Santayana also placed Dewey within a broader, though still modern, this-worldly frame—namely, he associated Dewey’s philosophy with the secular romanticism of the Hegelianism of the Left (OS 226). Santayana well knew of Dewey’s earlier studies in Hegel and the other 19<sup>th</sup>-century European Idealists; but he also understood that the *pragmatic method* stemming from Peirce and James diverged in principle from the *dialectical logic* of the European Idealists.<sup>5</sup> Dewey, needless to say, was no dialectical materialist. So here Santayana pointedly associated Dewey with the version of post-Hegelian historicism that envisions the human praxis of changing a precariously open-ended secular world.<sup>6</sup>

But according to Santayana, these modern historicist philosophies are not only this-worldly, they flourish on the basis of a specious idealism of present-day project and prophecy. In actuality, past and future “moments” of project and prophecy are available only as essences of immediate conceptual intuition; they are null sets, or

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<sup>5</sup> Among the classical American philosophers it was Peirce who first explicitly clarified the difference between the method of pragmatism (later pragmatism) and the dialectical method of the German Idealists, and of Hegel in particular. The *dialectical logic* works by the mechanical protocol of *aufheben*, that is, by *sublating* opposites and multiplicities into their higher unity (synthesis of thesis and antithesis), whereas the *pragmatic method* works to *resolve* problematic matters into their experiential differences and efficacies in conduct. See Walter Watson, *The Architectonics of Meaning: Foundations of the New Pluralism* (Albany: SUNY University Press), 1985, pp. 84-102, and David A. Dilworth, *Philosophy in World Perspective: A Comparative Hermeneutic of the Major Theories* (New Haven: Yale University Press), 1989, pp. 29-30.

<sup>6</sup> Santayana’s critique of American meliorism goes at least as far back as a brilliant undergraduate 1886 essay on Emerson (whom he recognized as *not* a meliorist—to be further elaborated). In modern philosophy, the premisses of philosophical meliorism traces back importantly to Kant’s political writings; Kant, in his turn, acknowledged his debt to Rousseau’s concept of the perfectibility of human nature. See Kant’s later political essays “On the Relation of Theory and Practice” (1792), “Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Sketch” (1795), and “The Metaphysics of Morals,” especially “The Theory of Right, Part II: Public Right” (1797) in Hans Reiss, ed., *Kant’s Political Writings* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983). Kant’s rationalistic prognosis for the future of mankind entered into the philosophical consciousness of 19<sup>th</sup>-century America though Peirce. As a case in point, Peirce appears to have taken the very words of his pragmatistic concept of “truth in the long run” from these same writings of Kant.

dialectically intelligible only in relation to the present moment of conceptual immediacy. But again, according to his skeptical analysis of the ontological status of the realm of essence, nothing that “appears” or is “immediately given” exists—essences qua human appearances do not float in on their own out of an infinite realm of potential forms. Rather, essences, the forms of life, ingress into the temporal and historical orders of human language and conception on the basis of nature’s external contingencies—including its radically unpredictable and uncontrollable embodiments in fathomlessly “dark psyches.”

The philosophical stakes here are very high. According to Santayana, all the philosophers of teleological and post-teleological historicism—of the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup>, and now extending into the 21<sup>st</sup> centuries—who philosophize about “making a difference” in history do so on the basis of their *theoretical solipsism*—that is, their own solipsism of the present historical moment. Moreover, such *historicist* programs of experiential immediacy are “crossed by Care.” They commit the *historicist* to imploding in his own karma—to acting out the dogma of his own animal beliefs in the field of action. In this way the practicing *historicist* succumbs to a “most terrible illusion”—the illusion that the essences of past and future exist and control events—one of Mother Nature’s many mad, and ephemeral, dreams.<sup>7</sup>

Santayana pursues this invective against fanciful historicism in various other phases of his Dewey article.<sup>8</sup> But, in sum, he refers to Dewey’s brand of “naturalistic metaphysics” as a form of near-sighted sincerity comparable to that of contemporary painters in their painful studies. “The intellect here, like the fancy there, arrests its dogmatic vision and stops short at some relational term which was invisible because it is only a vehicle in natural seeing. No wonder that these near elements, abstracted and focused in themselves, have a queer look” (OS 213).

For my part, I am suggesting that Santayana’s skeptical critique of Dewey “sociological” naturalism is set within a larger philosophical frame which pertains to the entire gamut of transcendentalist, phenomenological, pragmatic, and *historicist* styles that flourished in Dewey’s day and continue to flourish in today’s academy.

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<sup>7</sup> “This illusion supposes that the eventual about which it is troubled is controllable by the immediate, as by wishes, omens, or high thoughts; in other words, that the essences given in the immediate exist, generate their own presence, and may persist or rearrange themselves and so generate the future. But this is sheer superstition and trust in magic; the philosophy not of experience but of inexperience. The immediate, whether a paradise or a hell, is always specious; it is peopled by spectres which, if taken for existing and working things, are illusions; and although they are real enough, in that they have definite character and actual presence, as a dream or a pain has, their reality ends there; they are unsubstantial, volatile, leaving no ashes, and their existence, even when they appear, is imputed to them by a hidden agency, the demon of Care, and lies wholly in being perceived.” (OS 233)

<sup>8</sup> “This immediate imagination of things, far from being fundamental in nature, is only a dream which accompanies our action, as the other dreams accompany our sleep.” (OS 234) Dewey and the rest are Care-driven social and ethical mystics—proactive in their worlds of “authentic practice” (or “praxis”) driven by animal faith and blind presumption. It is the mysticism of their own presentational immediacy, a mysticism of the foreground that is a luminous cloud, or a sunlit fog, “that envelops everything and arrests the eye, in every direction, on a painted perspective,” that is to say, is “a mental universe in which the accidental order of discovery is substituted for the natural order of genesis”—and this with potentially grave consequences, “since it is not so easy for the universe as for an individual to stand on its head” (OS 235).

## Living Nature and Vivacious Spirit

Now, having passed beyond this watershed of criticism, let me sketch the positive side of Santayana's philosophical vista. It extends deeper and farther than Dewey's naturalistic qua sociological metaphysics.

Santayana, we have seen, consistently employs the term "metaphysics" for an abusive kind of idealistic rhetoric that hypostacizes essences, whether the essence of "immediate experience" itself or of language, propositions, God, Idea, History—in short of any transcendental, or grammatological transcript.<sup>9</sup> As against that, he claimed to clear the windows of his soul by formulating certain *ontological*, not metaphysical, categories. Yes, and these were good *windows*—windows on *living nature* and *vivacious spirit*.

In this regard it is worth noting that Santayana's *Dialogues in Limbo* appeared in the same year as his review of Dewey's EN. In DL he encapsulated his entire philosophy—and the thesis of my paper as well—in declaring that he followed Democritus in physics and Socrates in morals. As well, in DL the Stranger (Santayana himself) leads his interlocutor Avicenna to debunk the esoteric secret of Aristotle's metaphysics, exposing it as the mother of all transcendentalisms that obscured the true facts of nature.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> In the culminating "General Review" of RB, Santayana acknowledges that his system might seem "extravagantly metaphysical in places, as for example in regard to the realm of essences" (RB 826). He goes on to say that he is willing to concede that his own system might "properly be called metaphysical, in the current literary sense of the word" (RB 828). But this is an ironic disclaimer. In the sequel he pulls in the reins of any connotation of "extravagant metaphysics" when he writes: "But I was reserving the term metaphysics for a particular, though widespread, abuse of super-material categories; an abuse that occurs whenever logical, moral, or psychological figments are turned into substances or powers and placed beneath or behind the material world, to create, govern, or explain it" (RB 828). He prefers to call his system an "ontology" and *not* a "metaphysics," and this for the specific purpose of averring that he regards "all immaterial things, in so far as they exist or are true, as qualities, products, or ideal implications of the physical world" (*loc. cit.*). "Physics, not metaphysics, therefore reveals to us, as far as it goes, the foundations of things; and ontology is a subsequent excursus of the mind, as in non-Euclidean geometry, over all that the facts may suggest to the fancy" (*loc. cit.*). But it is crucial to note that Santayana uses the term *physics* here in two senses—an empirical-scientific one and an entirely different sense of the *PHYSIS* (*NATURA*, Living Nature) which I thematize in this paper. As for the first sense, Santayana immediately adds that he wants to "dispel an illusion that better-digested science might create: the illusion that scientific ideas reveal the literal and intimate essence of reality, as the images of sense certainly do not" (RB 829). Santayana always wishes the empirical-scientists joy, but never fails to add that, both in principle and in practice, they can never fathom "the nature of things."

<sup>10</sup> DL (London: Constable and Co. Ltd., 1925), p. 175. "The Secret of Aristotle" chapter was one of the original chapters of the DL when it was first published in 1925, thus roughly contemporaneously with his review of Dewey's EN. The Stranger goes on to reveal "the secret of Aristotle" in the form of saying that Aristotle's exoteric text "intentionally disguised" the riddle of metaphysics—"the unmentionable truth"—by positing his doctrine of the *four causes*, which are only abstract concepts *in mente*, as if they were causes *in re*. This led a race of learned babblers "to put nature together out of words" (182-83). Enlightened by this critique of verbal abstractions, Avicenna comes to realize that the esoteric teaching of Aristotle remained true to the original materialism of the Presocratics and Democritus, whose doctrines of *PHYSIS*, concerning "the native impulse of matter," "touch the heart-strings of nature" (186-87). Santayana has Avicenna ironically conclude that "Doubtless in his popular works he [Aristotle] accommodated himself to the exigences of current piety and of human conceit, seeming to make nature a product of morals, which is absurd; and the converse is evidently the truth" (188). In his review of

As he embarked on his *Realms of Being* from this pivotal juncture of 1925 Santayana re-articulated his refutation of Aristotle's transcendentalism in the technical terms of his systematic ontology of his realms of being. In these technical terms, living nature is the realm of *matter* (substance, power, action), whose inner processes generate and subtend the other three realms; the realms of *spirit*, *essence* and *truth* are immaterial realms. Of these latter realms, the realm of *spirit* or *consciousness* is an existential realm. At the heart of that system is Santayana's fundamental intuition of the co-implicative relation of material existence and existential consciousness. Consciousness is an intellectual light in the service of animal faith; but it can self-consciously realize its own ontological status as the point of intersection of the other realms. None of this is captured by Aristotle's sciences which foreground morphological and etiological explanations in abstract disciplinary matrices grounded in transcendental concepts.

Santayana's review of EN, which portrays Dewey as a neo-Aristotelian, already contains this pivotal doctrine of natural existence and of existential spirit; it is precisely in terms of these intersecting features of natural existence and of existential consciousness that he transcends Dewey.

As for *living nature*, the reverse side of his critique of "the dominance of the foreground" is his insistence that Mother Nature is out of scale with any of our dialectical appropriations. "In nature," he says, "there is no foreground or background, no here, no now, no moral cathedra, no center so really central as to reduce all things to mere margins and mere perspectives" (OS 223). But all this, too, is the insight of the concrete self-conscious spirit which philosophizes not from concepts but from life.<sup>11</sup>

In this context Santayana goes on to express the point that a Deweyan "event," in its natural being, must be reconfigured as a "*mode* of substance," that is, "the transit of an essence." He often employs the Aristotelian language of substance and modes, while still hewing to the older layers of meaning of the Presocratic *PHYSIS* traditions.<sup>12</sup> The microscopic nature of "events" or "modes" serves to remind us that

Dewey's EN, Santayana comes similarly to propound an ironic philosophical template, very consistently iterated in his writings, which reverses, inverts, and subverts the assumptions of conceptualized transcendental idealism, a tradition running from Aristotle to Hegel and beyond Hegel to Dewey and to various forms of 20<sup>th</sup> century epistemology, phenomenology, and pragmatism.

<sup>11</sup> Santayana goes on to note that it is apparently only on higher levels of human consciousness, which are genetically secondary, that nature produces "events," where movement becomes rhythmical, involving units of dynamic animal perception and providing the empirical impression that nature is a series of "events," when in fact there are only essences succeeding one another in the mock psychological world of epistemology or historicism (OS 230). Higher animal consciousness is genetically secondary because it is cerebrally fore-grounded consciousness, and cerebral consciousness is rooted in temporally unfathomable "dark psyches" whose roots reach down into the endlessly labyrinthine layers of living Nature. It is in this perspective of dark psyche that Dewey's cerebral foreground is energized by Care—which is the fate of all animals rooting around for survival and prosperity in nature—whereas the "life of the spirit" in its refined vivifications transcends the care-driven beliefs and projects of ephemeral consciousness.

<sup>12</sup> Santayana came to co-opt many of Aristotle's terms. Conspicuous examples are those of physics, psychology, metaphysics, matter, substance, and psyche. With the exception of psyche, these terms do not significantly appear in the tradition from Thales to Plato. Many ancient philosophers, from the Presocratics down through the Hellenistic Schools, wrote works entitled *Peri Physeōs* and this comes out appropriately in Latin in Lucretius's title *De Rerum Natura*, "On the Nature of Things." The orientation was toward Nature, or in Plato's case to the Ideas, not to the abstract concepts of matter or substance, nor to conceptualized sciences of physics and metaphysics. Matter as Aristotle's material cause comes from *hylē*, originally meaning "wood,"

Mother Nature “laughs at our dialectic and goes on living in her own way; her flux, like the flow of a river, is far more substantial than volatile, all sleepy continuity, persistence, and monotony” (OS 229). But it is Mother Nature herself who prompts us to such moments of spiritual insight.<sup>13</sup>

Now I think it is important here to realize that Santayana’s key phrase “the life of the spirit” does not refer to the organic life of the *dark psyche*; it rather refers to his concept of the *luminous spiritual life*. Santayana adumbrates this concept of the spiritual life in contrasting Dewey’s near-sighted naturalism with the wings of speculative insight of the old Ionians or the Stoics or Spinoza, and of those many other mystics, Indian, Jewish, or Mohammedan, who, “heartily despising the foreground, have fallen in love with the greatness of nature and have sunk speechless before the infinite” (OS 224). In EGP, among other places, he had already pursued such a contrast between the *worldly* phenomenological *Geist* of the modern Western tradition and the fuller flowering of the *religious* Spirit in the ancient Indian philosophers.<sup>14</sup>

As well, in his review of EN Santayana adumbrates the theme of “the life of the spirit” released from the care-driven actions of animal faith in touching upon the theme of the sheer intuition of essence:

Such is sheer pleasure or pain, when no source or object is assigned to it; such is aesthetic contemplation; such is pure thinking, the flash of intellectual light. This mystical paradise is indefinitely extensible, like life, and far be it from me to speak evil of it; it is there only that the innocent spirit is at home. But how should pragmatism, which is nothing if not prehensile, take root in this Eden? (OS 233)

This passage (which speaks of the “pure spirit”) issues from Santayana’s doctrine of spirit’s *self-consciousness of*, its *witnessing to*, the realms of essence and existence. In this way, I am arguing, he has placed “the life of the spirit” at the very heart of his position.

For Santayana, therefore, consciousness is not supervenient in the current literary sense of the word. If anything, it is in Dewey’s framework which marks “events,”

and substance translates his *hypokeimenon*, meaning “that which lies under,” which Aristotle generalized to mean both the material cause and the composite of material and formal causes. He read the Presocratics and Democritus in his own procrustean way on the basis of these abstract distinctions. A close analysis brings out that Santayana reconfigured the sense of these various Aristotelian terms by reinvesting them with the meanings of the Presocratics, Democritus, and Plato

<sup>13</sup> Santayana goes on to note that it is apparently only on higher levels of human consciousness, which are genetically secondary, that nature produces “events,” where movement becomes rhythmical, involving units of dynamic animal perception and providing the empirical impression that nature is a series of “events,” when in fact there are only essences succeeding one another in the mock psychological world of epistemology or historicism (OS 230). Higher animal consciousness is genetically secondary because it is cerebrally fore-grounded consciousness, and cerebral consciousness is rooted in temporally unfathomable “dark psyches” whose roots reach down into the endlessly labyrinthine layers of living Nature. It is in this perspective of dark psyche that Dewey’s cerebral foreground is energized by Care—which is the fate of all animals rooting around for survival and prosperity in nature—whereas the “life of the spirit” in its refined vivifications transcends the care-driven beliefs and projects of ephemeral consciousness.

<sup>14</sup> EGP, p. 154 and *passim*. It can be pointed out that the provenance of this line of contrasting the ancient Indian Spirit with the modern Western *Weltgeist*, and indeed of the entire trajectory of Santayana’s impugment of “egotism” in German philosophy, is the writings of Schopenhauer. His interpretation of religion, and especially of modern Protestant religion, as in the “Reason in Religion” volume of *The Life of Reason*, can similarly be shown to have been indebted to Schopenhauer.

“situations,” “culminations” and “projects” that these designations are ghostly apparitions within the natural processes of historical transformations.<sup>15</sup>

The *spiritual life* can be described as supervenient in the sense that it is dependent upon the realm of matter and the realm of essence for its moments of natural existence. Matter and essence are the ingredients, so to speak, of the intuitions of consciousness. But in another fundamental respect—conspicuously emphasized by Santayana in the culminating pages of RB—the life of the pure spirit is “processional”: it faces—or, we can say—interfaces with the realm of truth; moreover, it has its own integrity and vivacity in its autonomous enjoyment of essence, thereby realizing an ontological parity with the realms of matter and essence. Spirit is most preeminently truthful in its artistic and moral life.<sup>16</sup>

These conclusions go remarkably beyond the parameters of Dewey’s metaphysical naturalism qua social pragmatism. They rather follow from Santayana’s farther-ranging ontological doctrine which maintains that, like the realm of matter or substance, the realm of spirit is an existential realm; at the same time, like the realms of essence and truth, it is an immaterial realm. It is the only realm that is both immaterial and existential. Thus, he says, spirit autonomously exists, though it has no physical force. It expresses substance without describing it, while aspiring to the truth. In its poverty and vulnerability, it is poetic and free. In its most refined fruitions, it is the enjoyment of essence, as nothing less than “the ultimate manifestation of power and the first pure actualization of form,” as he wrote later in the concluding section of his four volume *Realms of Being* (RB 850).

In was in terms of this co-implicative philosophy of living nature and of vivacious spirit that Santayana’s drew a skeptical bead on Dewey’s EN. His review suggested that Dewey’s and any other historicist-constructivist’s philosophy are not capable of expounding a viable theory of truth—the truth, namely, of living nature and of the solitary, indomitable, intense spirit’s witnessing to the facts of nature and history as well as to its own ideal fruitions in its poetic and moral life. For his part, Santayana laid up his treasure in heaven.

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<sup>15</sup> The terms epiphenomenal and supervenient, meaning posterior and consequent, translate the Greek term *epigennematikon*, as used for example by the Stoics.)

<sup>16</sup> It is important to disambiguate Santayana’s phrase “the suspension of belief.” The phrase has its provenance in the Greek Skeptics, and it is taken over from them by Hume. Santayana uses the phrase in the context of expressing two different thoughts: (1) of consciousness’s skeptical *reversion* to the realm of essence, and (2) of its vivacious *procession* in “the life of the spirit.” In the former sense, skepticism is *a-veridical*, a reversion to the immediate in a solipsism of the present moment, a momentary release from the urgent and dogmatic beliefs of animal faith. In the second sense it is *veridical*, a witness to the truth, that is, the truth of the facts of nature and of its own self-consciousness. This latter sense involves the trajectory of spirit’s aesthetic and moral intensity, vivacity, and fruition—of the pure intuition of essence in its pursuit and discovery of the truth, beauty, and goodness of the world. The dogmatic skeptic, such as the ancient Pyrrhonian, is a mystic of the abstract essence of Pure Being, whereas the life of the concrete spirit involves poetic and moral sensibilities that positively transform and redeem the world. Santayana’s term “omnimodal” has similarly to be parsed in this double sense.

# Santayana Read from a Perspective of Polish Post-Communism

Eastern Europe's political turmoil associated with the collapse of Communism deserves the name of *revolution*; it has been a gigantic political, social, intellectual, and moral quake that has destroyed the hitherto *status quo* and has given place to a completely new one.<sup>1</sup> The walls have collapsed and new vistas opened. Before there was imposed a black and white scheme of things (for instance, atheistic communism against religion) with a clear distinction between good and bad — what behooves one to do and what not. Now there has emerged a multifarious panorama of ways, methods, choices, and poses to take up. Liberty has been won; however, it did not take long to learn that liberty, when offered to the unprepared, immature, and unfit, might become a curse. As a consequence of this, the beliefs and convictions of ordinary people have started either to fall or undergo radical revisions, not to say distortions; ultimate truths have dissolved, and many of the previous values became valueless overnight. On the other hand, a rapid and uncontrolled influx of new ideas, religions, sects, doctrines, ideologies, philosophies, and fashions has had to be confronted: spiritual disorientation and intellectual helplessness became rife. The danger of axiological and cultural catastrophe loomed large. What had, for many years prior to the revolution, been firmly believed in, deeply relied on, and unlimitedly trusted to, were seen to be relative and/or dependent upon the circumstances: economic, political, cultural, even geographical. The absolute values, for which there had been a sometimes life-long struggle, were seen differently after the victory, when liberty had been gained and the free world had to be faced in its full complexity. Many people became dazed and confused; paradoxically, instead of becoming intellectually open and willing to absorb what has been offered by the free world, they seem to have closed themselves before the unknown. They seemed unable to cope with this, which sometimes strengthened conservatism and kindled fanaticism. For others, the need to redefine their own identity anew became clear and urgent. Cultural life can hardly tolerate an empty space for long, and this started to be filled in different ways immediately.

It is not my intention to embrace all the aspects of the situation in the post-Communist era, nor do I have in mind a full presentation of George Santayana's philosophy. In the present paper, three selected problems have been posed from the perspective of a Pole (or, broader, an Eastern European) in order to show that Santayana has something important and stimulating to say to modern Eastern Europeans, who have to face the challenges of the future and wrestle with the heritage of the totalitarian past.<sup>2</sup>

I try to transcend the historical limitations (i.e. the end of 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries) and geographical ones (i.e. American, Bostonian or Harvardian)

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<sup>1</sup> I should like to thank Dean Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. for making possible a seven month research visit to IUPUI (of which this paper is one of results) and introducing me both to American academia and Santayana's philosophy. At the same time, I am very grateful to The Kosciuszko Foundation for supporting my studies on Santayana in the US.

<sup>2</sup> The problem of squaring with the past (Communism, Marxism, Nazism, Fascism) in the light of Santayana's philosophy deserves a separate paper.

conferred upon Santayana's thought by some American critics<sup>3</sup> and to suggest a more universal dimension of this philosophy.

### What to do with a newly acquired liberty?

In *Dominations and Powers* (DP), the executive impotence of the UN has been compared to the old Polish law where an individual right to veto was guaranteed. Indeed, in 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century Poland, there was a legal regulation allowing the members of parliament to break the diet just by means of calling out *liberum veto*; no justification was required. This principle of unanimity, which paralyzed the government and encouraged anarchy, was seen by the nobility to be their guarantee of liberty and detachment. Yet the borderline between freedom and anarchy, and between order and chaos, was blurred. This sort of predicament loomed large in the 1990s, immediately after the Soviet oppression had been eradicated, its limitations thrown away, and freedom regained, but before a new order had been established. A new lesson of moral economy, of respect for others, and of self-discipline had to be begun at once.

Poland's *Solidarity* movement in 1980, which was followed by struggles in other nations of the region (Hungarian, Czech, Lithuanian, and East German), initiated for each a spontaneous nation-wide struggle against subjugation. In the beginning, the aim voiced by the rebel leaders was merely a loosening the curbs of the system, which had repressed the people and corrupted the institutions. The concepts articulated by the revolutionary leaders were predominantly negative — for instance to reduce injustice — but offered hardly anything constructive to aim at. The future envisaged by the freedom fighters had seemed clear up to the moment of victory. All the vital energies had been unanimously and passionately given to the destruction of the Communist system; once, however, this had been achieved, the aftermath unexpectedly became an even bigger challenge. Veterans at struggling *against*, the revolutionists and their numerous supporters were scarcely prepared to struggle *for*, exactly according to Santayana's observations (DP 47) that those engaged in grand scale reforms have an obscure idea of the post-victory period, where construction, not deconstruction, is to be the common goal. During the long period of strife before the victory, the enemy had been easily defined and the main obstacles identified and named. Afterwards, one of the fresh democracy's greatest problems had become the prevailing feeling that now everything is possible, that a do-what-you-want-to-do attitude should be dominant, where any restrictions imposed on the citizens evoked suspicions of a return to the restraints of the previous system. For example, it was a natural reaction of the new political elites to dissolve such structures of the state as the intelligence service or corrupt tax collection on the ground that they had played a major role in the just abolished dictatorship; this resulted, however, in uncontrolled intensification of crime, a tyranny of violence, and the dissemination of vice. The danger of anarchy and belligerence showed its face as never before. Among the questions most dramatically asked has been: what to do with the just regained liberty?

It would be naïve to claim that Santayana has found a remedy to the problems under discussion. No one has. The effort to rebuild the post-Soviet countries is a time-consuming collective one. However, some inspiration to answer the question put above is incorporated both in his writings and his life:

The thirst for vacant freedom may nonetheless be a sign of inner fullness, when a people or an art is really able to guide itself better than tradition or tutelage could guide it. In this case

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, Spanish scholars see Santayana differently.

the freedom gained in the open would be vital liberty. Then the desired reform, if grafted on the right tree in an appropriate climate, might absorb substance where it had asked only for freedom, and might merge in a united and persistent public life. But more often it is blind constraint that provokes rebellion. A foreign domination seems to be a disgrace or a rival home government a disaster (DP 48).

Does Santayana show such a chance for creative action in the field of culture, in the midst of widespread disorder and uncertainty? I think he does, as a living contribution to a living tradition that refuses to confine human culture, exclusively or mainly, to a tool for something else: now increasing human welfare (as technocracy suggests), now justifying dominance over others (as ideology often does), now relieving ignorance (as myths and fables do) now serving as a ticket to a salvation (that religion seeks to give).<sup>4</sup> According to the ancient understanding, culture is a cultivation of reason and spirit for their own sake; it is accompanied by a quest for truth about oneself and the world beyond, an endeavor to realize one's vital potentiality, and an appreciation of the variety of possible ways of these realizations. It also offers a theoretical concept of actualizing the fullest realization of one's particular vitality with the acceptance for the fullest realization of other people's potentialities; it is able, thus, to place an individual in the world of values and states of affairs. Is this tantamount to anarchy and self-destruction? No, if we take into consideration two things, that natural development is determined in part biologically (structurally, genetically) and in part socially. It is only within these constraints that an individual may thrive more or less freely. Just within these limitations a human being should be left free. Liberty comes out of order and not the opposite: harmony within an individual, harmony amongst individuals, harmony between individuals and the environment — these are the paths leading to liberty. It does not mean a spontaneous creativity that forgets the past: Santayana is known for his view that learning history is important. It was he who stressed the necessity of studying the past to help cope with the future, warning that "those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."<sup>5</sup>

While philosophy for the Greeks was the refinement of their civilization, for the Romans it was law and order. In Santayana's thought there is a tendency to reconcile the two, a striving to show that they are not mutually exclusive, that it is possible to make room for cultural, intellectual, moral, and social diversity within the restrictions of the legal system and economic order, reaching at a harmony "conditioned by difference." In general, these curbs require the minimization of conflicts among individuals, leading to a rational harmonization of the various forms of life and action. Respect for and execution of law seem today to be better frames within which diverse concepts of social order may be reconciled. In other words, the anarchist *liberum veto* must be replaced by better laws, which, at the same time, guarantee individuals' freedom to thrive, prosper, and develop within society. Cultural expression, within these limits, should be fully democratic: "the natural virtue of each age, place, and person is what a good democracy would secure — not uniformity".<sup>6</sup> The doctrine of essence may be a good metaphysical ground for such a multiplicity of aims and perfections, and for a sensitivity to various forms of individual and social life.

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<sup>4</sup> See G. Santayana, *Soliloquies in England* (chapter 42); see also: G. Santayana, *Animal Faith and Spiritual Life*. Edited by J. Lachs, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, 1967, pp. 449-461; DP 128-129.

<sup>5</sup> G. Santayana, *Reason in Common Sense*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905, p. 284.

<sup>6</sup> "Dear Corliss". *Letters from Eminent Persons*, Edited by Corliss Lamont. Buffalo, New York: Prometheus Books, 1990, p. 181.

## The problem of religion

In *Persons and Places* (PP), the author recollects having met Madame Paderewska (wife of the eminent Polish politician, pianist and composer), and asked her about “the fidelity of the men in Poland to the Church.” She responded that “they all *had* to remain good Catholics, because a soul lost to the Church meant a soul lost to Poland.” Santayana commented on this conversation in the following way: “This Eastern way of identifying religion with nationality gave me a useful hint for the interpretation of both” (PP 85). Indeed, Mrs. Paderewska’s opinion, which, even after so many years, can be shared by so many Poles today, pertinently touches the problem, which emerges and prevails in situations when the nation’s continuous predicament requires sacrifices, renunciation, and struggle. The religious demands overlap the national ones, making all of them omnipresent and almost obligatory. Poles, who had to face German (Protestant) and Russian (Orthodox) indoctrinations, became accustomed to sacrifices in the name of their own identity through the generations. Religious dissention could mean (and often did mean) an act of treachery against the fatherland. The defense of the country had dovetailed with the preservation of religious belief as well as of the native language. The Catholic faith has become a symbol-giver to the masses and the need to manifest these goes beyond the purely religious needs of those who manifest them. This way, Polish Catholicism has lost its balance: spiritually and intellectually very shallow, but emotionally very close to the heart of everyone.<sup>7</sup> What course, then, should the country follow when it is no longer (at least for the time being) at danger?

Santayana’s thought offers an attractive and sensitive way of bridging this dualism. He has worked out a philosophy showing that the split does not have to exist if we look at the problem from another angle of view: to transcend the locally rooted forms of beliefs and find out to what they are really directed; not to favor one type of sacral culture to other, but to penetrate to a more universal basis. Even though the dogmas of religion should not be taken as literally true, they do express, often in a very elaborate and beautiful way, truths about humans and human existence. Although it is not easy to name this object of respect or piety, one may follow Santayana in calling it the omnificent power of nature, or sticking to better known terms, fate or lot (OS 176). Anyway, it is this which is experienced by all of us all the time in all variety of modes; in a good way, when one is overjoyed with the birth of a baby, and in a bad way, when one learns that the baby suffers from cancer. It is this power that fixes one’s destiny to be born in a rich family and in a safe country, or, with no less vital potential, to be born in a place where one is forced to suffer, fight, and die for trifles. More generally speaking, it is this power that determines the structure, vital needs, and the time to pass away for all living beings. Its omnificence is feared and meditated, its superiority respected and worshipped, its expressions studied, and its mightiness symbolized. It may evoke spirituality in those who are sensitive to the mystery of the world, quite independent of the place or time. Very many of them find their repose in religions, but it is hardly necessary; the appreciation and apprehension of the message transmitted by religion becomes possible without embracing religious dogmas and codes, these being cultural and historical outgrowths of something much deeper. Sometimes these outgrowths constitute a fixed social convention; sometimes they evolve and get adopted due to the changing needs of believers. The kernel, however, is permanently

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<sup>7</sup> Thus, a striking masquerade can be seen nowadays: on the one hand the Polish Pope is being widely and undisputedly recognized to be the pre-eminent authority figure; on the other hand, his moral precepts (on promiscuity, divorce, abortion, consumption, love) are habitually ignored.

valid, because the human being is permanently vulnerable to the natural conditions imposed on every aspect of his/her existence.

Santayana makes a very important contribution to understanding and appreciating religion without subscribing to its dogmas. He saw it as a means of symbolic expression of multi-dimensional human confrontation with the world. At the same time, he did not reduce it to its natural basis, and in this way did not devalue it. One may speculate that this way of dealing with sacral traditions is not only stimulating but also that it might become a commonly accepted attitude in the future.

### Americanization: a resource or a burden?

By Americanization I understand a complex of processes uniquely connected with the culture of the United States that is imposed (economically and politically) upon other parts of the world, which may be completely alien culturally and incompatible (like Eastern Europe). The problem of Americanization gains dramatic importance nowadays, not only in post-Soviet shabby economies and vulnerable national traditions, but also elsewhere. Its seriousness must not be ignored; the neglect of serious analysis may lead to uncritical, unprepared, and shallow apprehension of this influence. Tragic events of today's world show that instead of talking about *contacts* we have to deal with *confrontations* — the September 11<sup>th</sup> tragedy being the most spectacular. In the case of Eastern Europe, the fear of losing national identity leads to various forms of defense, including anxiety and xenophobic tendencies; however, it is ignorance, superstition, and prejudice that are the most widespread consequences of this abandonment. For example, such American values as freedom or democracy are often seen to be a sort of permissiveness rather than an appeal for personal responsibility, respect towards law, and willingness to contribute to community welfare; the word "business" is associated with easy access to big money than with hard work; free market is said to stimulate consumption rather than creativity.<sup>8</sup>

Santayana's experiences may be worthy of our attention, especially because he resisted letting the new cultural milieu shake his own fundamental traditional allegiances. His intellectual confrontation with America was direct and prolonged. The 40 years in The United States covered boyhood, education, and professorship at Harvard — a long enough time to get saturated with the atmosphere of a new habitat. Indeed, his devotion to writing (and thinking?) in an adopted English language seems a sufficient reason to classify him as an American author. A kill-or-be-killed perspective looming over the frontiers between clashing cultures, so exciting for some and so feared by others, might seem to be confirmed in this case, with a Spaniard becoming an American. On closer inspection, however, the result of this encounter is not so one-sided. The thinker's emigration back to Europe (at the height of his thriving professional career in the United States), his strong reserve towards the American philosophical scene, and his own distancing from being classified as an American show that his emotional and/or intellectual ties with America were not so strong (PGS 601-2). Spirituality, contemplation, and a cult of antiquity — conspicuous features of his system — do not fit in with the practical, down to earth, prosperity oriented American mentality. That is why Santayana's case may be seen as a good illustration, not only to an East European, that the meeting with a more expansive American culture does not have to mean intellectual subjugation. The philosopher shows that — unlike

<sup>8</sup> As a result the best known ambassadors of America to many countries, especially the poorest ones, seem to be cheap Hollywood productions, Macdonald's, and Mike Tyson — all of them promoting rather easy access to an easy life.

a wealth of nameless creators whose ideas and systems got dissolved in the American melting pot — he has been enriched and strengthened after having been brought face to face with the overwhelming power of a foreign cultural milieu. His importance, in this aspect, lies in showing that this does not have to be a *confrontation* but a *meeting*. In other words, Americanization for a lot of people may be a challenge to cope with rather than merely an evil to fight against.

Also Santayana's theoretical output may be perceived with advantage in this context. Instead of helplessly reiterating that the American culture "strives to throw off, as useless parasites and impediments, all the older traditions of mankind",<sup>9</sup> he shows that it is we, the representatives of these old and less expansive cultures that should do our best to make American culture enriching to us without becoming oppressive; we might use modern (American) technology to preserve ancient manuscripts or promote orthodox liturgy on the Internet. Santayana makes a few crucial points. First, he notices, that American political and economic hegemony should be perceived not in terms of assault and aggression to be afraid of, but in terms of the tendencies proper to all peoples, especially as far as material conditions of human free existence are concerned; these, he adds, have been developed by Americans in the best way. Thus, it ought to be recognized and followed because "in questions of universal peace and universal trade their [Americans'] self-interest coincides with that of all other nations, or would at least to do so if it were clearly understood and strictly confined to material economy" (DP 459). These prophetic words, written a couple of decades ago, could be marred only by the problem of misapplication into a new reality, for example, introduction of the free market economy with the minimum of side effects. It should be added that Santayana's notes seem thought-provoking also in the issue of US as a world leader (DP 453, 456); they have been strikingly confirmed lately in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the impotency and helplessness of the United Nations Organization as well as the European Union was eventually stopped by the United States' military intervention.

This is connected with the second point which is typical for the American mentality, namely, priority of action and its effectiveness; it can be easily opposed by proverbial Polish ranting, speculativeness, and ineffectiveness<sup>10</sup>, which have been very appropriately illustrated by Santayana in the phrase: "Polish poets planning a fresh creation of the universe" (PP 319). Indeed, one of the consequences of this unlucky impotence has been the ever-present call for help — usually from Western Europeans, lately from Americans, always from Heaven. A balance and harmony between a focus on practicality, respect for a down-to-earth reality, esteem for endeavor, willingness to risk, respect for prosperity on the one hand, and for preserving the heritage on the other — it is also a part of a lesson to learn. Santayana's approach may also encourage a stance whose gist is to substitute, for a continual critique of American commercialization, a positive effort to actualize *one's own* potentialities.

Although the American melting pot is able to absorb diverse cultures on a superficial level, American commercialism has been frequently accused of its inability to admit intellectually different schemes of values. This, in a sense, dovetails with the difference between the American mentality and a non-American one. For instance, the

<sup>9</sup> G. Santayana, *The Idler and his Works, and Other Essays*. Edited by D. Cory. George Braziller, Inc., New York, 1957, p. 52.

<sup>10</sup> This probably resulted, at least to some degree, from the nation's constant and vain fight against the plagues of misfortunes - the biggest of them being the geographical location between far more powerful Germany and Russia. Happily, now, at the turn of millennia, the circumstances seem radically different: long time enemies have become partners and friends.

American concept of a self-made men assumed that (adult, mentally healthy) humans know their own interests and are able to secure them, if left alone, and this is the way leading to the happiness of all. The orientation toward prosperity tied to this, it is often said, cannot be grafted onto other traditions and mentalities. Santayana's great achievement is that he has survived intellectually and spiritually, while being able to harmonize himself with these opposing pressures; he used these cultural oppositions and turned them into art and let them stimulate his spiritual development. Santayana may be seen an example of how to treat Americanization as a resource to enrich and strengthen one's life and not as a burden to be purged.

### Conclusion

By a dead philosophy I understand one that has only historical importance and can only be studied to show the dependencies and influences amongst intellectual trends in the past. By a living philosophy I understand one that, apart from its place on the cultural scene of the past is a resource to be explored and offers a set of ideas offering new solutions in new circumstances. Santayana's thought seems to have an attractive message to be discovered and promoted in new political and cultural contexts in Eastern Europe and elsewhere. I hope that the selection of the issues presented above — each of which deserves a further development — can be seen as an introductory draft for a deeper investigation into Santayana's thought and its interpretation in the light of some problems of the modern world. Last, but not least at all, the interest in Santayana's work may be a very creative element in encouraging intellectual cooperation and cultural recognition between American, Hispanic, Spanish and Eastern European scholars and students; these sorts of contacts have always been a way to transcend geographical borders, psychological barriers, and cultural obstacles.

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## Two Philosophical Psychologists

With its cognitive revolution, professional psychology has vastly increased an already considerable knowledge of the human mind. Philosophers cannot but take note of this, and this is especially true of the writings of psychologists who turn their attention to philosophical issues — philosophical psychologists. I look briefly at recent books by two of these. It is written in memory of a third, Ken Bowers.

Santayana offers a concept of spirit that is entirely impotent; it consists of feelings as feelings, conscious awareness as awareness, with no consideration of the possible sources of these, assumed to rest in the realm of matter. This notion has been criticized, and the critique would be justified if spirit is meant to be part of a solution to the mind/body problem. It is not, and Santayana sees any possible explanation of the emergence of mind as a question about matter. If a solution is forthcoming, it will be given by science. It is of some interest, I believe, that each of the psychologists under consideration deal at length with specific mental phenomena that are impotent and would be treated by Santayana as special cases of spirit.

Antonio Damasio gives us a fascinating and original study of the grounds and function of human feelings; written as a popular text, it is nevertheless a serious discussion of philosophical issues fully informed by experimental results.<sup>1</sup> He acknowledges the importance of feelings to everything human, and has initiated experimental investigations of these in respect to their sources in the brain. As its title suggests, his book makes Spinoza's treatment of the emotions a central theme, tying it into his ongoing scientific study of human feelings and emotions. In the third and fourth books of the *Ethics*, Spinoza deals at length with the nature and strength of the emotions, and offers an extended list entitled "Definitions of the Emotions." Damasio is attracted to the part that the body plays in Spinoza's account of these emotions; of particular interest to him is the separation made by Spinoza between *bodily* emotions and *conscious* feelings — a distinction that he wants to enforce in order to facilitate his study of the feelings. We tend to speak of emotions and feelings as indistinguishable, but he finds their separation is important to an understanding of each.

The human mind, says Spinoza, is the idea of the human body; much of our ignorance of the human mind stems from our ignorance of the body; the mind is capable of perceiving many things in proportion of the body receiving many modifications; joy (sorrow) is associated with an increase (decrease) of bodily perfection. These and many others of Spinoza's propositions mesh nicely with Damasio's account of emotions and feelings and his position on the mind/body problem. He finds experimental evidence for these, and indeed fully endorses "William James's conjecture that when we feel emotions we perceive body states" (D 105).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Antonio Damasio. *Looking for Spinoza: Joy, Sorrow, and the Feeling Brain* (Orlando: Harcourt, 2003). To be cited simply as D in small caps.

<sup>2</sup> This would make a feeling into a kind of knowledge. According to Santayana's view of perception and knowledge, the essence intuited is unlikely to be the same as the essence of the thing perceived. In order for a perception to count as a genuine instance of knowledge, what is needed is functional success in interactions with matter applying it. This applies to ordinary perception, and no less to the observations and theories of science. With Damasio, this view of perception is carried to an altogether higher level. Even our feelings are, in a sense, instances of

Another of the classics of Western philosophy, Hume's *Treatise*, presents a similar list of definitions of the human passions in the second of three books; and a philosopher of science might suggest that the empiricist Hume would be a better resource than the rationalist Spinoza for the experimental psychologist. However, Damasio would not find what he is looking for in Hume — a substantial basis or substrate for feelings in the brain. An empiricist philosophy that rejects substance cannot provide this; Hume deals always with psychological entities, with ideas and impressions, without setting them in their substantial sources. Notwithstanding Spinoza's uncompromising rationalism, then, and notwithstanding the likelihood that the empiricist philosopher of science is well versed in science, it is to Spinoza that Damasio the scientist looks. Santayana holds that empiricism, with its rejection of substance, is alien to science; perhaps his view gets some indirect support from the position of this scientist.

Few twentieth century philosophers acknowledge Spinoza as their master; however, Santayana does so, and indeed singles him out as the only one of the moderns truly deserving of the title philosopher. In large part, his admiration was directed at the uncompromising naturalism of Spinoza's discussion of morality. Although some see such an egoistic approach as destructive of morality, Santayana argues that only in these terms, where the good is relative to human interests, can morality have any purchase on human life. This admiration went beyond ethics, however, and Santayana praises the naturalism he finds in Spinoza's treatment of mind (although the parallel framework he found unworkable). For the most sound discussion of mind, Santayana says, we must look to Aristotle. However, Spinoza's uncompromising rejection of any super-naturalistic source for mind offers a correction to Aristotle's position. Spinoza ties the wonders of mind to little understood complications in the body, a view embraced by Santayana, although at the time when he was writing, this view was not the commonplace opinion that it is today. The origins of mind are fully natural.<sup>3</sup>

For Spinoza, our conviction that conscious will is a spring for our actions is an illusion. Physical motions can only be initiated by other physical motions, all within the attribute of body. Through our ignorance of the complications of our bodies, we tend by default to take the will as the source of our actions. However, will falls under the attribute of thought, and cannot initiate bodily motions. More concrete reasons for doubting the causal force of the conscious will have been given in experimental psychology. A convincing list of these has been presented by Daniel M. Wegner in his *The Illusion of Conscious Will*.<sup>4</sup> Wegner does not allege that persons are powerless to act, but only that the conscious will is an unreliable sign of the true origins of action. For his thesis that our sensation of conscious will is illusory, Wegner's fine text offers evidence that is telling, comprehensive, and bears the imprimatur of experimental science; it cannot be ignored. As Wegner suggests, many philosophers are reluctant to abandon the authority of the conscious will. It is seen by some as essential to our self-image and to the validity of our notion of responsibility. However, he cites Spinoza's

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what Santayana must call knowledge, that is to say, self-knowledge. The object of knowledge is a bodily state, known through a map in the brain, while the intuition is the pure feeling of pain, or pleasure, or dread.

<sup>3</sup> As against Spinoza's pantheism, Santayana holds that what is divine about the human spirit, to the extent that it is divine, rests in the ideal objects loved and worshipped, not at all in the human psyche.

<sup>4</sup> Daniel M. Wegner. *The Illusion of Conscious Will* (Cambridge MA: MIT Press, 2002). To be cited simply as *W* in small caps.

argument that our belief in free will is illusory, and seems plausible only because we are aware that we carry out actions, but are entirely unconscious of the sources of these actions (w 28). Santayana — a student of William James as well as an admirer of Spinoza — offers views on conscious will in full agreement with the findings of Wegner:

Surely if anything ever had a cause and was evidently secondary, it is human will and fancy; to take them for absolute beings, or original powers, would be to allow theoretical sophistries to blind us to the plainest facts. If I want water, it is because my throat is parched; if I dream of love, it is because sex is ripening within me. Nature has fixed the character, and circumstances have fixed the occasion, for this ferment of desire and conception. Conscious will is a symptom, not a cause; its roots as well as its consequences are invisible to it, material, and often incongruous and astonishing.<sup>5</sup>

According to Santayana, the will is caused rather than causing; it occurs as an instance of spirit.<sup>6</sup>

This brings to the fore the question of what might be substituted for conscious will. Some will say that, if it is indeed impotent, humans are powerless against external forces that determine their actions. Wegner puts the question in these terms, and begins by asking whether we consciously cause what we do, or whether instead our actions *happen to us*. Many accept these as genuine opposites, and exhaustive ones; these endorse conscious will as the true locus of the struggle to make choices, with scepticism as the only alternative. Wegner offers a somewhat different approach, however, saying that in a sense one may give an affirmative answer to both questions:

Yes, we feel that we consciously cause what we do; and yes, our actions happen to us. Rather than opposites, conscious will and psychological determinism can be friends. Such friendship comes from realizing that the feeling of conscious will is created by the mind and brain just as human actions themselves are created by the mind and brain. (W ix)

When Wegner concedes that “our actions happen to us,” this certainly suggests an externally imposed determinism; however, he immediately clarifies his meaning. The *mind and brain*, something not at all external, is the cause of the action, and at the same time creates the feeling of conscious will. To the extent that we identify ourselves with our conscious will, then, our actions may be said to happen to us; but instead of this, should we not identify ourselves with the true sources of our actions — our mind and brain?

Although Wegner appeals several times to “mind and brain” in the context, for the most part he depends on a more experimentally verifiable term. In place of the suspect notion of conscious will, Wegner offers *empirical will*, something tied to actions in a manner open to experimental verification. It is meant as a scientific substitute for the unreliable conscious or phenomenal will:

But we must be careful to distinguish between such *empirical will* — the causality of the person’s conscious thoughts as established by a scientific analysis of their covariation with the person’s behavior — and the *phenomenal will* — the person’s reported experience of

<sup>5</sup> See (RB 313). (For a list of abbreviations used here, see page 42 below.)

<sup>6</sup> Although Santayana uses the term ‘cause’ in this context, he notes that this is a somewhat inapt use of the term. The notion of causality presupposed some field of contact in which the cause and the effect have the same status and where a transfer of energy takes place; and he does not see conscious experience as in any way commensurate with material forces (POML 27). It is more satisfactory, and more true to his philosophy to speak of a material substance behind the conscious experience of thoughts, pleasures and pains; and Damasio does just this, speaking of the brain as the *substrate* of feelings (W 105-8). Santayana’s philosophy is “substrative” to an extraordinary extent.

will. The empirical will can be measured by examining the actual degree of constant conjunction between the person's self-reported conscious thought and the person's action, and by assessing the causal role of that thought in the context of other possible causes of the action (and possible causes of the thought as well). But the precise causal understanding of the conscious will that is captured in such discussions is not something that is linked in any direct way to the person's experience of will. (w 14)

Wegner's empirical will serves his purposes very well, replacing the unreliable notion of conscious will with a measurable psychological variable. The repeated tests built into this definition are ideal for valid scientific inquiry. Still, he speaks at times as though covariation in itself constitutes a cause. Empirical will is defined as "the causality of the person's conscious thoughts as established by a scientific analysis of their covariation with the person's behavior." I believe that a philosophical discussion of action in the moral context requires more than covariation; in the absence of some locus for the application of empirical will — some seat for it in the human frame — the interpreter is likely to revert to conscious will as the source of action. Although less precise, the appeal he makes from time to time to the causality of "mind and brain" seems preferable in a philosophical context.

Wegner mentions (although he does not use) Hume's argument to discredit conscious will: it cannot be a force residing in a person, for it is subject to his famous argument against causality in general. Since there is no *perceived* relation between cause and effect, he infers that the notion of causality is a human construction that accompanies the constant union between the two. In this respect, Hume says, the actions of the mind are akin to those of matter. Since we are not conscious of any connection between our desires and actions supposedly based on these desires (the very point made by Spinoza), Hume concludes that there can be no more than a constant conjunction between the two (a conclusion not drawn by Spinoza). The force of causality is relegated to a habit of mind forced on us by repetition. He renounces a real causal force; or better, he does not much concern himself with it, and turns his attention always to how ideas arise in our mind. From the same hypothesis, Spinoza does not see reasons to be sceptical, and assumes the existence of unperceived bodily forces of change in general, in which incidents of causal effects participate.

At times, Wegner refers to his empirical will, a mere covariation, as a causal force, suggesting that he sees causality in the weak Humean sense. This would be misleading. He does not succumb to this sceptical notion of cause, and indeed cannot, for his book deals with genuine causes on almost every page. Indeed, Wegner disposes of all Humean scepticism when he says that conscious will itself is caused in an unknown way by the mind and brain. While 'mind and brain' is a vague and unscientific term, it perhaps offers a more persuasive escape than does 'empirical will' from the illusion that will dispenses power.

In dealing with the will, Santayana makes a distinction between 'will' with lower case *w*, which is the conscious will, and 'Will' with upper case *W*, which is "the observable endeavour in things of any sort to develop a specific form and to preserve it" (RB 607). The usage is suggestive of Schopenhauer, to whom he refers when he introduces the convention. The driving force behind physical change of all kinds (including any that might be attributed to mind) is called Will. This term may sound excessively metaphorical, and Santayana is fully aware that he is not introducing a scientific concept. Indeed, he cautions the reader to remember that he uses the term "poetically." Santayana's Will corresponds closely to the *conatus* used by Spinoza for the engine of change in the world. The two naturalist philosophers see human agency as grounded in that part of *conatus* or Will residing in the human body. For both, these forces of agency are subterranean and hidden from us. When Santayana wishes to

speak of conscious will, however, he consistently uses a lower case *w*; 'will' in this sense may be a guide to the operations of Will in oneself, but it is far from reliable, being prone to error and serious miscalculation. It is, of course, precisely that conscious will about which Wegner is writing.

Neither Will nor conatus can pass muster as scientific variables. It is of interest, however, that Damasio readily accepts Spinoza's conatus in his discussions. He finds it important in his quest for philosophical understanding, and for this reason allows it into his ontology, notwithstanding its shortcomings as an experimental variable. Empiricist philosophers may question the use of notions lacking in empirical backing, and may contend that they can play no part in valid explanation. Damasio recognizes that the kind of philosophical arguments he is considering force him to make some use of terms that fail to have scientific grounding. Of course, Santayana's notions of psyche and Will fall squarely into this non-scientific category, and are apt to be disparaged by analytic philosophers. I note with pleasure that a practitioner of science does not accept these empiricist fetters.

Damasio's feelings and Wegner's conscious will are two excellent examples of Santayana's general category of spirit. Feelings are shown by Damasio to arise in a substrate and to have no powers in themselves. They are tied to emotions, and it is these which must be included among the engines of human endeavour. Wegner's conscious will is shown decisively to be impotent, and to be caused rather than causal. The mind and brain at a deeper level constitute the genuine causal force, of which conscious will is at best an untrustworthy sign. Both are careful to exclude dynamic potency from the feature under consideration. This is characteristic of Santayana's entire realm of spirit, which encompasses the full range of phenomenal experience: sensation, passion, thought, will, feelings. All instances of spirit are considered as active intuitions of essence, quite apart from material and causal considerations. It is part of his definition of spirit that nothing but the conscious awareness is included.

Of spirit, Santayana offers this cryptic marginal heading: "its supposed powers are the effects of its causes" (RB 635). Some such doctrine might be expected of all those who denigrate the powers of the conscious will, or of thought in general, in carrying out actions. T. H. Huxley (as cited by Wegner) makes this a part of his epiphenomenalist doctrine: "The feeling we call volition is not the cause of the voluntary act, but simply the symbol in consciousness of that stage of the brain which is the immediate cause of the act" (w 29). When Santayana says of consciousness that its supposed powers are the effects of *its* causes, he appeals to *psyche* as the causal agent, the source of these powers. By this term, he refers to the material configuration of an animal life to which actions (and thoughts) can be traced. Psyche is the form that universal Will or conatus takes in animals: It is "no separate supernatural principle, but only a moving harmony or equilibrium maintaining itself more or less perfectly in each organism until death breaks it down altogether" (RB 679). To arrive at this concept, he says, "I must thicken and substantialise the self I believe in," and recognise in it "a nature that accepts or rejects events, a nature having a movement of its own far deeper, more continuous and more biassed than a discoursing mind" (SAF 147). The self posited is a living psyche. As this passage suggests, one of Santayana's chief motivations is to make a sharp distinction between psyche and consciousness or spirit.

Avoiding, then, this poetical word, the soul, laden with so many equivocations, I will beg the reader to distinguish sharply two levels of life in the human body, one of which I call *the spirit*, and the other *the psyche*. By spirit I understand the actual light of consciousness falling upon anything—the ultimate invisible emotional fruition of life in feeling and thought. On the other hand, by the psyche I understand a system of tropes, inherited or

acquired, displayed by living bodies in their growth and behaviour. This psyche is the specific form of physical life, present and potential, asserting itself in any plant or animal. (RB 331)

Spirit is the actual light of consciousness falling on anything. For Santayana, thought is an instance of spirit and is therefore impotent.<sup>7</sup> This is by no means the case for either Wegner or Damasio: Wegner speaks of the “causal role of thought” (w 14); and for Damasio, the sequence of events culminating in a feeling can be initiated by an evaluative thought (D 206).

In Wegner’s case, the assignment of a causal role to thought may at first seem curious. If there is any aspect of our thought that might seem to carry causal force, this would surely be our conscious will. The point is clarified, however, when one recognizes that Wegner is treating the terms ‘conscious will’ and ‘thought’ quite differently. He carefully maintains his denial to *conscious* will of any causal potency, having shown that the experience considered alone cannot exert any force. But he makes no such restriction in the case of *thought*, and is ready to see thought in a broader context as a possible force in initiating action; (perhaps a similar denial here would sound too like the discredited behaviourist doctrine). When he speaks of thought, he appears to be speaking of the content of thought *taken along with* the brain processes tied to that thought. In regard to any thought, he is prepared to assess “the causal role of that thought in the context of other possible causes of the action (and possible causes of the thought as well)” (w 14).

It would be open to Wegner to admit a second notion of thought — it might be called *pure* thought — with something of the status of conscious will. The term ‘pure thought’ would by definition include only the experience of thought, the intuition of a mental content, without broaching the question of how the thought might arise and how it might figure in any causal sequence. This would bring the discussion into line with Santayana’s usage in regard to spirit. The relationship between pure thought and thought in a larger sense encompassing causal processes would then roughly correspond to the relation between conscious will and psychic Will.

Damasio maintains a like distinction. Feelings arise through emotions in a sequence of brain events: a trigger mechanism starts activity in an executive brain area, which in turn generates the emotion (D 64). Prior to all this is thought in the form of an appraisal of the situation. Thus thought directed to the creation of an appropriate emotion initiates this causal sequence. The thought in question is surely more than a conscious dialectic; it must be taken in conjunction with the brain activity that sets off the sequence. By the term ‘thought’ or the term ‘appraisal’, I think that Damasio intends an amalgam of the felt experience with its material source within the nervous system. His usage is very different with the term ‘feeling’, for which only the awareness of pleasure or fear is meant. There is a studied difference in the scope of these two terms, quite like that found in Wegner

Exactly the same studied ambiguity is found in Santayana, although he only brings it to the reader’s attention infrequently. It is not much found in *The Realm of Spirit*, which deals with the nature and function of spirit rather than its sources in matter. Moreover, whenever he wants to speak of agency, he shifts immediately to talk of the psyche and the realm of matter. Nevertheless, sensation, passion, thought, and will can also be treated in a material context; there is an admitted ambivalence here:

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<sup>7</sup> The inefficacy of spirit is inherent in its definition, and complaints on this score rest on a misunderstanding (RB 835).

The psyche, in my system, belongs to the realm of matter. Only the spirit is immaterial, being the moral fruit of existence, as incapable as an essence or a truth of modifying the movement that evokes it. At the same time, the psychic synthesis or redirection of action that subtends that spiritual sensibility and is often called by the same name, naturally works out its consequence in the material world where it belongs. Sensation, passion, and thought are therefore efficacious materially in so far as they are material, but not in so far as they are spiritual. (PGS 541-2).

A *moment of spirit* is an event, that is to say, an existence in the realm of matter; the intuition of essence that brings to life the content of that moment is spirit proper. The distinction he makes here is clear enough, despite the fact that the same term may be used for both.

For Santayana spirit can influence matter only in the following sense: the content of a knowledge claim will be taken into account by the material psyche in guiding action. (Of course, it is psyche that creates the knowledge claim as well.) Damasio says the same for feelings, whose map of the bodily state plays a part in action. Wegner sees the sense of self, created by conscious will, as playing a similar part. Both go beyond this, however, and delve further into the complexities of the mind/body problem than Santayana is willing to do. These investigations could only please Santayana, for they are men of science.

Although he did not feel competent to do so, had Santayana taken up this problem, he would have had at his disposal a more uniform set of categories. On the one hand is a spirit opaque to science; on the other hand are mental acts and states seen in terms of brain activity and deeper psychic impulses. Some of the spiritual manifestations tied to brain activity could possibly be essential to that activity. They do not have to be excluded, so long as they remain paired to their material substrates; to rule on this point would be to make claims about the mind/body problem that he does not want to make (although here I go a little beyond Santayana's usual formulation). In any case, his over-riding points are always: that spirit as he defines it has no causal force; and that spirit arises from processes at a deeper psychic (material) level, processes to which scientific inquiry may turn.

Perhaps Santayana's categories would be better suited to the aims of science. It would force the discussion into terms that are in any case inevitable for experimental investigations; and for this reason some such view may well be adopted at a later time. Still, I don't believe that the appeal to Santayana's category of spirit would have much overall effect on the content of psychological research into mind and consciousness. From the philosophical point of view, however, spirit is important in other respects, not at all by shedding light on the origins of mind, but precisely because these problems are set aside. It allows him to describe the spiritual life and to formulate a "lay religion" that is not plagued by questions about knowledge and about the sources and effects of spirit.

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# The Santayana Edition

For more than a quarter century Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. has directed the Santayana Edition. Since the 1970s, when the plan to publish a complete scholarly edition of George Santayana's work was first implemented, the project has taken shape under Saatkamp's leadership. The first volumes of the critical edition include *Persons and Places*; *The Sense of Beauty*; *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*; and *The Last Puritan*. Books one through five of Volume Five, *The Letters of George Santayana*, have also been published and the remaining three books will be published by 2004. Publication of *Santayana's Marginalia* (Vol. 6) and the five books of *The Life of Reason* (Vol. 7) — a very significant milestone — will follow soon thereafter.

From the beginnings of the project in Florida to its transfer to Texas and, most recently, Indiana, Saatkamp — unlike Santayana — has delighted and excelled in university administration. As of July 2003 the general editor of the Santayana Edition became the president of the Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, a career-crowning achievement that cannot include major responsibilities for the Edition. As a consequence the project and its resident regular staff (Marianne S. Wokeck, director and editor; Kristine W. Frost, managing editor; Johanna Resler, assistant editor; and Paul Nagy and Martin Coleman, consulting editors) remain at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI). Professor Emeritus William G. Holzberger will continue in his consulting role from Bucknell University.

An important legacy of Saatkamp's deanship at IUPUI is the creation of the Institute for American Thought (IAT), which provides the umbrella for the consortium of scholarly editions: the Santayana Edition, the Peirce Edition Project, and the Frederick Douglass Papers. Nathan Houser is director of the Institute. Coinciding — fittingly — with the creation of the Institute was the Edition's celebration of the publication of Santayana's Letters. It was a joyous occasion that brought together many friends of George Santayana and an inspiration especially to those who are relatively new to the Santayana Society.

For many years the Edition has been supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities, most recently by a grant since August of 2002. This latest award was for \$20,000 in outright funds with an offer of up to \$60,000 in federal matching funds. So far, thanks in large part to contacts made by John Lachs and James Gouinlock, and a recent fundraising campaign, the edition has received almost \$15,000 in donations. These contributions and the NEH match will allow us to hire an additional graduate research assistant, to travel to depositories holding Santayana manuscript material, and to update computer equipment and software programs. We continue to seek external funds in efforts to take advantage of the full amount of the NEH's matching offer.

The moment we turn the magic of the moment into a maxim, we have clouded the sky.

(Santayana to Llewelyn Powys, 20 October 1937)

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# BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST

## NINETEENTH 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 Kristine Frost, Santayana Edition, School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI, Indianapolis IN 46202–5140.

### PRIMARY SOURCES IN LIBRARY COLLECTIONS

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Urbana, Illinois

#### Correspondence

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 (correction of date in 2001 *Bulletin*, seventeenth update)

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## Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

Page numbers given with no further information on the edition will refer to a volume in the critical Santayana Edition, where this exists, or to the Scribner's edition in most other cases.

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

### *Overheard in Seville*

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