

Overheard in Seville

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Santayana
Society*

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ANNOUNCEMENT

The George Santayana Society

2005

ANNUAL MEETING

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

- Report on the *Santayana Edition*: *Marianne S. Wokeck*
- Business Meeting: The Society needs a president

Speakers

Richard M. Rubin

Washington University in St. Louis

"The Philosophical and Interpretive Import of
Santayana's Marginalia"

Phillip Stambovsky

Boston College

"Royce, Santayana and 'The Relational Form
of the Ontological Argument' "

Chair

Angus Kerr-Lawson

University of Waterloo

7:00 - 10:00 P.M. 29 December

Concourse H

Hilton New York Hotel

Artifices of Eternity: The Ideal and the Real in Stevens, Williams and Santayana

The ontological status of the poem; its dependence on what we think of as, or call, the “real”; its relation to “ideas” or the “ideal”: these are the perennial questions we ask when thinking of poetry and, perhaps, of art in general.¹

Though Aristotle, as we know, was inclined to view poetry as more serious and more philosophical than history because it deals in universals rather than in particulars, modern criticism tends to be skeptical about such a confident binary. History, which Emerson calls “a fable agreed upon,” and poetry, which turns experience into discourse, have come more and more to look alike. And the relationship of both to the brute particulars of life as we live it has long since appeared too problematic to admit of simplistic distinctions. It may seem paradigmatic to us that a poem can take the place of a mountain (Stevens) or of some plums (Williams); we certainly understand Dickinson when she claims that the sunset she embodies in a poem is more convenient than the real thing. And yet in the intricate debates that constitute modern criticism we perpetually worry these issues.

Are some kinds of poetry closer to the “real” than other kinds — more objective and less subjective, built on the direct transcription of “images” rather than the shifting sands of personal “symbols”? Are there really no “ideas but in things,” as Williams claims? Is a poem best conceived of as a “machine made of words,” empowered by the imagination (“an actual force comparable to electricity or steam”) to raise us “to some approximate co-extension with the universe”? Are we “moved” by the agency of this force to bring a new form to birth (“the contraction which is felt”)? Is the imagination not only essentially of its time (“the ability to record at the moment when the consciousness is enlarged”) but also a kind of torquing energy that gives us “a momentum toward life” (“imagination is not to avoid reality, nor is it description nor an evocation of objects or situations, it is to say that poetry does not tamper with the world but moves it”)? Do we agree with Williams when he suggests that the modern poem is a made object that provides a kind of technology of the “truth”? Or, to use Yeats’s language, is poetry an “artifice of eternity”—a discourse that transports us to a transcendent realm? Is it, as Stevens claims, finally, a “transcendent analogue”?

These initial reflections are prompted by my rereading of Albert Gelpi’s incisive chapter on Stevens and Williams in *Wallace Stevens: The Poetics of Modernism* (Cambridge, 1985). While allowing for the “common allegiance of both poets to Modernism” (and Gelpi insists this includes — problematically, I think — a belief in both Stevens and Williams that the poet is “Anti-idealist and antimystical”), Gelpi nevertheless ranges the two on different sides of the Imagiste/Symboliste divide: “the underlying and defining inclination of the Imagist imagination . . . is to fix the mind and its language on the phenomena of experience; the corresponding inclination of the Symboliste imagination is to dissolve sense impressions into linguistic evocations of psychic states.” My intent in this paper is to put pressure on the concepts and terms

¹ This paper was read by Angus Kerr-Lawson to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Boston on December 29, 2004.

Gelpi employs (such as “idealist,” “phenomena,” “experience,” “sense impressions,” “psychic states”) so as to clarify the differences between Stevens and Williams and explore the generally accepted view that Stevens was a more “philosophical” thinker and poet than his scientifically/technologically oriented friend. Along the way I will ground my discussion in the notion of the “artificial” and the poem as “artifice.”

2

While attempting to distinguish Stevens, on the one hand, from Williams, Pound, Moore, and H.D., on the other, Professor Gelpi observes that Stevens’ “Symboliste aestheticism made him, like Santayana, a skeptical Platonist.” Such an observation, while familiar, or perhaps because of its familiarity, deserves some detailed interrogation. The phrase “skeptical Platonist” suggests that Stevens, like his erstwhile Harvard mentor, was at once a believer in “ideas” or “forms” and yet critical of what Stevens (following Coleridge) called “Plato’s dear, gorgeous nonsense.” The immediate locus of Stevens’ affectionate critique of Plato is his essay, “The Noble Rider and the Sound of Words,” in which the “noble” charioteer of Plato’s *Phaedrus* is still felt to be a stirring figure, while at the same time failing to convince us to “yield ourselves” to it because it has lost the “strength of reality.” Plato’s figure, Stevens argues, is pure poetry and as such has ended up in the “cemetery of nobilities” where all imaginings to which reality no longer adheres come to rest. But “as a wave is a force and not the water of which it is composed, which is never the same, so nobility is a force and not the manifestations of which it is composed, which are never the same.” Thus as Stevens bids farewell to Plato’s “gorgeous nonsense” he insists that the “force” continues to abide with us.

As it turns out, one of Santayana’s own “skeptical” critiques of Plato is contained in an important book published in the same year as Stevens’ *Harmonium* (1923). Though I hesitate to claim a direct influence (Stevens could have been introduced to Santayana’s notions when he had direct contact with the philosopher at Harvard), *Scepticism and Animal Faith* remains a rewarding text for the student of Stevens’ writing. In this prolegomenon, or introduction, to his mature system of philosophy, Santayana was at pains to lead the reader, step by step, to what he calls “ultimate scepticism” — namely, the denial of existence to “any datum, whatever it may be,” that presents itself to consciousness; “and as the datum, by hypothesis, is the whole of what solicits my attention at any moment, I shall deny the existence of everything, and abolish that category of thought altogether”:

Belief in the existence of anything, including myself, is something radically incapable of proof, and resting, like all belief, on some irrational persuasion or prompting of life The point is, in this task of criticism, to discard every belief that is a belief merely; and the belief in existence, in the nature of the case, can be a belief only. The datum is an idea, a description; I may contemplate it without belief; but when I assert that such a thing exists I am hypostatizing this datum, placing it in presumptive relations which are not internal to it, and worshipping it as an idol or thing.

Plato’s “ideas,” accordingly, belong for Santayana to “the philosophy of specious reality,” though in their “sympathy with universal life” they remain “anagrams of moral insight. Hence their nobility, and constant appeals to minds struggling after perfection, whether in art or in self-discipline.”

In place of Plato’s hypostatized “ideas,” Santayana proposes “essences” — demythologized universals that do not exist but nevertheless present themselves to intuition. The realm of essence “is simply the unwritten catalogue, prosaic and infinite, of all the characters possessed by such things as happen to exist, together with

the characters which all different things would possess if they existed. It is the sum of mentionable objects, of terms about which, or in which, something might be said." In Wallace Stevens' language, these essences — or supreme fictions — are "ideas" or "descriptions" without place; they cannot be located in physical space (hence, as I shall argue later, they are to be viewed as poetic "topoi" not as part of the actual topography of the world). And since they expose the character of anything, they are apocalyptic:

Description is revelation. It is not
The thing described, nor false facsimile.

It is an artificial thing that exists,
In its own seeming, plainly visible,

Yet not too closely the double of our lives,
Intenser than any actual life could be. . .

As Santayana goes on to argue, "an essence given in intuition" that serves as the description of an object invites the play of intelligence, for "the immediate must be vehicular." The description of things thus provides a motive for metaphor:

What is given becomes in this manner a sign for what is sought, and a conventional description of it; and the object originally posited by faith and intent in the act of living may be ultimately more and more accurately revealed to belief and to thought. Essences are ideal terms at the command of fancy and of the senses (whose data are fancies) as words are at the command of a ready tongue.

Translating Santayana's formulation into language more directly consonant with Stevens' own idiom, we may say that essences as "ideal terms" provide a vocabulary for the imagination in and through which it may build a world (and we notice that, in this theory, the data offered by the senses are also imaginative constructs). The world so built may be called "a world of words" ("Description Without Place"), but for Stevens "words of the world are the life of the world" ("An Ordinary Evening in New Haven"), not simply because he believes that "we live in the mind" but because discourse enables us to inhabit our world — makes it possible for us "to conceive of it." The "ideal terms" Santayana speaks of are not Plato's gorgeous nonsense; they truly make the world available to us, not by foreshadowing it or mirroring it but by providing trustworthy signs to the intelligence, "however poetical they may be as sounds or as pictures." And poetry, for Stevens, let us recall, is "an artificial thing" that reveals the truth — as Stevens' poet/singer in "The Idea of Order at Key West," the "single artificer of the world / In which she sang," shapes the sea in her song. The "idea" of order at Key West is not a Platonic idea but rather the image, or essence, of order.

3

Stevens' designation of the singer, or "maker," in "The Idea of Order at Key West" as an "artificer" provides an entering wedge for reflecting on the tradition of artifice as it descends to Stevens through other poets and on Stevens' sometimes divided attitude toward the concept. Perhaps the most readily available progenitor poet in this regard is Emerson, whose poem "The Snow-Storm," widely acknowledged and frequently quoted (e.g., by Whittier, Lowell, and Dickinson), must have been known to Stevens. The poem provides a useful interpretive and allusive crux in Emerson's ascription of the "frolic architecture of the snow" to an artist whose work is "wild" and "savage" and who is referred to as "the fierce artificer." The ferocious nature of this demonic maker (underlined by

Emerson's own playful doubling of the word "fierce" in "artificer") is further amplified by Emerson's clear allusion to *Paradise Lost* 4.121, where Milton calls Satan the "Artificer of Fraud." The allusion works nicely for Emerson because his "fierce artificer" is indeed the Prince of Falsity, "mockingly" investing the otherwise familiar New England winter landscape with "Parian wreaths" and other fantastic finials. But the larger context imported by Emerson into his poem raises the issue of art as "artifice" in the pejorative sense, whereby the artist is viewed as a Mephistophelean figure who overturns ordinary reality for the sheer joy of exercising his creative energies. He may make a "Heaven of Hell" or a "Hell of Heaven" just for the fun — or malice — of it, leaving us uncertain precisely where we stand. "Le paradis n'est pas artificiel," Pound insists, but we may well wonder.

Stevens himself wondered about Paradise as artifice and possible truth throughout his career. Early (in "Sunday Morning") he simply mocks conventional notions of an unchanging paradise by suggesting they have been made up out of the whole cloth of ordinary human experience ("Alas, that they should wear our colors there, / The silken weavings of our afternoons, / And pick the strings of our insipid lutes!"). Mid-career (in "Esthetique Du Mal") he imagines a "non-physical" paradise which — artificial or not — is filled with "nonphysical people" who experience only "the minor of what we feel." This is clearly diminishment, not transcendence. (Parenthetically we note that in the late 1940's, in "Imagination as Value," Stevens calls the "practicable earthly paradise" promised by communism the product of a "grubby faith.") By the time of "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" Stevens has transferred his allegiance to the art and artifice of language. Professor Eucalyptus of New Haven seeks "God in the object itself, without much choice":

It is a choice of the commodious adjective
For what he sees, it comes in the end to that:

The description that makes it divinity, still speech
As it touches the point of reverberation — not grim Reality but reality grimly seen

And spoken in paradisal parlance new.

The Miltonic turn in the last three words suggests a conscious refreshment of the old concept, whereby traditional artifices of eternity give way to sharp perceptions mediated by felicitously innovative linguistic inflection. It is worth adding that Stevens concludes this section of the poem with an observation that seems to pay homage to Santayana: "The tink-tonk / Of the rain in the spout is not a substitute. / It is of the essence not yet well perceived."

Concerned almost obsessively with "the extent of artifice within us and, almost parenthetically, with the question of its value," Stevens in fact turns (in "Imagination as Value") to the figure of Santayana himself as an example of lives "which exist by the deliberate choice of those that live them":

To use a single illustration: It may be assumed that the life of Professor Santayana is a life in which the function of the imagination has had a function similar to its function in any deliberate work of art or letters. We have only to think of this present phase of it, in which, in his old age, he dwells in the head of the world [i.e., Rome], in the company of devoted women, in their convent, and in the company of familiar saints, whose presence does so much to make any convent an appropriate refuge for a generous and human philosopher.

Here, tilting toward the valorization of artifice, Stevens reinvents Santayana as a saint himself, venerated by the nuns and surrounded by the imagined company of former

saints. Stevens' portrait is as artificial as the life he claims Santayana devised for himself, but it is not therefore false. Rather, it presents the essence of the philosopher as saint dramatically rendered in a kind tableau — Stevens' "Theatre of Trope," filled with "artificial things,"

Like a page of music, like an upper air,
 Like a momentary color, in which swans
 Were seraphs, were saints, were changing essences.

It is as if Stevens had remembered and filled out a passage in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*:

The theatre, for all its artifices, depicts life in a sense more truly than history, because the medium has a kindred movement to that of real life, though an artificial setting and form; and much in the same way the human medium of knowledge can perform its pertinent synthesis and make its pertinent report all the better when it frankly abandons the plane of its object and expresses in symbols what we need to know of it.

Stevens' reinvention of the Santayana he had once known as the "artificial" philosopher/saint is fully consonant with a tendency visible in much of the later poetry whereby "familiar" men give way to "artificial" heroes who are the "bread and wine of the mind" ("Examination of the Hero in a Time of War"). Equally, Stevens creates the image of a "different poet," an ideal poet, who is "an accretion from ourselves, intelligent / Beyond intelligence, an artificial man" ("The Creations of Sound"). And, he goes on to ask, "What are the major men?" ("Paisant Chronicle"), responding to his own question by affirming:

They are characters beyond
 Reality, composed thereof. They are
 The fictive man created out of men
 They are men but artificial men. They are
 Nothing in which it is not possible
 To believe. . .

Coming, it seems, to prefer a world "a little changed by tips of artifice" ("Late Hymn from the Myrrh-Mountain"), Stevens invests his faith in a more sophisticated universe than that of "the early constellations" innocently predicated on the "Illustrious intimations — uncertain love, / The knowledge of being, sense without sense of time." Far beyond the freshness of youth, he has come to live more fully in the imagination, with its unlocatable descriptions and unfamiliar heroes. These are the artifices of eternity to which he increasingly gave his allegiance: "The world imagined is the ultimate good."

What began for Stevens as "an expedient," a "crystal hypothesis," transcends (at the end of "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction") the innocently spinning world that once provided the pleasures of "merely circulating" and revolves permanently "in crystal." This is Stevens' version of the ecstatic discovery of essence that lifts Santayana to another plane of being — one in which "a mind enlightened by scepticism and cured of noisy dogma, a mind discounting all reports, and free from all tormenting anxiety about its own fortunes or existence, finds in the wilderness of essence a very sweet and marvelous solitude":

The ultimate reaches of doubt and renunciation open out for it, by an easy transition, into fields of endless variety and peace, as if through the gorges of death it had passed into a paradise where all things are crystallised into the image of themselves ...

Students of William Carlos Williams' writing regularly invoke his dictum that "the local is the only universal" as a way of differentiating him from writers with "idealist" tendencies such as Stevens. Thus Albert Gelpi, commenting on "Description Without Place," observes that "the poem ... describes a fictive concept, existent only in the medium in which it is contrived, as superior to any place of reference. But this book of revelation, unlike St. John's, does not reconcile us to earth or heaven, but draws us into its own ambience." Leaving aside the question of the reconciliations available to readers of Stevens' poem, and the equally thorny question of whether the Book of Revelation is free from fictive concepts which may be said to be existent "only in the medium in which [they are] contrived," we are faced with the important question of the ontological status of "place" in poetry.

Without strolling through Marianne Moore's famous "imaginary gardens" (and I have always believed that her toads are no more real than her gardens), we may observe that poetic "places" are almost invariably "topoi" — that is, imaginative spaces that make an appeal to the suspension of disbelief in the reader. Veridicality, or verisimilitude, or correspondence to our own life experience — these are not the issues we normally engage when we enter the imaginative spaces created by Dante, or Spenser, or Milton, or virtually any other poet. Though students of American Modernism have frequently insisted that Williams' familiar settings (e.g., Rutherford, Passaic, Paterson) are more "real" than Stevens' Palaz of Hoon or even the Tennessee so cavalierly invoked in "Anecdote of the Jar," I believe such a distinction is theoretically unjustified. Once again, the "space" of a poem is an imagined one even when it seems closer to the "real."

Poem X in Williams' *Spring and All* provides an instructive example. It opens, apparently, by leaning on Williams' "no ideas but in things" as he announces that "The universality of things / draws me toward the candy / with melon flowers that open / about the edge of refuse" This impression is strengthened as Williams goes on to talk about "the quality of the farmer's / shoulders and his daughter's accidental skin, so sweet / with clover and the small / yellow cinquefoil in the / parched places." The rest of the poem, however, takes us to stranger places:

It is
this that engages the favorable

distortion of eyeglasses
that see everything and remain
related to mathematics —

in the most practical frame of
brown celluloid made to
represent tortoiseshell —

A letter from the man who
wants to start a new magazine
made of linen

and he owns a typewriter —
July 1, 1922
All this is for eyeglasses

to discover. But
they lie there with the gold

earpieces folded down

tranquilly Titicaca —

The “things” Of Williams’ world engage his vision — presumably a “favorable” one — which is nevertheless distorted by the mediation of eyeglasses “that see everything” but are constructed according to mathematical laws (that is, the physical structure of Williams’ “things” and the structure of the eyeglasses appear to belong to differing modes of discourse). Moreover, the poet’s vision, from the outset devoted apparently to praxis (“things”) rather than theory (“ideas”), depends on eyeglasses “in the most practical frame of / brown celluloid made to / represent tortoiseshell —.” The frame is “practical” but also fake, that is, merely representational (thus there are imaginary tortoises in this presumptively “real” setting). Turning to “a letter from the man who / wants to start a new magazine / made of linen” (the speaker is clearly a writer; but is it the letter or the magazine that is “made of linen?”), the speaker notes, matter of factly, that the letter is typed and dated (placed in time — like Nick Carraway’s timetable in *The Great Gatsby* — in July, 1922). All this is for the speaker’s favorable but distorting eyeglasses to discover. They are not, however, in use: “But / they lie there with the gold / earpieces folded down / tranquilly Titicaca-.” The eyeglasses have now been reduced to the status of a “thing” objectively described — not the producer of “ideas” (images) but an item in a still-life. And what right do we have, in fact, to say the eyeglasses are “objectively described”? The actual glassy surface of the lenses seems now to provide mainly a motive for metaphor, and we find ourselves transported to a placid mountain lake in South America, far from the “farmer’s shoulders” and his daughter’s “accidental skin.” All of which is to say that Williams’ seemingly “objectivist” vision has brought us where one always is in poetry — to the world of the imagination.

5

I think it is unfortunate if Williams actually took umbrage at Stevens’ calling his “delineations” the “rubbings of reality.” Stevens could very well have used the same phrase to define his own work (perhaps he did: “... The freshness of transformation is / The freshness of a world. It is our own, / It is ourselves, the freshness of ourselves, / And that necessity and that presentation / Are rubbings of a glass in which we peer”). The lines of a poem do run parallel to the reality they limn, but they are part of a made object that only rubs up against the world it depends on for its genesis. Finally it has its own texture and integrity. Certainly Williams had as much respect for the poem as an artifice or artifact as Stevens did, though Williams might have shied away from such terms. Correspondingly, Stevens probably had no quarrel with Williams’ intent in calling the poem “a machine made of words,” though the technological lingo was not usually his own (speaking of Leibnitz — who, Stevens opines, “was a man who thought like a poet but did not write like one” — Stevens describes his *Monadology* not as “one of the world’s revelations” but rather “like a curious machine, several centuries old”). And whatever Williams actually meant in saying “no ideas but in things” (it sounds like a version of Locke’s “nothing in the mind that was not first in the senses”), he could not have wanted us to think of the poet as resembling one of Swift’s philosophers in the Academy of Lagado, plucking objects from sacks on their backs so as to avoid the dangers of misinterpretation inherent in rhetoric and figure.

No mere tyro in the study of philosophy, Stevens must have balked at Williams' slogan about "things," for he was aware of Kant's skepticism about our ability to apprehend the "Ding-an-sich" directly (and notes that his "nincompated pedagogue," Crispin, confronting the ocean as "vocable thing," but with its "speech belched out of hoary darks," is not in a position to understand its elemental language). Or Stevens could have remembered Santayana's own dictum: "Knowledge is faith mediated by symbols" (that is, our knowledge of the things of the world is radically dependent on the symbol-making processes involved in cognition; "ideas" are not so much *in* things as things are transferred to consciousness by the images we invent to represent them). In any case, Stevens and Williams would unquestionably have stood together in affirming that poetry is made of words, not things — that it is a discourse, and not a transcription of the world — and that its reality inheres in itself.

Whether "idealist" or "anti-idealist," the modern poet must, in Stevens' language, be a discoverer of sufficiencies and satisfactions for the spirit. As Williams once suggested to a Harvard audience, the poem should be approached not as an epistemological problem but as an experience. Don't "try to work it out," he said; "sit back, relax, let the thing spray in your face ... listen to it." And his conclusion was resonant: "If it ain't a pleasure, it ain't a poem." The slang is pure Williams but the sentiment is totally Stevensian.

JOEL PORTE

Cornell University

Skepticism, Romanticism and “Penitent Art”

The title of Joel Porte’s thoughtful essay “Artifices of Eternity: The Ideal and the Real in Stevens and Williams” does not promise a rounded portrait, or any portrait at all, of George Santayana, who figures in the discussion primarily as an influence on Wallace Stevens.¹ The essay deserves to be judged on its own terms, as a study of key similarities and differences between the two poets mentioned in its title, and on that basis it certainly merits high praise. For this student of Santayana, however, there are aspects of Porte’s treatment of the philosopher that are troubling beyond the unavoidable incompleteness of the portrait. Porte may be entirely correct in his characterizations of Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, but his brief portrait of George Santayana seems misleading in regard to his skepticism (always “scepticism” for Santayana), his conception of essences, and his attitude toward mysticism. On each of these topics, Porte assimilates Santayana’s views to Stevens’. Indeed, in “Artifices of Eternity” Santayana’s philosophy figures primarily as a prose counterpart to Stevens’ poetic vision. There certainly are parallels to be explored; Stevens’ great poem “To an Old Philosopher in Rome” and his essay “Imagination as Value” offer impressive testimony about the significance of the philosopher for the poet. Yet Santayana’s essay “Penitent Art,” unmentioned by Porte, suggests that the philosopher’s view of the literary modernism exemplified in different ways by both Stevens and Williams differed considerably from that held by the poets themselves. Most importantly, Santayana’s lifelong critique of romanticism needs to be taken into account in considering his relationship to two poets whose works both extend and enrich the romantic tradition. Disputing his characterization of George Santayana may seem an ungracious response to Joel Porte’s valuable discussion of Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams, but it will be a useful exercise if it succeeds in serving as a reminder of some of the distinctive qualities of Santayana’s thought.

Porte’s statement that in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* “Santayana was at pains to lead the reader, step by step, to what he calls ‘ultimate scepticism’ ” is not wrong, but it is misleading if it is taken as an accurate though concise statement of Santayana’s purpose in the book. Emphasizing and perhaps overstating, at least by implication, Santayana’s skepticism, Porte’s essay does not even mention, let alone give due weight to, the second term in the title of *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. Yet it is by means of this latter conception that Santayana accounts for the world as it is experienced in everyday life. In formulating the notion of “animal faith” Santayana was, in his view, simply making explicit and philosophically coherent the assumptions on which non-philosophers depend in everyday life; as he says in the introduction, he was not inventing a new philosophy but “giving to everyday beliefs a more accurate and circumspect form” (SAF 3), an enterprise that demanded not so much cleverness as the rarer qualities of “candour and courage” (SAF 7). One who learned of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* only through Porte’s essay would be surprised to discover that Santayana has already arrived at “ultimate scepticism” halfway through the book; “scepticism,” however ultimate, is for Santayana not a destination but rather a stage on a journey or, better yet, preparation for a journey. Santayana is just getting ready to begin his

¹ This paper was read to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Boston on December 29, 2004

engagement with the world in which he and the rest of us live our lives, an engagement that takes up the rest of the book, when he completes his discussion of “ultimate scepticism.” For Santayana skepticism “is an exercise, not a life; it is a discipline” (SAF 64-5), not a doctrine. In *Scepticism and Animal Faith* he goes out of his way to distinguish his own, preparatory kind of skepticism from the “dogmatic skepticism” that would require him “to deny what I assert, not to mean what I mean, and (in the sense in which seeing is believing) not to believe what I see” (SAF 153-4). He criticizes such dogmatic skepticism not only for its logical flaws but also for its intrinsic hypocrisy. In Santayana’s time and today, even those who publish books proclaiming the validity of radical skepticism live their lives as though they are pretty sure about some things. In contrast, it is perhaps Santayana’s proudest boast that there is no gulf between the ideas presented in his books and those he lives by day by day. In the introduction to *Scepticism and Animal Faith* he declares that “I stand in philosophy exactly where I stand in daily life: I should not be honest otherwise” (SAF 4). Near its conclusion he eloquently reiterates and amplifies this stance:

My criticism is criticism of myself: I am talking of what I believe in my active moments, as a living animal, when I am really believing something My criticism is not essentially a learned pursuit ... it is the discipline of my daily thoughts and the account I actually give to myself from moment to moment of my own being and of the world around me. I should be ashamed to countenance opinions which, when not arguing, I did not believe. It would seem to me dishonest and cowardly to militate under other colours than those under which I live (SAF 271-2)

Porte casually identifies Santayana’s concept of “essences” with Stevens’s notion of “supreme fictions” when he writes “In Wallace Stevens’ language, these essences—or supreme fictions—are ‘ideas’ or ‘descriptions’ without place” This identification leaves the impression that both Santayana and Stevens embraced a radical skepticism at odds with common sense. If all we know for certain is essences, and these are all fictions, albeit “supreme fictions,” then we know nothing at all. But Santayana’s conception of essences does not require that we end in absolute skepticism. It is true that some essences are fictional, and it is also true that no essences actually exist; yet it is equally true that it is the essences we intuit in perception that make it possible to learn about the world (as indeed Porte acknowledges later in the essay). To call essences “supreme fictions” is to invite the mistake Santayana warns against when he cautions that the realm of essences should not be confused with the world of the imagination:

... essence might be called “the imaginary.” This designation is popular and poetically very appropriate. ... But the danger in calling essence imaginary is that, like poetry, we should identify it with the imagined. ... The imagined is not, as essence is, a field from which all facts must gather their temporary forms; it is only a replica or variant of some of these facts (RE 29-30).

Conflating “essences” with “supreme fictions” seems to suggest that Santayana embraced the kind of skepticism that rejects entirely any notion of truth and insists that we can only choose between more and less fruitful fictions. Nietzsche at times affirmed this theory, and possibly Wallace Stevens accepted it, but Santayana did not. He believed it is possible to make judgments about truth and falsity which, though not absolutely certain or entirely complete, are certain and complete enough for all practical purposes: “there is a world ... there are facts, and ... there is a difference between truth and error,” Santayana declares in *The Realm of Essence* (RE 117).

Porte seems to imply that Santayana is in some sense a mystic when he refers to “the ecstatic discovery of essence that lifts Santayana to another plane of being.” Porte’s language — “ecstatic,” “lifts,” “plane of being” — has the effect of suggesting

a Platonic or religious conception of levels of being in which the lower, material level or plane would be somehow less real than a higher, spiritual plane whose attainment ensures ineffable delight. The notion that one may be lifted up to another plane of being where ecstasy awaits may sound plausible enough to devotees of one or another brand of mysticism, but Santayana himself had even fewer good things to say about mysticism than about romanticism. The perusal of the realm of essences for its own sake rather than for information about other realms could indeed encourage the sort of detachment from everyday life that Santayana recommended and practiced, but there is nothing particularly "ecstatic" about this detachment. Choosing his words carefully, Santayana divided the world into four "realms of being." He went out of his way to distance his conception of essences from any version of what he variously called "supernatural physics" (WD 32) "supernumary second physics" (LR3 134), or just "bad physics" (LR5 122). Romantic attitudes could at least inspire great literature, like the *Faust* of Goethe and the lyric poetry of Shelley — and, one might add, the poetry of Stevens and Williams — but Santayana held that mysticism, if consistent, could end only in silence. In *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* he offers this summary judgment:

The ideal of mysticism is accordingly exactly contrary to the ideal of reason; instead of perfecting human nature it seeks to abolish it; instead of building a better world, it would undermine the foundations even of the world we have built already; instead of developing our mind to greater scope and precision, it would return to the condition of protoplasm—to the blessed consciousness of an Unutterable Reality. (IPR 14)

A consideration of Santayana's only extended comment on modernist art suggests that he did not share the belief of many avant-garde artists and poets that their break with artistic and literary tradition would lead to new and greater achievements. "Penitent Art" mentions neither Stevens nor Williams, yet the poetry of each, in quite different ways, might plausibly be thought to exemplify what Santayana had in mind when he wrote the essay.² Santayana suggests that modern artists and writers feel so uneasy about the fictionality of art that they give up the attempt to imitate reality as convincingly as possible and instead foreground the artificiality of their work. Penitent art is art that deliberately refuses to make use of the full range of devices available to earlier art and literature to induce a "suspension of disbelief" in the viewer or reader because it is not as confident and unapologetic about the enterprise of representing reality as poets and artists once were. Surely the poetic achievement of both Stevens and Williams derives at least in part from the ruthlessness with which each forgoes traditional literary devices in order to achieve something new. Stevens's *Notes toward a Supreme Fiction* may be among the great literary works of the twentieth century, as its admirers claim, but not even the greatest admirers of *Notes* would argue that the poem allows its readers to believe in, for instance, Canon Aspirin as we believe in, to take three very different examples, Homer's Achilles and Hector, Pope's Belinda or Virginia Woolf's Mrs. Ramsey. Meanwhile, William Carlos Williams's poetry, whether it is *The Red Wheelbarrow* or *Paterson*, exemplifies Santayana's second sort of penitent art, the kind that "makes no attempt to resist the impulse to observe and to express external things" (223) but renounces the conventions of narrative in favor of "the naked truth, the pathetic appeal of sheer fact" (224).

"Penitent Art" displays Santayana's characteristic detachment and subtlety. He does not employ the concept named in the title either to condemn artistic and literary

² "Penitent Art" appears in Volume VII of the Triton Edition, pp. 219-26; page numbers cited in the text for quotations from the essay refer to this volume.

modernism or to applaud it unreservedly. Santayana compares the "penitent art" that refuses to employ the full panoply of artistic devices to the "revivals" sponsored by romanticism, much to the advantage of the former:

Fortunately revivals now seem to be over. Ruins and museums are interesting to the antiquary ... but they cannot supply inspiration. In art as in poetry, unless you become as a little child you cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. Little children is what artists and poets are now striving hard to be ... (222)

Cubism provides a striking example of "penitent art," and cubism, Santayana cautions its detractors, is "by no means an inexpert or meaningless thing"; it may, "when the penance is genuinely performed," possess "a very deep and recondite charm" (222). Santayana's portrait of the penitent artist as one "who has taken refuge in the spirit and is not striving to stretch his apprehension into literal truth" (226) is surely sympathetic and not dismissive. On the other hand, Santayana's comparison of the impression left by a cubist painting to "what the spinal column might feel if it had a separate consciousness, or to what the retina might see if it could be painlessly cut off from the brain" (222) suggests that he does not view the revolution in the arts signified by cubism as unalloyed progress. Moreover, Santayana's essay makes no attempt to explain or justify the putative guilt felt by contemporary artists, leaving the impression that the new trends are not an indication of spiritual agonizing but either a mere change in fashion or a symptom of artistic failure: "I call pure colour and caricature penitent art, because it is only disappointment in other directions that drives artists back to these primary effects" (220).

In Santayana's opinion, it seems, the penitent artist's lack of faith in mimesis forecloses the possibility of creating works comparable in literary or artistic stature to the masterworks of the past. The opening section of "Penitent Art" compares "art" to "a charming woman" who is undergoing a "long decline." Unable to recover her youthful beauty, she now begins to feel "the hollowness of her old airs and graces" and even hears "a call to repentance." She now recognizes that after all "it is really a sorry business, this perpetual pretence of being important and charming and charmed and beautiful" (219). The implication of this comparison seems to be that the ideas driving "penitent art" do not demonstrate the superior sophistication and power of modernist works but rather the relative poverty of their scope and ambition in comparison to the great art of the past, just as the second thoughts of the erstwhile belle are motivated more by the loss of her youthful beauty than by any accession of superior wisdom. Santayana, of course, intends his thesis that "art is like a charming woman" to be taken with a grain of salt or two, but his intimation as to the superiority of the best art and literature of the past to even the best "penitent art" seems clear enough.

Santayana, however, saw no reason in principle why contemporary artists and writers should feel unable to create art and literature even greater and more satisfying than that of the past. It has often been asserted, especially by those influenced by Romanticism, that an era whose view of reality is based on mythology or religion is much more favorable to the creation of great art and literature than an era whose view of reality is based on science and technology. Wordsworth famously wished that he might be "A pagan suckled in a creed outworn" so that he might catch a glimpse "of Proteus rising from the sea;/ Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn." Though Karl Marx was a great believer in human progress (though only through class warfare) and officially opposed to all romanticism, he believed that the masterpieces of Greek art constitute "a standard and model beyond attainment," since modern science and technology render meaningless the mythology that was "not only the arsenal of Greek

art, but also the very ground from which it had sprung."³ Santayana, however, did not agree with this view, any more than he accepted other romantic theses. The growth of scientific knowledge, like the growth of other knowledge, is not in principle any obstacle to poetry or any other art since "in the end ... knowledge is good for the imagination" (TPP 138). At the end of *Three Philosophical Poets* Santayana suggests that the greatest poetry remains to be written, since "the growth of what is known increases the scope of what may be imagined and hoped for":

Throw open to the young poet the infinity of nature; let him feel the precariousness of life, the variety of purposes, civilizations, and religions even upon this little planet; let him trace the triumphs and follies of art and philosophy, and their perpetual resurrections If, under the stimulus of such a scene, he does not some day compose a natural comedy as much surpassing Dante's divine comedy in sublimity and richness as it will surpass it in truth, the fault will not lie with the subject, which is inviting and magnificent, but with the halting genius that cannot render that subject worthily. (TPP 139)

Any assessment of the relations between George Santayana, Wallace Stevens and William Carlos Williams must take account of the romantic elements in the work and outlook of the two poets as against the philosopher's lifelong critique of romanticism. Santayana criticized German romanticism for encouraging a "longing for vague impossible things" while refusing to recognize that "people in all ages, sometimes achieve what they have set their hearts on" (EGP 211-12). Santayana traces such romantic pessimism to

... that mystical misinterpretation of human nature which is perhaps the core of romanticism. He [the romantic] imagines that what is desired is not this or that—food, children, victory, knowledge, or some other specific goal of a human instinct—but an abstract and perpetual happiness behind all these alternating interests. Of course an abstract and perpetual happiness is impossible (EGP 212)

But if one sort of romanticism, especially influential in Germany before World War I, inclined to a pessimism unsupported by the facts, another, still influential in the United States in both high and popular culture, insists on an affirmation of life beyond what the evidence might support. It is this tradition of romanticism, sponsored by Ralph Waldo Emerson and Walt Whitman, to which both Williams and Stevens belong. Williams's poetry was inspired in part by the schools of art such as Cubism that Santayana took as examples of "penitence." Williams, however, saw the same movements as instances of liberation. Carl Rapp comments that "The function of all art was, as Williams saw it, to liberate the spirit from fixations and impositions." Cubism provided a liberating example for poetry because it demonstrated "the freedom to be anti-representational or anti-mimetic and thus it was able to mock or evade the traditional requirement that art be subservient to that which it might be said to depict or represent."⁴ Williams and Stevens shared Santayana's skepticism about the God of traditional religion, and the two poets turned to art as a means of making the kind of affirmation that in another era would have been founded on religious belief. Frank Kermode comments that "the subject of Stevens" throughout his poetry is "living without God and finding it good, because of the survival of the power that once made Him suffice."⁵ Merle Brown's eloquent summary of the argument of *Notes*

³ Karl Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, excerpted in *Critical Theory Since Plato*, eds. Hazard Adams and Leroy Searle (Boston: Thomson Wadsworth, 2005), 615.

⁴ Carl Rapp, *Fleeing the Universal: The Critique of Post-Rational Criticism* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), 98.

⁵ Frank Kermode, *Wallace Stevens* (Edinburgh and London: Oliver and Boyd, 1960), 127.

Toward a Supreme Fiction, perhaps Stevens' greatest poem, supports Kermode's thesis:

The point is that the whole world from its first idea to its slightest detail, is seen as it is only by him who loves it, who sees it with feeling. Seen with feeling, seen with love, poetically, imaginatively, the world, from its littlest bees and violets to its ordinary men, its presidents and canons and captains and maidens and widows, is a distortion of the world as seen rationally. But irrational sight and thought are in truth more rational than reason. "The fiction that results from feeling" is the real thing. The world is seen and thought in its purity.⁶

It is no denigration to the poetry of Stevens and Williams to point out that Santayana's own vision leaves no room for any affirmation at all that goes beyond what the facts will allow. In response to William James's affirmation of "the will to believe," Santayana responded that "to be boosted by an illusion is not to live better than to live in harmony with the truth" (COUS 51). Santayana refused to affirm that life was worth living, no matter what the circumstances. He criticized those German romantics who asserted that "the good is life," responding that "for a rational being the good is only the good part of life, that healthy, stable, wise, kind, and beautiful sort of life which he calls happiness" (EGP 207-8). Santayana believed that "Nothing can be meaner than the anxiety to live on, to live on anyhow and in any shape; a spirit with any honour is not willing to live except in its own way, and a spirit with any wisdom is not over-eager to live at all." (WD 20). Surely one of the reasons for the clarity of Santayana's prose is his willingness to face the world as directly as possible, without resort to either mysticism or romanticism, attitudes whose consolations in the face of unpleasant realities may be expressed in great poetry but more often in muddled prose whose confusions obscure unwelcome facts. At the end of *Civilization and Its Discontents*, Sigmund Freud admitted that "my courage fails me ... at the thought of rising up as a prophet before my fellow-men, and I bow to their reproach that I have no consolation to offer them; for at bottom this is what they all demand—the most frenzied revolutionary as passionately as the most pious believer."⁷ Like Freud, but without Freud's scientific pretensions, Santayana refuses to offer consolation to his readers. He urges us to seek only the happiness that is actually available to us, by using whatever skills we can learn and whatever knowledge of ourselves and the worlds we can attain but also — perhaps the more difficult task — by relinquishing without bitterness those desires and aspirations that cannot, in the nature of the case, be satisfied. The wisdom he offers is no message of despair, but it is a wisdom that requires renunciation:

If you renounce inwardly your natural lust for pleasure or reputation or for life itself, the loss or the insecurity of those things ceases to touch you deeply: but if those things come to you, you enjoy them heartily for the time being, not expecting them to last. (PP 63)

When Rose Darnley responds to Oliver Alden's proposal of marriage by asking him "Can't you see that I would rather die than marry you?" (LP 550), Oliver is not crushed but freed; he achieves the only kind of liberation in which Santayana can believe: "His earthly person had been rejected, his earthly plan defeated; but by that defeat and rejection his soul had been wonderfully liberated" (LP 551). Oliver now is able to accept that puritans like himself have no place in the modern world: "In the world to-day we are a belated phenomenon, like April snow. Perhaps it is time for us

⁶ Merle E. Brown, *Wallace Stevens: The Poem as Act* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1970), 110.

⁷ Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and its Discontents*, trans. Joan Riviere (New York: Doubleday, 1958), 105.

to die” (LP 552). Yet he is not defeated; he is simply ready to accept all the consequences of the identity he proudly accepts: “We will not accept anything cheaper or cruder than our own conscience. We have dedicated ourselves to the truth, to living in the presence of the noblest things we can conceive. If we can’t live so, we won’t live at all” (LP 553-4). Not cynical but now free from illusion, he renounces any attempt to give his life meaning by trying to save the world from itself: “Enough if at all times I practice charity, and keep myself as much as possible from complicity in wrong” (LP 555).

Santayana demonstrates his philosophical integrity not only in the content of the conclusions drawn by Oliver Alden but also in the fictional aftermath he provides. Santayana’s plotting makes it clear that Oliver’s liberating insight, however important to Oliver himself, has no effect, good or bad, on the course of events. Oliver Alden’s death soon after his epiphany cannot plausibly be interpreted as somehow resulting from his new awareness; he does not die gloriously in battle nor in a melodramatic suicide but only because of the sort of auto accident that happens to philosophers and non-philosophers alike. That the accident itself is not narrated as it happens but announced to the reader only in retrospect while setting the scene for Mario’s final visit to the Darnley household (“Those ladies had long known of Oliver’s death” [LP 556]) is just another indication that Santayana refused in his fiction as in his philosophy to employ “bad physics” or to make romantic gestures.

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The Life of the Spirit in Santayana, Stevens, and Williams

*Then Oxymandias said the spouse, the bride
Is never naked. A fictive covering
Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind*¹.

Joel Porte's paper on Stevens and Williams contains a subtly articulated philosophic core. It reviews the reputed *Imagiste/Symboliste* divide between Williams and Stevens in the light of what I will call Santayana's double sense of the functioning of essences in human consciousness. His argument is that, *pace* Williams' ostensibly "objectivist" poetics, his actual poetic performances are *topoi* of the imagination, and therefore are on the same page with Stevens' pronouncements on poetry's "world of words [as] the life of the world" (CP 474) which involve suspensions of belief in the ordinarily encountered "things" of the empirical world. This commonly shared insistence on an *aesthetic dimension* of experience Porte astutely relates to Santayana's realm of essences as intuited by the pure spirit.

I will add that Santayana's sense of the *double functioning of essences* appears to require an appreciation of the kind of exemplary expression of the magic of fresh perception, combined with blooded, personal affection, in the poetry of Stevens and Williams. Stevens and Williams were twentieth-century Emersonian "modernists" in their quest for originality and integrity of expression in their own bloody times. They bear witness to Santayana's formulation in RB: "Integrity ... the clear allegiance of a transparent soul to its radical will, without being true of anything external, makes a man's choices true to himself" (RB 475). Or in Stevens' words just cited from "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," "The bride / Is never naked. A fictive covering / Weaves always glistening from the heart and mind." Implicit in such formulations there is the further Emersonian implication that the poets are our "representative men"—that is, they speak the vatic lines which restore our alienated majesty in pleasures of thought and moral sentiment in the ever-widening circles of our human lives.

In such wise, Santayana tells us, the poets and artists, who are the most representative humanists among us, speak of moral truths in their own ways. They relieve our care-driven animal anxieties as they bring us to hitherto unimagined freshness, clairvoyance, and radiance of insight in the life of the spirit.

Santayana's basic formulation that "knowledge is faith mediated by symbols" parses into two kinds of faith or belief—in "pragmatic" life and in the "artifices" of the spirit. These are issues and resolutions of universal philosophic import. Placed in their historical milieu, I venture to submit, they focus the implication that Santayana's ontological categories can be seen as having not only reconfigured the teachings of American pragmatism on a more realistic or naturalistic basis, but also as having

¹ Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), p. 396; hereafter cited as CP. Citations will also come from *The Letters of Wallace*, ed. Holly Stevens (University of California Press, 1996), hereafter cited as L; and Wallace Stevens, *Opus Posthumous: Poems, Plays, Prose*, ed. Milton J. Bates (Vintage Books, 1990), hereafter cited as OP.

This paper was read to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Boston on December 29, 2004. An enhanced version of this paper will be posted on the *Bulletin* website, with an added note on Santayana and more complete footnotes.

written the philosophic script for the veritable golden age of early 20th century American poetry comprised of such contemporaries as Stevens, Williams, Marianne Moore, Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and others.

Porte's placing Santayana's doctrine in interface with Stevens suggests such an elaboration of the veridicality of the "fictive coverings" of the creative imagination that comprise the life of the spirit in 20th century American poetry. On the face of it—and as Porte astutely concludes—the reputed *Imagiste/Symboliste* divide between Williams and Stevens smacks of being procrustean. Both Stevens and Williams were after all first-tier poets—poets' poets—exemplary practitioners of the art of *poesis*. Both held a devil-be-damned attitude toward academic classification. They were their own best critics, feeding off each other works while also sometimes rubbing against each other's nerves. Santayana's ontological categories allow us to bridge their relationship in essential ways. But conversely, these poets decisively confirm Santayana's categories.

Here is the issue in a nutshell. The "weaker Williams poems," as one writer puts it, appear to run the danger of becoming a "Polaroid poetry" in their penchant for "imaging" in the perspective of stark empirical objectivity.² In this respect Williams is sometimes linked with Marianne Moore who claimed that there must be "real toads" in imaginary gardens and who, in her own fashion, built some of her poetry out of collages taken from newsprint, magazine pieces, snippets of posters, and other mundane sources to illustrate her own disingenuous dictum that there is no difference between prose and poetry. [FN 3] While Williams and Moore were close poet-sidekicks of Stevens, their ostensibly object-oriented imagism thus appears to depart from Stevens who rather insisted on the "fictive coverings" of all poetry as instances of the "supreme fictions" of an *endlessly imaginable space* that makes an appeal to the suspension of disbelief in the reader. Indeed, the essence of Stevens' valorization of the poetic life consisted of *affirming belief in a fiction while knowing that it is a fiction*: "The final belief is to believe in a fiction, which you know to be a fiction, there being nothing else. The exquisite truth is to know that it is a fiction and that you believe in it willingly."³

(Of innumerable parallels to this formula in Santayana's writings let us cite here the last sentence of his novel, *The Last Puritan*: "After life is over and the world has gone up in smoke, what realities might the spirit in us still call its own without illusion save the form of those very illusions which have made up our story.")

This is said to be the age in which the critic replaces the author. But let us now get it from the horse's own mouth. In explaining his ostensibly Lockean aphorism in *Paterson*, "No ideas but in things," Williams himself said, "The poet does not . . . permit himself to go beyond *the thought* to be discovered in the context of that with which he is dealing. . . . The poet *thinks with his poem*. . ."⁴ His explanation here of "No ideas but in things" does *not* harken back to the old Democritean doctrine satirized by Cicero who skeptically complained that the composite images (*eidola*), which the Democriteans taught were emitted from material bodies, would have had to work by hitting you in the chest. Rather, his position is perfectly consonant with Santayana's teaching that we *think* with the transcripts of essences that become our poems and other lights in an otherwise darkened world. Nor does it diverge from Stevens whose Crispin remarked that "his soil was the basis of his intelligence" (CP

² Bart Eeckhout, *Wallace Stevens and the Limits of Reading and Writing* (University of Missouri Press, 2002), pp. 164.

³ Consult Stevens, OP, "Adagia," p. 189.

⁴ Cited from *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry*, ed. Richard Ellman and Robert O'Clair, second edition, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1988), p. 313.

36). Both confronted their times with formidable senses of both existential involvement in our tradition-forsaken modern world and of confronting the pressures of reality with the redemptive possibilities of the poetic imagination.

Richard Ellman's introductory remarks on Williams in *The Norton Anthology of Modern Poetry* are to a similar effect. He notes that Williams' poetics deliberately flouts the grandiose subject, preferring to make any quotidian object his *materia poetica*, and especially "those things which lie under the direct scrutiny of the senses, close to the nose." But Ellman adduces other pronouncements of Williams' on his poetic agenda such as: "The particular thing offers a finality that sends us spinning through space"; "The only realism in art is of the imagination"; "To refine, to clarify, to intensify that eternal moment in which we alone live there is but a single force—the imagination." And Ellman notes that Williams, in freeing himself from the mediation of other writers, "seeks 'radiant gists', as he calls them in *Paterson*" (*Ibid.* p. 314).

I should think that Williams' signature poem, "The Red Wheelbarrow," is such a *radiant gist* in its entirety:

so much depends	glazed with rain
upon	water
a red wheel	besides the white
barrow	chickens

One poetically transformative word here is *glazed*; and again, so much radiant *meaning* hangs on the word *depends* (*so much* that the poem, according to Ellman, is a microcosmic symbol of the macrocosm—in the sense of the dependence of the whole world on the red wheelbarrow!) (*Loc. cit.*). Or again, so much depends on seeing that Williams' haiku-like gem of a poem illustrates Santayana's doctrine that the "things" of the farmyard (wheelbarrow, rain water, chickens) can function as either pragmatic objects or, as here intended, as pure essences of the contemplative imagination.

Let us now work out these considerations in the terms afforded by Porte's paper and in further reference to the philosophy of Santayana. Porte focuses these considerations in his paper's opening words which raise the question of the *ontological status of the poem* in general; and he returns to the topic in querying the *ontological status of "place"* in poetry. He adjudicates this ostensible debate between the poetics of Williams, Moore, and Stevens when he argues that the distinction between the "real" and the "imaginative" in the *topoi* of poetry is unjustified. The net effect of his analysis is to dispel the debate itself. He is cogent in arguing that the *space of a poem* is an *imagined one* even when it seems closer to the "empirically real." [FN 7.5] Porte astutely shows how Williams' own Poem X of *Spring and All* illustrates how the "things" of the poem transport the intelligence beyond the sphere of ordinary "use" and "practice."

Williams' "things" turn out to be as imaginative as Stevens' "ithy oonts and long-haired plomets" in his "Analysis of a Theme" (CP 348) which takes off from a theme in Lewis Carroll's language "How happy I was the day I told the young Blandina of three-legged giraffes. . ." It ends with the poet's delightful spoof on the philosophers and scientists via a description of a portion of the realm of essences.

Yet in time's middle deep,
In its abstract motion,
Its immaterial monsters move
Without physical pedantry
Or any name.
The knowledge of bright ethered things

Bears us toward time, on its
Perfective wings.

We enjoy the ithy oonts and long-haired
Plomets, as the Herr Gott
Enjoys his comets. (CP 348).

Both poets professed the "exquisite truth" of the aesthetic pleasure of the creative imagination which consists in believing in a fiction knowing that it is a fiction.

If we return for a moment to the Emersonian provenance of Santayana's doctrine of the double functioning of essences (as transcripts of pragmatic intelligence and as pure data of poetic intuition), we will at the same time discover a *locus classicus* for the essential poetics of Stevens, Williams, Marianne Moore, and indeed all genuine poets and artists. Referring to the *spirit* in us, Emerson writes "The least change in our point of view, gives the whole world a pictorial air. A man who seldom rides, needs only to get into a coach and traverse his own town, to turn the street into a puppet-show. The man, the woman,—talking, running, bartering, fighting,—the earnest mechanic, the loungeur, the beggar, the boys, the dogs, are unrealized at once, or, at least, wholly detached from all relation to the observer, and seen as apparent, not substantial beings." He goes on to say, "In a higher manner, the poet communicates the same pleasure. By a few strokes he delineates, as on air, the sun, the mountains, the camp, the city, the hero, the maiden, not different from what we know them, but only lifted from the ground and afloat before the eye. He unfixes the land and the sea, makes them revolve around the axis of his primary thought, and disposes them anew." Emerson then anticipates Santayana's doctrine of the double functioning of essences (as transcripts of animal faith and as data of pure intuition) as he continues: "Possessed himself by a heroic passion, he uses matter as symbols of it. The sensual man conforms thoughts to things; the poet conforms things to his thoughts."⁵

In these terms we should be wary of making the interpretive mistake of importing possibly jejeune classifications of literary analysis into our philosophical discourse. Academic philosophers are prone to do so from the side of social-scientific and linguistic empiricism. Literary critics, uncritically ideological as many of them are, are just as apt to lack a sense of the "exquisite truth" of the realm of essence. But as Santayana's philosophy can tell us, Stevens, Williams, and Moore observed reality not with the scientist's microscope but with the eye of a Renoir or a Paul Klee; they knew, too, that a poet's writing of "your blue-shadowed silk" consists of a special *music of the words* (CP 90). They were painters and musicians of words—"words of the world [that] are the life of the world" (CP 474).

In searching for the difference between Williams and Stevens, I would place it in the higher degree of self-reflexivity—a more self-consciously expressed quality with respect to the making of the poem as an act, a living process, of his mind—which Stevens' poetry exhibits in comparison with Williams'. A sustained feature of Stevens' poetry is that it often becomes a *poetry on the act of poetry*—containing first-order images combined with a wraparound second-order meditation on its own creative and self-bemusing process. (A good case can be made here for understanding this second order feature as bearing paradigmatic witness to what Kant defined as the *reflective judgment*—the *aesthetic judgment* comprised of the discovery of one's own capacity for contemplative self-enjoyment of revelations of the beautiful and the sublime).

In a prose statement now collected in his *Opus Posthumous* Stevens can be found asserting the humanistic implication of this poetical self-understanding as follows: "*Ex Divina Pulchritudine esse omnium derivatur*, and, above all, poetry. And in reflecting on this, think of it in connection with the associations of poetry and pleasure and, also, in connection with *l'instinct du bonheur*. If happiness is in our selves, divine

⁵ From the "Idealism" section of NATURE (1836), p. 34 in *Emerson: Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte (NY: The Library Classics of America, 1983.)

pulchritude is in our selves and poetry is a revelation or a contact" (OP 183). Aesthetic pleasure in either Kant's or Emerson's transcendental sense turns out to be an ubiquitous feature in the later poetry of Stevens, as for example in "The Auroras of Autumn" and "Primitive Like an Orb" and perhaps culminating in "Final Soliloquy of the Interior Paramour." [FN 10] And all of this illustrates, I think, the kind of "clairvoyant" depth one comes to expect in a Stevens' poem in contrast with a Williams poem, though it is hard to generalize any final contrast between Williams and Stevens. (I will speak further below of the *clairvoyance* of Stevens' poems.)

Porte clarifies how each of these poets were committed to the transformative power—"power" in an Emersonian sense—of the "space" and "life" of the imagination. And the philosophic core of Porte's exegesis consists of his explication of this in the terms of Santayana's epistemology of the double functioning of essences in human consciousness. Drawing upon Santayana's central doctrine of SAF that "no datum exists" he articulates the sense in which Santayana and Stevens are "skeptical Platonists" for disallowing the hypostacization of essences. (It is no different with Williams' "no ideas but in things.") Beliefs in existence, then, are irrational persuasions or promptings of animal life, whereas the datum as idea, as description without existential location, enjoys the indefinitely evasive quality of "as" in its own ontological "place" as a pure essence—which may be aesthetically contemplated without actional belief. Essences, once again, can function either as transcripts for animal faith or, in another ontological dimension, as pure "fictions" or "artifices" of the imaginative intelligence.

A good companion to Porte's discussion of the *topos* of the poetic imagination as a "description without place" is Santayana's chapter on "Pictorial Space and Sentimental Time" in RM: "Here lies the legitimate magic of poetic intuitions," Santayana writes, "such as are these intuitions of time and space; that, being, incarnations of spirit on some animal occasion, they have a double affinity, here to spirit and there to matter" (RM 49). Santayana goes on, in my reading, to delineate four kinds of *space*—the aesthetically pictorial; the pragmatic in human action's horizontal topography; the geometrical in scientific longitudinality and latitudinality; and an internal space of dreamy, bodily semi-consciousness,—and also to delineate at least three kinds of *time*: to wit, the *here and now* of aesthetic time (as Platonic Idea, with its possibilities of poetic elaboration); of scientific (arithmetical) time; and of actional (pragmatic), sensitive, or sentimental time. Another kind of sentimental time as a "time of the Id," corresponding to bodily semi-conscious space, might also be distinguished in Santayana's phenomenological description. (An elaboration of this topic is deferred to another occasion.)

Now, as another example of his thesis Porte astutely reads Stevens as having "reinvented Santayana" as a saint in symbolic surrogacy of his own poetic consciousness in his poem "To An Old Philosopher in Rome." (An elaboration of this is also deferred to another occasion.) Porte quotes the Lines of SAF in which the "discovery of essence" lifts Santayana "to another plane of being"—namely, *to the realm of essence* in which "a mind enlightened by skepticism and cured of noisy dogma, a mind discounting all reports, and free from all tormenting anxiety about its own fortunes and existence, finds in the wilderness of essence a very sweet and marvelous solitude." Stevens especially rang the changes on this theme in many of his late-phase poems, for example, in the opening lines of "Credences of Summer": ("Now in midsummer come and all fools slaughtered / And spring's infuriations over Now the mind lays by its troubles and considers. / The fidgets of remembrance come to this," CP 372).

Now I think this binarism of essence as pragmatic transcript and as poetic artifice suggests that we appreciate Santayana's doctrine of truth in its full implication. His doctrine of truth's *objectivity* regards truth as a description of the realm of essence furrowed by time, that is, by the flux of material existence. This is not incompatible with a description of truth's *subjectivity* in the transparent and radiant words of the poet. On Santayana's own ontological terms, we have to account for the way poetic symbols as demythologized Platonic Ideas, which are the very fruitions of the spiritual life, function as ". . . anagrams of moral insight. Hence their nobility, and constant appeals to minds struggling after perfection." "The theatre," Santayana writes, "for all its artifices, depicts life in a sense more truly than history, because the medium has a kindred movement to that of real life." *Exemplo gratiae*, what narrative of wisdom and foolishness, justice and injustice, compassion and ruthlessness, can be truer to life than Shakespeare's *King Lear*? How is it that we can draw profoundly true moral lessons from such a consummate work of the aesthetic imagination?

Readers of Stevens' poetry will recognize that this redemptive work of the pure spirit is rendered in his own brilliant "world of words" that are "the life of the world." Stevens, the skeptical Platonist and sublime Epicurean, even has a version of "the ultimate Plato" which he symbolizes as the light of the evening star that "conducts / The thoughts of drunkards, the feelings / Of widows and trembling ladies, / The movement of fishes." The poem ends with the lines:

It is a good light, then, for those
That know the ultimate Plato,
Tranquillizing with this jewel
The torments of confusion. (CP 27)

This is the "ultimate Plato" for Santayana, too. In Santayana, as Porte suggests, the demythologized realm of Platonic essences which expose the pure, qualitative character of anything, are "apocalyptic." In Stevens, the theme that "description is revelation" in ecstatic, clairvoyant, Emersonian perspective of "the transparent eyeball" becomes especially pronounced in his late-phase poetry, as for example in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" and the poems of *The Rock*.⁶ [FN 13]

Porte's philosophic reconfiguration of Williams' objectivism is also embedded in these pronouncements concerning the veridical status of the transporting function of the imagination. Poetic ideas, Porte rightly concludes, are not so much *in* things as things which are transferred to consciousness by the images we invent to represent them. And he is right again in concluding that whether "idealist" or "anti-idealist," the twentieth-century modernist poets, of both the Stevens and the Williams camps, exemplified the life of the transforming spirit whose ontological status consists in its spontaneous and free imaginative power.

To wrap this up, let us dwell a little longer on the diaphanicity of Stevens' sense of "description as revelation." Related to Emerson's "transparent eyeball," this sense-making perspective is implicit in "The Snow Man," his Florida poems, "The Latest Freed Man," "Less and Less Human, O Savage Spirit," and other early and mid-career poems. It becomes more pronounced in his quest for the refreshment of an immaculate beginning of a First Idea in "Notes toward a Supreme Fiction," in the more mystical transports of "Credences of Summer" when all fools are slaughtered, in the "innocence" of the poet's memories in "The Auroras of Autumn," and in his rambling narration of "the plain version of things" in "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven."

⁶ See William W. Bevis, *The Mind of Winter: Wallace Stevens, Meditation, and Literature* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1988).

Brilliant as this clairvoyant perspective is in his poetry, it will shed its own light, I submit, on Santayana's own epistemic perspective which I take to be especially articulated in his theme of the omnimodality of spirit and its attendant doctrine of seeing things *sub specie eternitatis* (with credits to Spinoza). [FN 14]

From the abundance alone of texts which Porte cites we can build the case for the *active character of perception* in Santayana's accounts of both animal faith and pure intuition of essence. Santayana praised Berkeley for having played a key role in the transmission of this idealist tenet. Berkeley himself formulated this in the terms of the duality of passive, or inert, ideas and the active agency of spirit. Kant reconfigured Berkeley's subject-and-object relation into the doctrine of the constructive nature of perception. What is passive or receptive is simply the plane of sensation inside the surface of the skin. *Perceptions*, however, are *intellectual*, transforming the data of sensation into the space, time, causality objects of pragmatic perception (that is, into the transcripts of animal faith). With a shift in a priori (from the determinative to the reflective judgment), a different transformation occurs in the independent dimension of purely imaginative *poesis* in which pragmatic belief is suspended in favor of the aesthetic pleasure of the spirit in pure intuition of essence (with its veridical moral anagrams).

Santayana rings the changes on the latter theme whenever he talks about pure intelligence (in contrast, for example, to the pragmatists' primacy of instrumental intelligence). He departed from Berkeleyan kind of immaterialism in his insistence on the ontological status of his realm of matter. (This also took him "beyond Kant.") Stevens poetics dovetails with Santayana's in significant respects. We can say that his sense of the "supreme fictions" of the imaginative life constituted an updated version of William James' less sophisticated "will to believe" (that is, one that is still conflated with pragmatism). Santayana and Stevens' articulated versions of the will to believe in the suspension of belief, that is, in the radiant immediacy of the poetic life of the spirit. James may have groped toward this insight, but it was left for his student, Santayana, and his *protégé* Stevens, more adequately to express the sense of truth contained in the discovery of the realm of essence and its implications for the ontological status of poetry.

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Santayana on Public Opinion

Santayana's criticism of American culture and accompanying reticence towards democracy and liberalism is only one of the many themes we can pull from his rich and contradictory body of work. A good portion of his work undeniably speaks of a yearning for an ideal society in which any individual interested in the arts and spiritual matters could live without having to resort to an "interior exile" to survive.¹

He lived in an era of change: in economics, commercialism evolved into industrialism; in politics, direct democracy turned into representative democracy; and in culture, a mass culture emerged. The criteria of efficiency and quantity married by these changes sat poorly with the aesthetic, hedonist and contemplative values of Santayana's latin identity. The Spanish philosopher falls squarely within what Habermas calls the second evolutionary phase of bourgeois publicity: a period during which citizens once considered part of the privileged aristocratic class began to participate in public life. Jorge Santayana, like other great thinkers of the 19th century such as Stuart Mill or Alexis de Tocqueville, questioned the feasibility that under such conditions a competent government could arise independent of these powerful new demagogues.

Santayana was concerned with the repercussions on political and moral order as well on aesthetic order. The term "public opinion" appears often in his work to connote the gagging of free expression for thinkers and aesthetes, and an imposition of Philistine values. Santayana conceives broadly of public opinion as an irrational entity having the principal function of social control, as opposed to the political and rational concept dominant from the 18th century. For Santayana, the extension of democracy to the masses represented the death of an Enlightenment concept of public opinion in which only a small number of well-informed citizens would participate in public deliberations. In its place appeared a concept of public opinion as social control irrelevant to the quality of the debate. The cohesion and consensus necessary for society to advance would be achieved regardless of what was considered correct at any given time.

As Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann affirms in her classic work *The Spiral of Silence*, the concept of public opinion as social control carries implicitly a radically different interpretation of the term "public" from that of the Enlightenment. On the one hand, its influence spreads much wider than the theater of individual debate of democratic theory and, on the other hand, involves a series of topics beyond politics, including culture. Santayana wrote two essays on the subject of public opinion. The first of those, titled "On Public Opinion," was unpublished and dated by his secretary and executor Daniel M. Cory at between 1937 and 1952 (the essay was first published in 1968 in BR); the second, "Public Opinion," was published in his 1951 book *Dominations and Powers*. The aim of both is to question the constraints which the existence of a public opinion imposes on individual liberty, as well as its legitimacy and operating capacity in public affairs.

Despite Santayana's feeling of "being from another era," his thinking was not only timely. It pulled directly or indirectly from theories on public opinion of influential political thinkers such as de Tocqueville, James Bryce and Abbot Lawrence

¹ This paper is a translated adaptation of a chapter of the doctoral dissertation, *Public Opinion and Press in the United States: Vision, Description and Analysis of Spanish Intellectuals between 1885 and 1936*, Universidad Complutense, Madrid, Spain, 2005.

Lowell; left its mark on others such as Walter Lippmann; and shared some of the arguments Floyd H. Allport, the social psychologist, used to create the modern concept of public opinion.

To understand Santayana's concept of public opinion we must first understand the value the philosopher placed on individual opinions. Santayana's thinking on this topic stemmed directly from his materialist philosophy which considered appearances derivative and indicative of realities but not substantial in and of themselves. As such, Santayana refuted pragmatist philosophers (James, Dewey, Munitz) for whom the existence of opinions meant they carry a value unto themselves. Santayana considered opinions inadequate to analyze reality, representative as they are of phases of animal life rather than recreations of its objects — in other words, opinions are fictions. In describing opinions as "creations of the human mind, of human senses and passions, stimulated and controlled by external facts,"² Santayana, starting from a rather behaviourist premise, accepted that opinions can reflect well-being or pain in humans and the environment in which they live, but held they are incapable of penetrating to the nature of things. Santayana denied the intrinsic validity of opinions except those founded on true criteria based on memory, history, perception or science.

So it should come as no surprise that the term public opinion appears in Santayana's work as something imprecise, invisible, ethereal and volatile. Something "like the wind; it becomes at times a formidable force, something a man finds himself borne along by or fighting against; yet in itself it is invisible, rises suddenly in gusts and squalls, and mysteriously disappears."³ In fact, Santayana drew broadly from the prevailing thinking of his time on this issue. The philosopher agreed with Allport, whose article, "Toward a Science of Public Opinion," published in 1937 in the first issue of *Public Opinion Quarterly*, coined the concept of The Personification of Public Opinion to counteract the notion that the sum of individual thoughts is equivalent to the whole of collective thought or public opinion.

Santayana, too, called both public opinion and the public itself "conceptual fictions,"⁴ yet he still recognized their reality and power. He used nature as a metaphor, giving the example of how small and fragile the snowflakes are which form a snowball — innocuous in and of themselves but hard and compact when taken together. Nevertheless, as its very definition indicates, Santayana recognized and himself experienced the enormous social power which spawns that ethereal and mysterious force. Thus it is logical that we find many references in the philosopher's work to the existence of something which, named outright or not, could be called public opinion. For example, as a critic of US culture, the Tocquevillian and, by extension, the concept of "tyranny of the majority" served as one of his battlehorses in critiquing the American character. So much so that Santayana considered the capacity to resist the pressure exercised by society, a quality lacking in most Americans, to be an aristocratic feature. The following affirmation by the Spanish philosopher is a clear example of his conception of public opinion as social control:

But Americans are diffident, often feigning an assurance which they are far from feeling, and not able heartily to snap their fingers at public opinion. The instinct and the ideal of

² See page 539 of George Santayana, "Apologia pro mente sua," included in Paul A. Schlipp (ed.), *The Philosophy of George Santayana*. Northwestern University Press, Evanston and Chicago, 1940.

³ See page 101 of George Santayana, *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*. Columbia University Press, New York, 1968. (From the essay "Public Opinion.")

⁴ See George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, A. M. Kelley, 1972. (From Chapter XI, "Public Opinion.")

uniformity are very profound in them; if they are compelled to be rebels, they become propagandists, like the authors of this book, and if they cannot conform to the majority they are not happy until they make the majority conform to them.⁵

He made another references to the pressure exercised over the individual by public opinion in *The Last Puritan*, through the character Peter Alden — the protagonist's biological father and, in many ways, Santayana's own alter ego. Alden represents the prototype of a free thinker who criticizes the human tendency toward unanimity. On more than one occasion, this character criticizes what he calls a too common weakness among even the most intelligent of men to not be capable of allowing that others have a different opinion. In his autobiography, *Persons and Places*, the philosopher also criticized the provincialism which, in the process of introducing cultural values into the gentile condition, had become widespread among the American politico-social elite shaping public opinion.

If Santayana's vocational dissent housed no doubts, his personal life certainly showed numerous contradictions. One of those was the fact that despite his obvious isolation at Harvard due to his heterodox behavior, he would remain there as professor for 23 years, and yet feel no nostalgia when he finally left his position. Another contradiction was that Santayana never sympathized much with other dissident aesthetes who had the same concerns about public opinion's gag effect. Santayana was always careful to maintain his distance from other Americans he came across in Europe — and as such he is not known to have had any great friendships. This withdrawal, a sign of identity for Santayana throughout his life, was only possible through the maintenance of conventionality. In other words, Santayana fled any kind of radicalism or maximalist feeling so that he could formulate his criticisms without breaking the social harmony around him. In this, Santayana was a pragmatist and, to paraphrase the philosopher, knew how to behave correctly in good society while he was living in good society. However, Santayana's thinking is not what we would call "politically correct." In fact, the philosopher questioned the intrinsic value of democracy when he criticized the conduct of many philosophers of his era who legitimized the peoples' opinion on complex topics.

This is a consequence of modern philosophy, or the principle of it. All opinions are free and equal if, as modern philosophy maintains, they have no objects and are essentially opinions about nothing; the truth can then only be a harmony or a compromise established among these opinions. You shake the ballots in a hat, and pull out salvation.⁶

Santayana cites the "human fascination with unanimity"⁷ as the key factor explaining the force public opinion wields over private mentality, but he denies the possibility that public opinion can be considered representative of private opinions. The superiority of private over public judgment is that it stems from constant beings with memory and the capacity to think in historical terms, versus the ephemeral and fickle body of public opinion. As such, public opinion seems an unreliable force. The philosopher also criticized how leaders in democracies such as America's became hostages of something as volatile as public opinion. They became prisoners of passions that are nothing but physical impulses maturing in time, and often spreading

⁵ See page 147 of George Santayana, *The Genteel Tradition: Nine Essays by George Santayana*. Edited by Douglas L. Wilson, University of Nebraska Press, 1998. (From the chapter "Marginal Notes on Civilization in the United States",).

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ See George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*. *Op. cit.* (From the chapter "Public Opinion.")

“like infectious diseases.”⁸ This statement could have been written by Gustave Le Bon, one of the founders of social psychology.

Santayana also cast a critical eye on the idea of fashion, a word whose significance had already suffered a mutation since its 17th century origins in the uses and customs of clothing to become fetishist terminology for all kinds of ideas and trends in consumerism and the culture of the masses. The two years Santayana spent in Germany as a student, from 1886 to 1888, allowed him the opportunity to study under George Simmel (1858-1918), the German sociologist and philosopher who, years later in his 1904 work *Fashion*, would make an important contribution to thinking on how fashion had become an instrument of social approbation and integration. In a letter to William James, Santayana wrote with enthusiasm about how interesting he found Dr. Simmel’s classes. One of a current of thinkers of that time considered part of the intellectual aristocracy, Simmel defended the idea that the development of social differentiation and the numerical growth of the Group would bring about the loss of individual uniqueness and excellence. The German author described how both the tendency toward imitation (uniformity) and differentiation (individuality) in fashion had become mass forces in the production of consumer items. In *Dialogues in Limbo*, Santayana used the concept of fashion to explain how the tyranny of the majority over individual tastes and behavior came about with the full and enthusiastic consent of the individual. This tyranny would be upheld by what is most current — that is, in fashion — as a value in and of itself. The most tragic of all, according to Santayana, would be the acceptance of this concept by the intellectual elite.

The idea of pressure exerted by fashion can be found fully in the context of Santayana’s time. This idea is also paralleled in the work of James Bryce, who pointed out at the end of the former century the tremendous homogeneity of American customs and ways of thinking in comparison with European communities. Although Bryce recognized the role of democracy in legitimizing “the deference of individuals to the mass,”⁹ he attributed greatest responsibility for social equality among democracy’s inhabitants to the newness of traditions, access to education and geographic mobility; in sum, to the same liberalism criticized by Santayana. Another example is the concept of public opinion coined by Abbott Lawrence Lowell, a Harvard dean during the final years of Santayana’s work there. Lowell understood that the force of public opinion stemmed from the compliance with which the minority accepts majority opinions.

In order that it may be public a majority is not enough, and unanimity is not required, but the opinion must be such that while the minority may not share it, they feel bound, by conviction not by fear, to accept it.¹⁰

But Santayana also had significant influence over one of the most important figures of the North American intelligentsia in the 20th century, the famous columnist Walter Lippmann. Lippmann’s vision of the world, and of public opinion, were very similar to that of Santayana’s, indelibly marked by his contact with the man who was his Harvard philosophy professor from 1907 to 1910. The same self-distancing from

⁸ See George Santayana, *Persons and Places*. (From the Chapter 24, “Official Career at Harvard.”)

⁹ See James Bryce. *The American Commonwealth*, vol. II (1887). (From the chapter titled “The Uniformity of American Life.”)

¹⁰ See A.L. Lowell, *Public Opinion and Popular Government*. New York: Longmans, Green, 1913. pp. 15-16.

the world, the same self-protective intellectualism and the same strong belief in the limitations of democracy would appear in both men's lives and work — especially in Lippmann's classic book, *Public Opinion* (1922). He, too, denied the legitimacy of the public as a reasoning subject in which popular sovereignty could reside, considering public opinion a "mere ghost" or "abstraction."¹¹ Like Santayana, Lippmann assumes that public opinion does not constitute a group of defined individuals, rather it varies according to individual interests.

It is important to point out how indebted Santayana's notions of public opinion are to his aesthetic ideas and philosophy. One of the premises of that thought — that Mediterranean populations are more capable of reaching the state of contemplation necessary to make true philosophy — is at heart just a way of supporting his taste for Latin civilizations. This is based on the rationalization that citizens of Latin countries are more individualist and therefore less vulnerable to the subordination of their opinions and behaviors to collective ends. This argument would, according to him, explain the level of barbarism to which Germany stooped in World War I despite being the country of the great *kultur*. In contrast are countries such as Spain, where defining collective thinking is always a battle of "tradition and principles against instinct and desire."¹² He demonstrated this by showing how Spanish loyalties split during World War I between supporters of the Allies (liberals and revolutionaries) and supporters of the Germans (clergy and conservatives).

By instinct all Mediterranean peoples are republican and pagan, not having changed much since antiquity. ... If we take Spain not as the collection of individuals now alive in the peninsula, but as an historical power and personality, there is no doubt that her heart must be with Germany in this war. The friend of the Allies need not grudge traditional Spain this romantic affinity. She is quixotic, and seldom, even in her sympathies, on the winning side.¹³

Although Santayana's concept of public opinion may seem heterogeneous, it was something he considered very real; it represented a significant concern which would condition his nomadic life and appear sporadically yet consistently in his work. To summarize, we can cite three reasons why Santayana distrusts public opinion, the origin of which is the human compulsion for unanimity: its process of irrational formation based on imitation and contagion; its temporal discontinuity; and the lack of quality in its judgments. Nevertheless, in his final work, *Dominations and Powers*, he cast aside his *elitist* approach and recognized that, despite it all, any man — thanks to his capacity to reason — is capable of transcending public opinion and creating his own opinions. Considering Santayana's skeptical nature, this represents a major show of faith in humanity.

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¹¹ See Walter Lippmann, *The Phantom Public*. (Included in the compilation by the same author among others, *The Essential Lippmann*, Harvard University Press, 1963, p. 89.)

¹² See George Santayana, "Spanish Opinion on the War". *The New Republic*, April 10, 1915. p. 253.

¹³ *Ibid.*

Santayana on Causation

In *The Realm of Matter*, a book where the reader would expect a full treatment of causation, Santayana says almost nothing on the subject. This is especially curious because of extensive work he had done while writing this book. John and Shirley Lachs have presented three previously unpublished papers on this theme in their anthology POML, which they say, no doubt correctly, were composed in preparation for RM. However, almost none of this material found its way into RM. What then became of his ideas on causation, and why were they not included in his definitive work on matter? He castigates the empiricists, both the classical ones and those of his day, for discarding the notion in its common sense meaning. It would therefore be strange if he did not retain it himself in some form.

In the POML papers, Santayana does argue that in mature scientific theory the notions of cause and effect disappear; on the other hand, in RM there are a few passages where he does retain causation. Thus when we deal with the real flux of matter, he says, causation is everywhere:

There is then no necessity in the relation between cause and effect, and no assurance that law is constant. Nevertheless, causation is prevalent: were it not prevalent in fact, the expectation of it could never have arisen. (RB 303)

What Santayana intends by the term 'prevalent' is not made clear. However, this passage appears in the RM chapter entitled "Tropes," and is very similar to claims he makes at some length there about laws. He does not try to quantify the term there either, but the analogy does help to clarify his position. There, his attention is directed to physical laws and the application to them of tropes. On a more mundane level, though, causes are essential to our discourse; even though he does not deal with this point in detail in RM, there is every reason to think that this remains a part of his system.

Before turning to this main theme, I touch on one issue concerning causation — its relation to mind. On the claim that spirit is entirely impotent, Santayana is unambiguous. It might seem therefore that he is an epiphenomenalist and holds that spirit is caused by psyche but not the converse. As is well known, however, the notion that mind is caused by body raises its own difficulties. I mention here only that he recognizes this problem, and is wary of saying that psyche *causes* spirit. In part this is because there is simultaneity rather than succession. More important is the fact that moments of spirit belong to a realm utterly different from that of the material flux. About these moments he says:

This psychic lightning, since it flashes out of certain motions in the cloud of matter, might well be said to depend upon them and be an extraneous effect which has them for a cause. But if we adopted this language we should have to remove from the notion of causation the suggestion of an identical substance or force passing from an earlier to a later arrangement: the psychic expression of life is contemporary with its material phases, and it is in itself perfectly unsubstantial, evanescent, inconsequential, and impotent. It is no continuation of the same process that goes on in body, no transformation of the same energy. (POML 27)

According to the realms ontology, agency occurs only in the realm of matter. Moments of spirit are generated by the psyche located in that realm, and may be said to be *caused* by matter only if the sense of 'cause' is somewhat amended. In this special sense, then, Santayana could be called epiphenomenalist, although he did not much like the term. (See RB 134.)

In his later works, Santayana does not change his dismissive attitude to empiricist doctrine, and presses the attack no less vigorously than he had earlier; his most frequent observation on causation is that the empiricists have it wrong. The following passage launches the first of the three essays entitled "Causation" in POML:

Cause, like substance, is a notion much criticized by modern philosophers and sometimes discarded by them. The most usual and flimsy of their criticisms are psychological. When facts have been reduced to human perceptions, that is, to illusions, it is easy to reduce the pregnancy of facts to human superstition, namely to the expectation of any sequence once observed among them. But this whole psychological web is artificial; it is the literary dress given by half-hearted critics to a subjectivism not nakedly presentable. (POML 21)

As might be expected, he appeals to the notion of substance in his complaint about the Humean account of causation. The following passage comes from the third paper with the title "Causation." Uniformities or sequences that might be noted in our perspectives on natural change are not generated by their predecessors. Of these uniformities, he says:

The driving force, if anywhere, is not in them but beneath them, in the automatism of substance. For this reason empiricists, who deny or ignore substance, are constrained to regard causation as illusion. Irresistible succession in thought is mistaken, they say, for necessary succession in things. (POML 37)

He goes on claim that empiricists, when they appeal to a principle of the association of ideas make the mistake which they denounce. For Santayana, as he frequently repeats, the sequence of moments of spirit for any person is not at all dependent on the intuited contents of these moments, but depends entirely on the underlying material conditions in the brain; the associationist principle is "notoriously false." Passages similar to these, but without specific mention of causation, are not difficult to find in the final text of RM. These insist that connections in the intuited sequence of anybody's thoughts have their sources in the material psyche and are not internal to the sequence itself.

Santayana insists that causation is not a necessary connection. In the first citation given above, he asserts that "There is then no necessity in the relation between cause and effect," and then adds that causation is nevertheless prevalent (RB 303). When he asserts that causation is prevalent but not necessary, this brings to mind similar assertions in his more detailed treatment of laws. There are genuine laws but there is no assurance that they prevail everywhere. I turn briefly to his somewhat more extensive treatment of physical laws.

Here is Santayana's definitive statement dealing with spontaneity and natural laws. It is a double claim, saying that we must accept two apparently contradictory propositions:

I think that the reality of law can be briefly expressed in two maxims: one, that whatsoever happens anywhere, happens there spontaneously, as if it had never occurred before and would never occur again; the other, that whatsoever spontaneously happens once will have spontaneously happened before and will spontaneously happen again, wherever similar elements are in the same relations. The first of these maxims proclaims the contingency, substantiality, originality of fact everywhere: it is the maxim of empiricism, when experience is understood practically and not psychologically. The second maxim proclaims the postulate of action and of reason called the uniformity of nature. It is only a postulate, which contingent, substantial, and original facts may at any point disallow; but in so far as they do so, they revert to chaos and render life and art difficult, if not impossible. (RB 301-2)

The analyst might well question the consistency of these two maxims, since no rules are given for the dominance of one or other of the maxims under specific conditions. Santayana's formulation might suggest an example he relishes from Bradley:

It is *always* raining on half-holidays because of the Law of Raininess, but *sometimes* it is *not* wet, because of the Supplementary Law of Sunshine. (STTMP 49)

Do Santayana's two maxims not illustrate just the same kind of absurdity, the same clash of two incompatible theses? On the contrary, in a curious way the Bradley example could be used by Santayana to illustrate just the point of his account, as he surely has in mind. The clash between the laws of Raininess and Sunshine only arises if the former is taken to have the exalted status of a universally valid law; whereas it is patently just a generalisation from an apparently frequent but not inevitable occurrence, as is evidenced by the supplementary law. He calls the Bradley example a "pebble cast playfully at the metaphysical idol called "Law"." Santayana himself never misses an opportunity to pelt rocks at this idol. On these occasions, his intention is to counter any tendency to see in natural laws something more than the habitual; his maxims assert that similar occurrences repeat under similar circumstances, and indeed may appear always to do so, but it would go too far to say that they *must* always repeat. More to the point here, however, is the following: even if there were no exceptions to the putative law, this would not eradicate the spontaneity and inward determination of *each* instance of the law.

The principle of the two maxims of this important passage is surely meant by Santayana to apply to causation; and indeed it has other applications, one of which is to his discussion of psychic freedom. With the two maxims Santayana has enunciated a compatibility thesis. Spontaneity is not removed by natural law. It would not be removed even if these laws were necessary ones, although he does not embrace necessity himself. His chief complaint is the tendency to believe that, when events follow laws, the laws themselves are forces and are the causes of the events. Freedom itself is sometimes seen as a force; whereas the true force is the underlying material substance. The spontaneity of human freedom stems from that of matter, which is the locus of the material psyche. An event does not lose its spontaneity on being repeated.

While the notion of causation shares with natural laws the fact that they are not necessary, this does not mean that Santayana treats causes in terms of repetitions. Quite the contrary, he stresses in the POML papers that causation is not a question of law or uniform sequence:

The empirical notion that causation is a question of law or of uniform sequence, is purely sophistical, substituting connection in reflection for genesis in fact. A particular movement in nature cannot be due to the fact that a similar movement has occurred before. (POML 38)

In this passage, what he rejects is an account appealing to sequences of thoughts or perceptions or ideas. He is condemning any account of causation through a uniform sequence that substitutes "connection in reflection for genesis in fact." If this is his main point here, he is just repeating his standard criticism of empiricism; and many of the passages do just this. Thus, when "laws are sought among the random pictures in sense, it is no marvel that laws are not found." There is no merit in "alleged inductions based on repetitions in experience" (POML 22). In the many places in the three articles where he condemns an appeal to regularities, there is frequently some reference, perhaps a subtle one, to the fact that he is referring to a sequence of ideas. This would suggest that, rather than excluding uniform sequences from his own account of causation, he is concerned only to advance his critique of empiricism in regard to its appeal to psychology. And if there are passages in the three POML articles on causation where this concern is less evident, there might be a good reason for this. It is

significant that the notion of a trope, of such importance in RM, is absent from the three preliminary papers; but this notion offers exactly the distinction needed here between a natural regularity and its representation in thought by means of a formulated law. Thus it might appear that Santayana is merely rejecting regularities in thought, but lacking the notion of trope did not make this clear.

This speculation is incorrect; other passages make it evident that he is dismissing regularities of all kinds as irrelevant to the concept of cause. "The actual derivation of each event is singular, by the flowing together of the events immediately preceding in that place and substance; ... A particular movement in nature cannot be due to the fact that a similar movement has occurred before" (POML 38):

The breaking of innumerable waves in similar fashion one after another does not establish a causal influence of each upon the next. It invites the naturalist to study the origin of each wave out of the constant properties of water, the steady force of the wind, and the conformation of the shore. (POML 24)

In regard to causation, the repetition of observed events is not the crucial point. For a valid causal analysis, the true material agents in a physical derivation must be identified:

To come to close quarters with causes, however, it would be necessary to penetrate to the mechanism of matter. There we should see what in the lobster deranged the stomach and in what way, ... (POML 23)

This is then the method of science, to look beneath the superficial deliverances of spirit to isolate the true physical causes behind a natural movement within the flux of matter.

However, there is a complication here as regards causes: when a science matures and becomes a self-contained theory, the demarcation of individual causes disappears: "Causes are not assigned in those parts of nature, like the solar system, where the mechanism lies revealed" (POML 28-9). To this Santayana attributes "the ill-repute that has fallen on the word cause among scientific people" (POML 26). In several passages from the three papers, he agrees that the notion of causation is deficient:

Within the mechanical flux, again, to speak of causes and effects is beside the point. All the elements of the material world are original, its laws constant, and the possibility of calculating any posture of it is equal in any direction. No part or phase of substance is responsible for any other, or nearer to the ground of things. (POML 28)

The "causes" of things which a cursory observer can assign are accordingly mere arbitrary and exchangeable units, of a literary sort, behind which the flux of substance is going on, altogether too minute, complex, and voluminous for sense or language to trace it. (POML 30)

It is perhaps this deficiency that led Santayana to downplay the notion in RM. In dealing with natural law and science, his preferred tool is the trope. Still, there is much of value about causation that is ignored in the final text. There is a middle position, with excellent examples to display it, that deserves a place there.

In the following passage, Santayana again makes his point that the application of causes must be to mechanism rather than to phenomena:

When the bite of a mosquito is followed by a fever, it cannot have been the ugliness of that insect or his hum or my feeling of a prick that did the mischief: the connection, if any, must be traceable to some unsuspected germ meantime deposited in my blood. The flux of substance is generative, not the flux of phenomena. To attribute one phenomenon to the influence of another phenomenon is superstition or, when defended by philosophers, empiricism. The arts, even magic and prestidigitation, must work through substance. (POML 36-37)

On the one hand, in seeking causes in natural derivation, Santayana dismisses as causes events that are mere repetitions of superficial observations or are the

phenomena of experience. On the other hand, science when mature tends to set aside all appeal to causes. Between these two cases, however, are found a number of telling examples. There is some material in the stomach from the lobster or in the blood from the mosquito. One must discover the material substance responsible for the derangement, and it is customary to call this the cause of the ailment. Such is the method of science, as he points out. It is not the science of fully elaborated theory in which cause plays no part, but it exemplifies the move called for by valid science. In this context, the POML papers offer many supportive examples. While these do not appear in *RM*, he nowhere contests their validity.

Two main themes dominate the texts, both early and late: one is the ever present dismissal of the sequence of phenomena as an explanation of anything; the second is his recognition that change, variously called derivation, genesis, or mechanism, has its sources uniquely in matter. It might be called causation as well, for causation is everywhere:

Nature is the realm of derivation; it is all process and genesis, and in this sense everything in nature has a cause—everything flows from something else (POML 23).

The serious study of matter, called science, leads to self-contained theories and away from the notion of cause toward a mathematical treatment. While these theories have led to valuable applications and to a wonderful understanding of the intricacies of matter, they also lead away from the discourse appropriate to action. In the following passage, “acrobatic intellectual art” refer explicitly to a mathematical physics

To discern the causes of things—that is, to penetrate to that level on which their movement is connected and calculable—is an immense task which will still beckon the last of mortals. It demands of man that he abandon the human scale, which he can do only in intent by an acrobatic intellectual art which is very fatiguing and jejune; he can practise it only occasionally, and he hardly brings back from those abstract flights any warm conviction to his animal spirit. (POML 47)

One is led, as a part of this acrobatic art, to “abandon the human scale.” I think that the rejection of the notion of cause is a part of this departure from the human scale. One of Santayana’s stated purposes in *SAF* and *RM* is to provide the assumptions and categories required for human action; since the notions of cause and effect *are* indispensable for action, it is regrettable that he does not bring forward some of the earlier material.

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The Autonomy of Spirit

Despite his characterization of spirit as impotent, George Santayana speaks on occasion of the *autonomy of spirit*. An impotent spirit cannot be autonomous under the standard reading, on pain of contradiction. One cannot say that spirit supervenes on a causally autonomous realm of matter, and then add that spirit itself is autonomous in the same sense. However, he makes his intentions clear: it is autonomous in an entirely different “moral” sense. What Santayana has in mind depends on the fact that spiritual experiences and moral evaluations, once occurring, can never be annulled. In this, he sees something of a victory for spirit, not in the sense that the pain of events is removed, but in the sense that suffering is seen in a different light. It may become more tolerable, once understood and mastered in an intellectual sense. While this might seem of small comfort, he would perhaps suggest that spiritually inclined persons would comprehend. I believe that, provided one takes into account the unfamiliar sense assigned to ‘autonomy’ in the case of spirit, there is no conflict here with his naturalism.

An issue touching on his ontology arises here on which Santayana makes his position much less clear. In order for Santayana’s account of the autonomy of spirit to carry full weight, the moments of spirit that make up experience must be recorded in the realm of truth and must be known along with material facts. Has Santayana made provision for this? A moment of experience, as a physical event, has its own essence, and this will differ radically from the essence intuited in the event; but from the spiritual point of view, it is the latter that is important and is needed in the realm of truth. However, Santayana has very little explicit to say about this double occurrence of essence in a moment of spirit. This calls for an explanation. I deal with this issue following some further comments on his remarkable doctrine that spirit, although impotent, is in a special sense autonomous.

The immaterial, says Santayana, is “indomitable” (RB 672). Actual experiences cannot be abolished by being ignored, and essences cannot be changed by being dragged down into the flux of change. He assigns to essences a non-existential priority over the events in which they participate, and has them figure in a truth that is eternally unchanging. Life cannot annul the discoveries that spirit has once made in the life of any person. Obviously, hostile existences can extinguish the organs of spirit; they can and eventually will destroy any physical records of human experience. However, they cannot remove from the record experiences that have taken place. To this fact, he attaches the name ‘autonomy of spirit’:

... but the autonomy of spirit, while spirit lives, is inalienable. The things felt will have been felt, the things loved will have been loved, whatever may ensue; and no contrary judgment supervening will ever have the field to itself. Ignorant as it may be of all contradictions, it will be contradicted; unconscious as it may be of alien goods, the alien goods will exist. So that the clouds that traverse the spirit, in being seen, are in one sense abolished: spirit has outflanked them, set them down to be clouds, and thereby vindicated the supremacy of light and of vision. (RB 672)

Santayana employs several different terms to describe this characteristic of spirit. It is indomitable and inalienable, and as well it has *intrinsic authority*. This latter is the sixth and last on his list of the characteristics of intuition. He does not mention truth in the above passage or in his discussion of the sixth characteristic. However, there is little doubt that he has in mind the participation of moments of spirit in the realm of truth. Thus in another text: “Yet who knows what intuitions, what moments of spirit,

may not sometimes visit an idiot or wild animal? These are things that God only knows; they are laid up in the treasury of truth."¹ He is not speaking here of brain events, but of intuitions that call up specific essences into view.

There is a strong similarity between the above passage from RB and similar ones written much earlier, in which truth (although not a *realm* of truth) does come to the fore. The later notion of autonomy is suggested by the concept of ideal immortality discussed at length in LR, and this in turn may have had its origins in his reading of Spinoza. In a passage from the former, his mention of truth together with the terms "inventory" and "true confession" are clear anticipations of the realm of truth:

Animal sensation is related to eternity only by the truth that it has taken place. The fact, fleeting as it is, is registered in ideal history, and no inventory of the world's riches, no true confession of its crimes, would ever be complete that ignored that incident. (LR3 268)

This ideal immortality he here calls "indefeasible." A fuller statement of similar considerations occurs in his introduction to the 1910 Everyman edition of Spinoza's *Ethics*. This is his interpretation of Spinoza's contentious statements about immortality:

Yet all things are eternal in their status, as truth is. The place that an event fills in history is its inalienable place. ... When a man's life is over, it remains true that he has lived; it remains true that he has been one sort of man, and not another. In the infinite mosaic of history that bit has its unfading colour and its perpetual function and effect. A man who understands himself under the form of eternity knows the quality that eternally belongs to him, and knows that he cannot wholly die, even if he would; for when the movement of his life is over, the truth of his life remains. The fact of him is a part for ever of the infinite context of facts. (Introduction to the *Ethics* xviii)

Just prior to this passage he says: "It was not the length of a man's days that made him immortal, but the intellectual essence of his thoughts." He is not concerned with external movements of life within the realm of matter but with moments of spirit.

Again, Santayana himself expresses his preference that, if he had a legacy, it should be the intellectual essence of his thoughts, his mental life seen under the aspect of eternity, rather than its outward events. It is, at least for himself, the spiritual burden of a life that is important. Not only do moments of spirit contribute to the truth, but in fact these are the ones of most interest to him, the ones that play the crucial part in his notion of ideal immortality. The later ontology makes it easier for Santayana to clarify this position: these earlier passages describe what he would later call the autonomy of spirit, and variously bring in truth and spiritual moments. All are redolent of his vision of truth, and are themes that must have been a factor in his elevation of truth into a fourth realm of being.

Santayana admits moments of spirit as existences; he affirms that, although only one of his four realms is material, two of them are existential. (See PGS 521.) Matter is uniquely material and the only source of power, but he classifies both matter and spirit as "existential." In a letter to Charles Strong on June 3, 1934, he speaks of "immaterial existence," which is exactly our theme here:

The second point: when you insist that "projection outward is *intentional*", and this creates the "phantasm". This is what I think, of course; and this introduces spirit or

¹ See PGS 541. When Santayana speaks of moments of spirit, the focus is usually on the essence intuited and the act of awareness. With the term 'intuition', the double aspect is brought out more sharply. An intuition is both the physical event generating an act of awareness and the act itself. However, he does not everywhere stick to this, and sometimes speaks of moments of spirit in their status of physical events.

intuition or actual feeling with its immaterial existence. ... What is it, then, but an essence? There are plenty of psychic or material existents in the region to which this essence is projected: they are the object: but in the moral world I see nothing but the perception itself—a spiritual moment—and the essence discerned by it. I feel in general that if we admit the dynamic continuity of all events in nature, both spirit and essence are purified very much, and made quite simple on their own levels.²

As seen earlier, Santayana includes in truth the spiritual contents of experience, and not merely the physical changes that generate these. My concern is the question of how this might be incorporated into his categorical scheme. The key point here, and a neglected issue in Santayana's system, is the double occurrence of essence tied to a moment of spirit: one arises because the intuition is generated by a bodily event that must be the embodiment of some essence; and a second essence arises as the visionary image intuited. The two are utterly different. Although the second arises from the event as an appearance, it is incidental from the viewpoint of the psychic mechanisms operating within the realm of matter. From the viewpoint of spirit, however, it is of the first importance; if this second essence is left out of the picture, doubts must arise that the intuition of a certain essence at a certain time counts as a true fact. In Santayana's account, the involvement of two different essences here does not get the attention it calls for.

The only place I know where he records in a single passage the need with moments of spirit for a duplication of essences occurs in an earlier letter to Strong on January 18, 1933:

Even in an appearance, I should say, there is a concomitant existence involved, or rather two: one substantial, that of the psyche, and another spiritual, that of the intuition. But the thin existence of the appearance itself seems to be only imputed, because the appearance is regarded by the hasty mind as the intrinsic nature of the psyche at that moment; and then in memory and history, the same appearance is used to describe the phase of spiritual life in which it was present. I think, as I said in my last note, that a "multiple definition" of such terms as "existence" and "datum" might be useful in obviating disputes.³

Not only does Santayana concede here that there must be a double occurrence of essence associated with appearances, but he gives a hint of how he might want to deal with the issue. The appearance to intuition he calls a *thin* existence in contrast to the *thick* material existence of brain activity. Although these terms are apparently taken from Strong, they appear to reflect his own position. The thin existence of an experience is tied to the thick existence in psyche that generates it.

In the later writings, Santayana likes to work within the context of one or other of the realms and to consider questions from differing points of view, as determined by those realms. When we deal with morals and spirit, the essences that we intuit are of the first importance. His discussions, in RS and elsewhere, often deal with spiritual questions without comment on the assumed material sources. However, from the viewpoint of the causal picture in the realm of matter, the thin existence of these intuitions would be incidental. Although acknowledged to be of importance from the spiritual viewpoint, the thin must here give place to the thick existence seen as a material change in the psyche. Thus in DP he strives to discuss political institutions from a materialist perspective, shunning any ideal explanations and justifications (but stressing the spiritual consequences of various political arrangements). He tries to

² See Book 5 of his letters (LET5 113).

³ See (LET5 7-8). Santayana could himself have devoted more attention to a multiple definition of the terms 'intuition' and 'moment of spirit', not just to obviate disputes, but to clarify his own position.

keep matter and spirit separate throughout;⁴ and in neither context does he have much to say about the double existence of intuitions. The question at issue, since it touches on causes, cannot be answered in terms of spirit — any explanation must be in the setting of the realm of matter. Moreover, even there we are ignorant of the mechanisms that give rise to spirit. Thus a moment of spirit, when considered within the realm of matter, is generated by a single psyche, both in its material existence within the brain and its immaterial existence as intuition of essence. There seems little more that he is prepared to say about the genesis of moments of spirit.⁵

In order to get a better picture of how Santayana sees this issue, it is helpful to study how it bears on his theory of knowledge. If certain images have been perceived, he clearly asserts that this is a fact open to knowledge. He makes the exact point in this passage:

The fact that the direct source of data is the organ in operation, not the object, has this further consequence, that immaterial and ineffectual things may become the objects of knowledge, only the instrument of knowledge being active and material, as in the case when we know the past, the future, or the outlying parts of human discourse, such as other men's passions. (OS 142-3)

Clearly, this is knowledge of the "thin" existences at issue. When he speaks of the outlying parts of human discourse, he obviously refers to the knowledge that some essences have been intuited.

The issue now becomes the problem of fitting knowledge of these immaterial existences into his stated system. There appears to be a clash with his claim that knowledge is of substance, along with his later identification of substance with matter. If a knowledge claim is to be an assertion that something exists materially and has some property described by some essence, then it is difficult to deal with moments of spirit. Here is one of his statements that the phenomenal events are open to knowledge, but one containing at the same time some puzzling remarks about substance:

All knowledge, being faith in an object posited and partially described, is belief in substance, in the etymological sense of this word; it is belief in a thing or event subsisting in its own plane, and waiting for the light of knowledge to explore it eventually, and perhaps name or define it. ... Nevertheless, from the point of view of knowledge, every event, even if wholly psychological or phenomenal, is a substance. It is a self-existing fact, open to description from the point of other events, if in the bosom of these other events there is such plasticity and intent as are requisite for perception, prophecy, or memory. (SAF 182)

This citation confirms once again that intuitions are facts that might be true and can be known. However, the references to substance are not at all easy to disentangle. He explicitly admits phenomenal events as substances open to knowledge. However, in Chapter III of *RM*, after an extended argument, he announces that in his system substance is to be matter. This would appear to discredit the above comments about

⁴ Santayana was an admirer of Spinoza, and in early days he even flirted with the theory of psycho-physical parallelism (PGS 555). His sharp separation of the realms of spirit and matter often reminds one of Spinoza.

⁵ On the question of how Santayana's system ties moments of spirit to the persons who have the intuitions, an ontological separation of this type is called for. Briefly I would say that, from the viewpoint of the realm of spirit, there is no tie. Because of this, Santayana does speak of spirit in global terms in a manner at times even suggesting idealist philosophy. For the answer to the question, one must look instead to the realm of matter; and there the various moments of spirit are tied to the psyches that generate them. He acknowledges that there is no *proof* of this tie, but then he does not seek proofs of the existence of matter either.

knowledge and to nullify any possible knowledge of thin existences; for knowledge that a phenomenal event has taken place, where we are speaking of the thin existent, is scarcely knowledge of substance as matter. I offer a very brief sketch of my account of Santayana's position on substance and matter, and then suggest that this sheds some light on the issue of thin existence.⁶

For Santayana, I believe, the term 'substance' has a double sense. The first takes substance to be the principle of existence, something that will vary from philosophy to philosophy. It is to substance that belief can be properly directed, and in this general sense, an important condition is that the substance must be absent from intuition: it subsists "in its own plane" separate from the given appearance. I have argued that he retains this general sense for the term 'substance' when he is analysing others' thought; whereas within the system he elaborates in RB substance is shown to be matter. In his analyses, he regularly puts the case that substances in the weaker sense, as considered by others, are in truth dependent upon substance *at a deeper level*, that is to say, upon matter.

When Santayana refers to substance "in the etymological sense of the term," he makes the term 'substance' sufficiently elastic to serve his special purposes. He takes care that this does not invalidate the more specific announcement in RB that substance is to be matter in his systematic philosophy. As I understand Santayana's position, it is only a knowledge claim of an external fact that makes a direct claim of material existence. A knowledge claim that some moment of spirit has taken place and exists as an immaterial existence, does call on an *indirect* assertion of material existence. As he likes to say, there is dependence of material events at some more remote level. Thus I hold that the explicit double sense Santayana gives to 'substance' mirrors the unexplained double notion of thin existence. As he says above, even a wholly phenomenal event is a substance in the general sense; belief can be applied to it and it might be known. However, on a deeper plane, this thin existence depends on material changes in psyche. A phenomenal experience is an existence whose occurrence may be known; it is a "thin" existence that is grounded at a deeper level on "thick" ones.

Earlier, I had thought that the weak notion of substance is only used by Santayana in analyses of the philosophies of others. However, I see now that he appeals to it within his own system in dealing with thin existence claims. He invariably puts moments of spirit at the uppermost stratum remote from their genesis deep within matter. In the context of this appeal to levels (which surely betrays further influences from Spinoza), the notion of thin existences has a natural place. These are substantial "from the point of view of knowledge." Belief in their existence is "belief in substance from the etymological sense of this word." Thus the fact that a person has certain intuitions of essence at certain times counts as an existence and can be known by that person or by someone else. It belongs to the realm of truth, and because it does, spirit achieves a certain kind of autonomy.

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⁶ The interpretation here follows my discussion of substance in my paper "Santayana on the Matter of Aristotle," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*. Summer 2003, Vol. XXXIX, No. 3, pp. 349-371. For a different view see the response to this paper by John Lachs, "Substance and Matter: A Response to Angus Kerr-Lawson" on pages 373-381 of the same volume and number.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST

TWENTY-FIRST 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 46202–5157.

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Second International Conference on George Santayana

We are delighted to announce that there will be an international conference on George Santayana in the summer of 2006. It is organized by Chris Skowronski, and will be held in The Institute of Philosophy and Sociology at Opole University, his home university, in Opole, Poland. The dates will be from June 20 to June 24.

I have from Chris an initial partial list of those planning to take part in the conference: Jose Alcoriza, José Beltran, Matt Flamm, Kristine Frost, Manuel Garrido, Michael Hodges, Angus Kerr-Lawson, H. T. Kirby-Smith, John Lachs, Antonio Lastra, Daniel Moreno Moreno, Pedro Garcia Martin, Giuseppe Patella, Daniel Pinkas, Kenneth Prize, Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., Vicente Cervera Salinas, Chris Skowronski, Michael Stack.

Those who wish further information should contact Chris at this address:

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45-266 Opole, Poland.

Much easier and quicker is an e-mail message to Chris at either

skris69@hotmail.com or
skris69@yahoo.com

The *Bulletin* and other Websites

The website for *Overheard in Seville* is:

<<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 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>>

Herman Saatkamp has prepared a site in the Stanford University philosophy series:

<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/santayana/>

Overheard in Seville

Edited for the Santayana Society by Angus Kerr-Lawson. Correspondence concerning manuscripts and publication should be sent to him at the Department of Pure Mathematics, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1.

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Matters concerning subscriptions, the Santayana Edition, the Santayana Society, and the Bibliographic Update should be sent to Kristine Frost, managing editor of the Santayana Edition, School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5157, USA.

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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
CP	<i>Complete Poems</i>	PP	<i>Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography</i>
DL	<i>Dialogues in Limbo</i>	PSL	<i>Platonism and the Spiritual Life</i>
DP	<i>Dominations and Powers</i>	RB	<i>Realms of Being</i> (One volume edition)
EGP	<i>Egotism in German Philosophy</i>	RE	<i>The Realm of Essence</i> . RB Bk. I
ICG	<i>The Idea of Christ in the Gospels</i>	RM	<i>The Realm of Matter</i> . RB Bk II
IPR	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i>	RT	<i>The Realm of Truth</i> . RB Bk III
LP	<i>The Last Puritan</i>	RS	<i>The Realm of Spirit</i> . RB Bk IV
LR	<i>The Life of Reason, or The Phases of Human Progress</i>	SAF	<i>Scepticism and Animal Faith</i>
LR1	Vol. 1. <i>Reason in Common Sense</i>	SB	<i>The Sense of Beauty</i>
LR2	Vol. 2. <i>Reason in Society</i>	SE	<i>Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies</i>
LR3	Vol. 3. <i>Reason in Religion</i>	TTMP	<i>Some Turns of Thought in Modern Philosophy</i>
LR4	Vol. 4. <i>Reason in Art</i>	TPP	<i>Three Philosophical Poets</i>
LR5	Vol. 5. <i>Reason in Science</i>	WD	<i>Winds of Doctrine</i>