

OVERHEARD IN SEVILLE

BULLETIN
OF THE
SANTAYANA
SOCIETY



NUMBER 40
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Cover design by Jonathan Wotka. The original cover of *Overheard in Seville*, used in its first thirty-seven issues, showed an enlargement of the figure taken from the emblem on the cover the Triton Edition of Santayana's works. The Triton Edition was named after the Triton Fountain (Fontana del Tritone) by Bernini, which is in the piazza outside the Bristol Hotel, Santayana's residence for many years in Rome. The current design restores the emblem to its approximate original size in relation to the cover, embedding it in a yellow background that recalls the gold of the emblem on Constable version of the Triton Edition. The dark blue color, the color that Santayana preferred, also comes close to the blue background of Constable version.



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(For corrections to the print version see p. 174.)

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Report on The Annual Meeting

At the annual meeting of the George Santayana Society, held virtually on 22 January 2023, the members who were present elected officers, each to serve two-year terms, as follows: Richard Rubin, re-elected as President, Hector Galvan, as Vice President, and Phillip Beard as Secretary-Treasurer. (Michael Brodrick, who had served as a board member since 2015, most recently as Vice President, had announced that he would leave the Executive Committee at the end of his term.) Martin Coleman gave a report on the status of the Santayana Edition, which is losing significant institutional support from the Indiana University School of Liberal Arts in Indianapolis. (For further details on this subject, please see Coleman's report on the Edition here on page 5) Herman Saatkamp encouraged donations both in support of the Santayana Edition and also for the forthcoming volume of essays commemorating the one-hundredth anniversary of the publication of *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, edited by Glenn Tiller and Martin Coleman. The bulk of the meeting was a broadly attended discussion on the definition of truth in the work of Santayana. Glenn Tiller started the discussion with a ten-minute presentation. Formal respondents to Tiller's talk were Eric Sapp, Adam Sopuck, Herman Saatkamp, and Richard Rubin. After their comments the discussion was open to all participants. An edited transcript of the discussion will appear in the next issue of *Overheard in Seville*.

PHILLIP L BEARD

Secretary-Treasurer, George Santayana Society

Editor's Notes

This fortieth issue of *Overheard in Seville* continues our tradition of bringing out new material on topics that arise from the life and work of George Santayana. This is the sixth year we have presented sketches of Santayana's life. The series "Santayana 75, 100, and 125 Years Ago," which we instituted in 2017 has two new authors. Andrés Tutor de Ureta writes about 1897, a year Santayana began in England and ended back at Harvard. Matthew Flamm, the previous editor of this journal, tells us about Santayana in France and Rome in 1922. Both writers have taken advantage of the *Recently Discovered Letters of George Santayana*, a collection that consists of letters to Charles Loeser, Albert von Westenholz, and others. It was edited by Daniel Pinkas, a member of our editorial board. The letters also appear in Spanish translations by Daniel Moreno, one of the editors of *Limbo*. In 1947, Santayana was in his last home, the Hospital of the Little Company of Mary. He seldom went out but had an extensive correspondence. In the fall, his longtime assistant Daniel Cory came to Rome and stayed with him for several weeks after they had been separated for nine years.

Daniel Pinkas has been working on a fictional autobiography of Santayana called *Un Hôte de Passage*. With an eye toward gaining more awareness of Santayana in francophone countries, Pinkas has imagined that to amuse himself Santayana produced a set of notebooks in French. It is a pleasure to be able to publish a selection from this work-in-progress both in the original French and with a facing English translation. We hope that readers who have at least some ability to read French will start with Pinkas's original and use the translation for back up.

A previously unpublished item, Santayana's report on the lecture series he gave in France during the 1905-1906 academic year, appears in this issue. Daniel Pinkas's introduction explains the context of the report.

Also in this issue, Jessica Wahman confronts Santayana's eschewal of metaphysics by asking whether metaphysics is compatible with naturalism. Eric Sapp, in the second of two articles on Santayana's dialogue "The Secret of Aristotle," argues that Santayana's notion of causality is a radical departure from Aristotle's efficient cause. Lydia Amir concludes her three-part article on the Democritean tradition with her comparison of Santayana, Nietzsche, and Montaigne on laughter and the comic. Phillip Beard draws a connection between Santayana's treatment of the sublime in *The Sense of Beauty* and his analysis of pure being in *The Realm of Essence* and other works.

Vincent Colapietro takes Katarzyna Krempleska's book *George Santayana's Hermeneutic Politics* as the starting point for an essay on Santayana's political theory. Adam Sopuck reviews the book that emerged from the conference on John Lachs's life and work held in Berlin in 2015: *John Lachs's Practical Philosophy: Critical Essays on His Thought with Replies and Bibliography*. Dr Sopuck has also sent us a letter commenting on the article by the late Angus Kerr-Lawson that appeared in our 2021 issue.

In in September 2022, Jerry Griswold, who had conducted online sessions on Santayana and Wallace Stevens in 2020 and 2021, died unexpectedly. Griswold had been professor emeritus at the University of California San Diego, specializing

in children's literature. Many of us hoped he would continue to make contributions to the Santayana world for years to come. In this issue we pay tribute to his creativity and enthusiasm.

Michael Brodrick, after eight years on the Executive Committee, resigned as Vice President, effective at the end of term in January 2023. Michael has contributed much to Santayana scholarship, and we look forward to future contributions from him.

Hector Galván has taken on considerable responsibility advising at-risk students at Texas A&M—Corpus Christi. This job prevented him from continuing as Associate Editor in 2023. He continues to serve on the executive committee of the George Santayana Society as Vice President, a role he took over from Michael Brodrick. Hector put in considerable time, effort, and thought to help make this and the two previous issues possible. Phillip Beard, who became a second Associate Editor at the end of 2022 has contributed greatly to bringing this issue through its final phases. He also became Secretary-Treasurer of the Society at the annual meeting in January 2023. Both Hector and Phillip have helped shape our review process and editorial process. Our focus is not just on making the articles we publish as accurate, complete, and focused as possible, but also on making them as clear as possible. To that end our editorial board has continued to provide invaluable assistance. Its members usually work anonymously and, therefore, without public credit. We are indebted to them and to the authors, for their willingness to accept, or at least negotiate over, the many suggested changes.

RICHARD MARC RUBIN

Editor, Overheard in Seville, and President, George Santayana Society

Report on the Santayana Edition

The Santayana Edition completed work on the critical edition of *Winds of Doctrine*, Volume IX of *The Works of George Santayana* in Fall 2022. The book is in production at The MIT Press and is scheduled to be published in 2023.

The critical text for *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Volume XIII of *The Works of George Santayana*, has been established and the Edition is working on the editorial apparatus including the index and Notes to the Text. We have shared this critical text with the George Santayana Reading Group, and we are especially grateful to several scholars in the Reading Group for their assistance with composing Notes to the Text.

In November 2021, the Edition submitted a grant application to the National Endowment for the Humanities that was not funded. We submitted a revised grant in November 2022 to support work on the critical edition of *Realms of Being*; but as we were completing the application, we learned that the IU School of Liberal Arts would no longer fund any editorial positions in the Santayana Edition after 1 July 2023. This greatly diminishes the chances of the NEH funding our application, because an important criterion is institutional support of the proposed project.

The IU School of Liberal Arts will continue to provide office and archive space for the Santayana Edition. After 1 July, the Edition will use its remaining funds (mostly from recent gifts and a bequest from Morris Grossman) to employ David Spiech and Faedra Weiss for around five months. This makes completion of the critical edition of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* highly likely.

After the Edition is no longer staffed, the plan will be to maintain the Edition's digital resources. This will depend on transferring the website to IU's School of Liberal Arts to ensure ongoing technical support and moving digital archives (texts, letters, notes, etc.) to another platform, likely hosted by the University Library. The logistics for such moves remain to be worked out as we try to harmonize our needs with present institutional priorities and practices.

MARTIN COLEMAN

Director and Editor, The Santayana Edition, IUPUI

Online Reading Group on *Scepticism and Animal Faith*

The *Scepticism and Animal Faith* reading group (SAF Group) is a continuation of the *Life of Reason* reading group that began in the fall of 2020. The group meets monthly in two sessions: Friday at 11 am US Eastern Time and Sunday at 1:15 pm US Eastern Time.

Schedule for the SAF Group, 2023-2024

Friday 11:00 ET	Month	Sunday 13:15 ET	Year	Chapters
17	February	19	2023	SAF Preface, Ch I
17	March	19		SAF Ch II-III
21	April	23		SAF Ch IV-V
19	May	21		SAF Ch VI
16	June	18		SAF Ch VII-VIII
21	July	23		SAF Ch IX-X
18	August	20		SAF Ch XI
22	September	24		SAF Ch XII-XIII
20	October	22		SAF Ch IV-XV
17	November	19		SAF Ch XVI-XVII
15	December	17		SAF Ch XVIII
26	January	28	2024	SAF Ch XIX-XX
16	February	18		SAF Ch XXI
15	March	17		SAF Ch XXII-XXIII
19	April	21		SAF Ch XXIV
17	May	24		SAF Ch XXV
21	June	23		SAF Ch XXVI
19	July	24		SAF Ch XXVII

Announcements about the meetings are sent out approximately one week before with the connection information. These often go to the general George Santayana Society email list (santayanasociety-l@list.iupui.edu) and always go to the email list set up specially for our reading groups (santayana_read_grp-l@list.iupui.edu). This latter email list is not moderated and is open only to those on the list. From time to time, it has been the place for lively discussions between meetings. If you would like to join this list, write to info@georgesantayanasociety.org.

Everyone is welcome to join either the Friday or Sunday session or both. There is no need to have attended previous sessions. Also, there is no presumed continuity from the Friday to the Sunday session.

Letter to the Editor:

Santayana's Doctrines of Time

Dear Editor of the *Bulletin*,

I found Angus Kerr-Lawson's piece, the one that was devoted primarily to explicating some of the unique features of Santayana's doctrine of physical time and which was featured in the 2020 issue of *The Bulletin*, interesting and, in many respects, penetrating. However, while a problem with which Santayana grapples that is termed *the problem of change* gets briefly discussed—namely, “the problem of finding a suitable representation of time” (Kerr-Lawson 2020, 104)—the article merely scratches the surface of the real (ontological) *problem of change*, as I see it, that Santayana faces. Perhaps Kerr-Lawson deals with this problem elsewhere; nevertheless, the problem is absolutely crucial; let me attempt to provide a statement of it here.

In accordance with what I call Santayana's *fluxism*, in order for change to occur, material substance must exchange one essence for another: “Actual succession is a substitution” (RB 272). This is to say that in any change, one object or existent, i.e., hylomorphic compound, is annulled—albeit its matter is conserved (see RB 274)—and another object or existent takes its place. That which exists, in Santayana's view, is always a hylomorphic compound, and neither essence stripped of matter nor matter stripped of essence *exists* (see RB 13). A particular hylomorphic compound *per se* ceases to exist (i.e., is annulled) when its matter takes on a distinct form. Ceasing to exist in this limited sense is not to be conflated with *annihilation*, which requires the destruction not only of the compound *per se*, but the perfect erasure of matter (and, trivially, its form) from the plane of existence (see RB 224 on the prospect of such annihilation).

Santayanan fluxism, as I understand it, inescapably implies that past objects and present objects respectively belong to distinct orders of reality within the “steady procession of realities” (RB 257). The former are rungs in a material substance's “order of derivation” (RB 253) that have ceased to exist (in the sense defined); the latter are the present states of material substance; the future constitutes the subsequent set of transformations material substance will undergo.

A substantive *now*, it seems, is an unavoidable commitment of such an account. There is, after all, a determinate, non-arbitrary point within the series of objects coming into and slipping out of existence that can be described as a junction point, where what was future rolls into existence and what was present rolls out. Call this the *flow function* of the present.

This flow function seems at first glance to be captured by Santayana's following description of presentness:

Presentness is the coming, lasting, or passing away of an essence, either in matter or in intuition. This presentness is a character intrinsic to all existence, since an essence would not be exemplified in any particular instance unless it came into, or went out of, a medium alien to it. Such coming and going, with

the interval (if any) between, constitute the exemplification of that essence, either in the realm of matter or in that of spirit. (RB 254)

However, Santayana insists that presentness is an intrinsic property of all moments, including those in the future and those in the past (RB 253; see also RB 265). Moreover, this absolute *presentness of a moment* is functionally equivalent to or rigidly designates that moment's actuality or existence. In other words, they are biconditionals—cf. Adolf Grünbaum on the fallaciousness of accounts with this feature, according to which “*seemingly* tenseless uses of the terms ‘to exist’, ‘to occur’, ‘to be actual’, and ‘to have being or reality’ are in fact laden with the present tense” (Grünbaum 477-478). It is *prima facie* difficult to understand how the relevant flow function may be accomplished by the absolute present. If things are intrinsically present, and presentness and existence are biconditionals, how might they ever slip out of existence? Conversely, “[a]n equal reality of the past with the present” (RB 265), a thesis that Santayana grounds in the intrinsic presentness of all moments, is, it seems, at odds with his fluxism and the requisite ontological prioritization of the present. Here I channel Grünbaum: relativistic accounts of time paired with theories of local becoming make for rather unhappy marriages—cf. Davies 260.

Were we to decouple presentness from existence or actuality, *eternalism*, according to which what is past is not for that reason out of existence, would become a theoretical possibility. Such a view makes good on the “equal reality” thesis. Indeed, some interpreters have construed Santayana's account as eternalist in nature. Within his analysis of “Santayana's Eternalism”, Leemon B. McHenry argues that “Santayana has concluded that, since a proposition must have an existing object, all events must be ‘intrinsically present’ and only relatively past or future. Pastness and futurity, for him, are in fact specious essences that events wear for acts of spirit or consciousness” (McHenry 223).

This interpretation has its advantages. I will not dispute, what appears to me to be, the deeply referentialist framework on which Santayana's appeal to the absolute present is based, according to this reading—see also Sprigge 177; cf. Routley 31 & 398 on the connection between “chronological Platonism” and referentialism. I will, however, emphasise that eternalism seems simply to be a non-starter for Santayana. Consider the following, for instance: “After things lose their existence, as before they attain it, although it is true of them that they have existed or will exist, they have no internal being except their essences, quite as if they had never broached Existence at all” RB 24; or: “Existence . . . is the negation of eternity” (RB 24; see also RB 267-268). Such remarks problematize Santayana's characterization of the absolute present, of which the following is an element: “This [absolute] presentness is pervasive; a moment does not fail to be eternally present because it never was and never can be present at any other moment” (RB 254). But if presentness in the absolute sense and existence are bi-conditionals, as I have proposed, how does one avoid deriving from this remark that Santayana is committed to the eternal existence of any given moment?

It should be noted that Santayana's “supertemporal” conception of the nature of truth, according to which the truth of the world never changes, might be considered, with some straining, a form of eternalism, and indeed, McHenry invokes this

conception within his exposition of the eternalistic nature of Santayana's view (McHenry 220-224). However, I think it is a mistake to say this conception brings Santayana within the vicinity of eternalism *proper*, since that would involve equivocating between truth and existence. The supertemporal view of truth does not affirm the eternal *existence* of past, present, and future things, only the eternal *truth* of such things. Besides, even if we draw eternalistic implications from the referentialist line McHenry and others identify in Santayana, which connects his theory of truth to the postulation of the absolute present, that's so much the worse for the coherence of Santayana's fluxism.

As a counterpoint to the picture of this tension I present, see Richard T.W. Arthur's spirited defense of the consistency of local becoming with relativity, of which the following claim is a key component:

We must distinguish *the now that is the time of the event's occurrence* from *the now at which we are considering it*. To summarize: the existence of things in time is their existence at those times, not their existence now [T]he past and future . . . exist or are real at the times of their occurrence if they do indeed occur at those times. *Events exist neither at no time nor at all times, but at the time of their occurrence.* (Arthur 18-19)

Compare this with Santayana's following characterization of presentness in the absolute sense: "[P]resentness, taken absolutely, is another name for the actuality which every event possesses *in its own day* [my emphasis]" (RB 254).

Nevertheless, the "in its own day", it might be urged, lands Santayana directly on the second horn of McTaggart's temporal transience paradox (see Freeman 398 on this second horn): Let it be so that a moment, *x*, is future at time *t*₃, present at time *t*₂, and past at time *t*₁; no doubt similar questions arise regarding the presentness, pastness, or futurity of moment *t*₂ (in which *x* is present), and so on *ad infinitum*. Arthur denies the premise on the basis of which such a regress is generated: "Duration and time are not existents in the sense that they exist at times" (Arthur 19)—cf. Geach 93-95 for a similar reaction. I am still unsure as to whether this is a successful response to McTaggart's challenge.

A further consideration is whether Santayana can appeal to temporal properties that are not parasitic on the "A-series" or properties of pastness, presentness, and futurity; relations of *before* and *after* (serial orders of transition) are contenders in this regard, i.e., temporal properties that are independent of tense. The "flow" of time, on such a view, reduces to the forward trajectory of events in an irreversible succession or is synonymous with a physical or causal flow (cf. Eddington 465-469; Grünbaum 475-466). We thus might regard Santayana's account of time as a "B-Theory"—indeed, Kerr-Lawson, with some qualification and hesitation, appears to characterize it in this way (Kerr-Lawson 2020, 98-99; see Kerr-Lawson 1999, 17 for a counterpoint, however, where he casts further doubt on this characterization). Such an interpretation is suggested by many of Santayana's remarks (see, e.g., RB 253; 285-286).

But, again, Santayana's fluxism interferes with such B-Theory conceptions of objective time. To borrow Arthur's words, "the fact that some event occurs *before*

another . . . is not something that changes in time” (20). Driving the relevant point home, McTaggart writes:

[T]here can be no change unless facts change . . . [and] no fact about anything can change, unless it is a fact about its place in the *A* series. Whatever other qualities it has, it has always. But that which is future will not always be future, and that which was past was not always past. (1927, 14-15)

To be sure, Santayana thinks that “facts are transitory” (RB 403), but this is a function of his idiosyncratic use of the term “fact”, which, as Sprigge notes, “in Santayana’s terminology, means some concrete phase of existence [and not] something which ‘is the case’” (Sprigge 83)—cf. RB 227, 487. Nevertheless, what in Santayana’s thought licenses the view that facts are transitory in either of these senses? I find no coherent answer.

Finally, note that fluxist accounts that do not presume local becoming are another matter. Here I have in mind universes that are expansionist (like ours [see Eddington 1976]), but which, in their expanding, do not trespass on or overwrite existing things, which is to say, those universes that expand by creating new material substance ahead of their own original boundaries without any corresponding fluctuations within such boundaries. In these universes, changes could occur at the level of the totality of the universe, according to which the universe as a unit changes, and without any local changes (where expansion is an aggregative affair, and, *prima facie*, one can *compound without displacing* or transforming the units to which one adds). Such a universe is conceivable—cf. Arthur on the “continuing attempts to inject dynamism into physics by having spacetime as a whole subject to change, in order to head off criticisms of it as an unchanging block or static manifold” (Arthur 5).

Yet, this alternative formulation of fluxism is out of Santayana’s reach: for, by his account, a material thing’s external relations are constitutive of that thing, *qua* existent, and simply by being added to, an existent thing undergoes intrinsic qualitative changes (RB 121; 147; 282; see also Sprigge 137; cf. McTaggart 150-156 on “Universal Determination”).

For these reasons, Kerr-Lawson’s suspicions are certainly on the right track when he remarks:

It seems to me that, if a philosophy is to take account of human action, it should admit the notion of a present time separating a past that has in part been already affected by our actions from a future that is the locus for our plans and projects. By setting aside this consideration, perhaps Santayana departs here from . . . the task he assigns himself of giving a philosophy of action. (Kerr-Lawson 2020, 102)

Yours Truly,

FORREST ADAM SOPUCK

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Santayana 75, 100, and 125 Years Ago

Santayana in 1897: light and darkness in a transitional year

On the whole, 1897 was another year of transition in Santayana's life. Having experienced a life-changing *metanoia* four years earlier,¹ he was slowly leaving his student life behind—a life that had been unfocused and without a clear path forward. His destiny had not yet been revealed. But gradually he became more self-assured and more aware of who he wanted to be. This does not mean that his tastes altered, or new sympathies emerged. Santayana never doubted what he liked or disliked. He once said of himself: “I don't evolve” (LGS to Logan Pearsall Smith, 15 May 1917). During this year Santayana came to see more clearly the true meaning and value of everything that interested him—poetry, architecture, philosophy, people around him—and also of life itself. Nevertheless, at the same time another long period of “somniaambulism” in his life was about to begin: his fifteen years of teaching at Harvard. In that sense, Santayana's 1897 had both light and darkness. Santayana characterized himself during his time at King's College Cambridge and his trip around Italy as being “wide awake” (PP 275). In strong contrast, he felt that Harvard, where he returned at the end of the summer, “had nothing essentially new to offer or to awaken within me.” (PP 352).

A long letter, written very early in 1897, places Santayana in King's College Cambridge, England, after having spent the Christmas of 1896 in Paris with some acquaintances (PP 381). Addressed to his sister Susana in Avila, Spain, the opening paragraph reveals that she was having a rough time. Her husband Celedonio was about to have an eye operation and her stepson Eduardo (Celedonio's fifth son) had smallpox. Having wished both a prompt recovery, Santayana expressed a discomfort familiar to many who have lived abroad:

The people [in Cambridge] are much to my mind, being refined, simple, and serious, but theirs is a slow fire and it takes a long time to get warm at it. Sometimes it seems as if the time for going away would come before I had really got into the ways of the place. (LGS 14 January 1897).

Santayana also complained that he should have stayed at Oxford, a place where he could have enjoyed “the fields and the country air”, but administrative regulations made it impossible for him to stay there, save as an undergraduate (which he thought undignified) or unattached to the University (which was hardly convenient). All in all, he seemed content with the arrangements made for him to be a master of arts at Cambridge with a connection to King's College (McCormick 118). In his letter to Susana, Santayana called his projected stay at Cambridge an “experiment.”² The letter reveals Santayana's devotion to his sister and acknowledges her

¹ See “Santayana in 1893: the *Metanoia*” (Saatkamp 2018)

² Santayana was often given to impulsive judgments. This impulsiveness can be seen in his contradictory comparisons—“schizophrenic”, McCormick called them (McCormick 118)—

influence on his taste in architecture. The letter ends by telling the story of the trial involving his friend Frank Russell and the mother of Frank's estranged wife, in which Santayana had appeared in London as a witness to events that took place in the summer of 1887. Santayana met Frank's younger brother Bertrand for the first time in 1897.

Santayana had hoped to visit Italy, Greece, and Spain in the spring of 1897 (LGS to Conrad Hensler Slade, 11 August 1896, and to Susan Sturgis de Sastre, 14 January 1897), but he was only able to go to Italy. In April and May, he travelled with his friend Bob Potter and his wife. The places he visited included Florence, Venice, and Rome (PP 379-380). In a letter to his friend Charles Loeser, Santayana reflected on his trip and focused on one of the towns he had visited:

On looking back on my whole journey I think what stays by me most clearly is a certain consciousness of Italian history and landscape, which may best be summed up in the word Urbino. What a place, and what an interesting chapter in the history of man it evokes. Everything now reduces itself to me to some phase of the history of man. (RDL 130)

It certainly comes as no surprise that Santayana took the beautiful Italian city Urbino, a walled city like Avila, as the highlight of his trip to Italy and as a symbol that summed up all his recollections. More interesting is the sentence in which Santayana said that everything is now reduced to "some phase of the history of man." During these years he had started to write a long work that investigated those phases. That work would become the five volumes of *The Life of Reason, or The Phases of Human Progress* (McCormick 128).

The letter to Loeser continues:

I have been in the country for the last few days, reading Earl Stanhopes history of Queen Anne. It is the first account of the war of the Spanish succession I remember to have read, and it interested me immensely. Europe has changed a great deal upon the surface in these two hundred years, but the knowledge of what then happened and of the men that then lived makes it possible to see the present in true perspective, and reduce it to its proper size and proportions.
O la bella prospettiva!

of King's College Cambridge and Harvard. In his January letter to his sister, he said "It is a very simple, youthful life every one leads here [at King's College], and Harvard in comparison seems constrained and corrupt." Yet in the next sentence he wrote, "[Harvard] is also more interesting, I must confess, and this Cambridge to say the truth is very dull. I should have stayed at Oxford if it had been possible" (LGS 14 January 1897). Two years later, he compared the typical Cambridge undergraduate to his Harvard counterpart:

his taste is better and more formed, his knowledge of what he knows is far more solid, and his instinctive capacity to distinguish what is important and interesting from what is trivial and silly is far more developed (Santayana, 1899, 7-8, quoted in McCormick 118)

On the other hand, in a letter to his friend Guy Murchie in July 1897, he said:

[T]he great civic and manly virtue that prevails here [Cambridge] gives people a sort of neutrality and dullness which will make me leave them without much regret.

(LGS 17 July 1897).

So much for the disinterestedness of spirit.

One can appreciate the extent of Santayana's reflection about the importance of history in understanding the present. Here Santayana was talking about the war of the Spanish succession, the international conflict at the beginning of the eighteenth century, after which the whole European map shifted and the British Empire established its worldwide supremacy. Nevertheless, it is the idea of *perspective* expressed in the letter that is especially worthy of attention. Several of the terms in the letter, such as *knowledge*, *true*, *perspective*, and *proportions* are central to Santayana's later epistemology, where knowledge must have a standpoint, and truth's apprehension must come from a particular perspective.

The letter jumps seamlessly from history to art. Here is the next sentence:

I quite understand Uccello's heavenly dreams, when I have the consciousness, or the illusion, of squaring the appearance of things with their reality. (RDL 130).

As perspective and painting also go hand in hand, one is suddenly immersed in that typical, holistic Santayanan view that links art, philosophy, knowledge, and reality. The relationship of essence to matter is illustrated in the work of Paolo Uccello, the fifteenth-century Italian painter who was one of the first to use pictorial perspective. It is not clear what Santayana meant by Uccello's "heavenly dreams," but the surrealists regarded him as a precursor. In *Battle of San Romano*, for example, one can see the delineation of planes, the geometrization of bodies, the suspension of movement, and the uncanny gleaming appearance of the warriors, which has an oneiric quality that appealed to surrealists. The point is that Uccello did not just mirror the world, he interpreted it. Santayana did not yet have the vocabulary of his later philosophy, but he saw in Uccello's painting an illustration that any approach to existence is through the appearances given to consciousness. "Squaring the appearance of things with their reality," which Santayana acknowledges may be an illusion, is an early formulation of the process whereby the essences that appear as the data of intuition are presumed to represent things and events that are really there, even though the essences may not resemble the things they stand for. "Squaring" may also refer to grid lines a painter draws to capture a scene with measured accuracy, the way we tune our perceptions to better fit the world.

This letter and later ones to Charles Loeser also reveal his thoughts about reworking his play *The Marriage of Aphrodite* (published much later as *The Marriage of Venus*).³ After Santayana collected opinions about the play from such friends as the poet Trumbull Stickney and the art historian Bernard Berenson, he sent it to Loeser. Once Loeser had read the draft, annotated it, and mailed it back (one can only imagine the complexity and time involved in such processes with the technical tools and means of communication available at that age!) Santayana took his comments seriously and incorporated some of his suggestions in the text (RDL 134). But Santayana didn't agree with Loeser on everything. Loeser thought, for example, that in some scenes the characters, all Greek deities, lacked the majesty and dignity appropriate to them. Santayana responded: "[T]he authority of Homer allows a certain buffoonery and brutality to alternate with dignity in the characters of both Zeus and Hera" (RDL 134).

³ In *The Poet's Testament: Poems and Two Plays* (1953).

The play is a comedy, divided into five acts, centered on the marriage of Venus and Vulcan. The play is filled with references to the attributes of and traditional stories about the various mythological characters. These references are especially abundant in Act II, where Apollo, Mercury, Bacchus, and Vulcan each make a speech in an effort to woo Venus. Furthermore, throughout the work Santayana leaves traces of his characteristic philosophical ideas. For example, Jupiter, at the very beginning of the first act, says that

[w]hat the fates prepare
I see, and nod, and govern not by choice
But by foreknowledge, mocking vain desire (PT 39),

Here one can clearly see Santayana's acceptance of the overpowering nature of fate, which in Greek mythology also ruled over the Olympian gods themselves. This force would become the realm of matter in Santayana's later ontology. Similarly, in that ontology the interplay between the realm of essence and the realm of matter supports Jupiter's answer to Venus in Act II, when he insists that she choose one husband among all who might be eligible. As the bride in question is Venus, who, as a goddess, must choose a husband with whom she would live *forever*, and who, as the goddess of love, endowed with immense beauty, could surely choose any mate from *all possible suitors*, her choice was neither casual nor easy. The beautiful passage, which expresses ideas that may appeal to contemporary feminists, is worth quoting in its entirety:

[Venus]
Must I take one, renounce all other quest,
And hush the cry for freedom in my breast?
One path my long irrevocable days
Must trace for ever? Oh, farewell, farewell,
Ignorant dreams of youth, uncertain hope
Of risks untempted, joys unnameable!
My fate is set, my life has found its scope;
And if one ask hereafter, "Who art thou?
What is thy soul's good, thy immortal life?"
I shall remember this sad day, and bow
My head, and answer: "I'm my husband's wife."

[Jupiter]
What were your hopes, my child? *The infinite
Is nothing. All the phantoms we pursue
Must needs take body in becoming true.
Choosing one part and sinking into it
We act our play.* So charm away this sorrow
And let your joys begin. This very day
Shall see your wedding.

[Venus]
Ah, not yet, I pray.
(PT 57. Emphasis added)

From the literary point of view, 1897 was quite a dramatic year for Santayana. By then, he had also finished the tragedy *Lucifer*, which he described in a letter as:

a prodigious tragedy in five fat acts, with melodramatic situations and lyrical episodes all designed to effect the purgation of souls by pity of the author and dread of having to peruse his complete works. (LGS to Guy Murchie, 17 July 1897).

In addition to his work on *Lucifer* and *The Marriage of Aphrodite*, Santayana published “Before a Statue of Achilles” (a poem consisting of three sonnets) the essay “Cervantes (1547-1616)”, and two book reviews (Saatkamp and Jones 14). Also during 1897, the first reviews of *The Sense of Beauty* started to appear.⁴ While some of them raise critical objections, all of them praise Santayana’s text for its exquisite style, its brilliant expression, and its entertaining value. They confirm Santayana’s growing reputation and influence.

Spring had passed. After his travels to Italy, Santayana returned to King’s College Cambridge. In June he attended Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee procession at the invitation of John D. Rockefeller (Holzberger 513-514). During the summer, he saw his friend Lionel Johnson, whom he hadn’t seen in years, in Frank Russell’s London rooms in Temple Gardens. This would be the last time Santayana would see him (PP 304). For the most part, as he told his friend Guy Murchie, Santayana’s days were dedicated more to working than seeing people:

I have seen some, not many, people . . . My pedestrian companion has been usually [Frederic] Morgan, who is at Trinity, . . . sometimes Wedd, . . . and the highly sympathetic and melancholy Dickinson of King’s. (LGS 17 July 1897).

The few people he chose to meet were younger friends. The letter therefore reveals Santayana’s preference for meeting with students rather than faculty.

With the responsibility of his future course on Plato at Harvard in mind, Santayana kept working on the Greek philosopher with Henry Jackson as he prepared for his trip back to Boston where he planned to live with his mother. Living in a household where only Spanish was spoken would mean a considerable change compared to his former lodging in the United States. In the letter to Murchie Santayana explained the advantages of this arrangement for his “second life” at Harvard. They would be:

that three days in the week will thus be quite clear of interruptions and temptations; that it will be an economy; that it will mark more clearly the merely temporary status which I have . . . and that it will make it easier for me than it was last year to give up Harvard altogether, if such is the final issue of things. (LGS 17 July 1897).

This last sentence clearly shows Santayana’s uncertainty about being a professor as well as his surrender to “the authority of things”, because, as long as he could not afford to quit, he would have to go on teaching. Harvard would offer him a

⁴ See for example: *The Philosophical Review* 6 (1897): 210-212. *The Philosophical Review* 6 (1897): 401-404. *The Bookman. An Illustrated Literary Journal* 5 (1897): 70-72. *Psychological Review* 4 (1897): 439-441.

position as assistant professor early in 1898.⁵ A 15-year-long slumber as a professor awaited. Or did it?

In mid-October, Santayana wrote to his sister Susana in Spain. Toward the end of the letter, he described his life in Boston:

I find things here quite as usual and everybody well. Living at home has great advantages, insuring quiet and freedom from interruptions for my reading and writing. At the same time, when I go to Cambridge, which is nearly every day, I have a chance to see a lot of different people and to propound philosophy ex-cathedra. As to serious discussion of anything really interesting, that is impossible in this country, as there is here no cultivated public, only a few individuals with pronounced personalities, like Professors Norton and James, who don't lend themselves to easy conversation. I have to wait for my next visit to Europe, which I hope may be next summer, when I may come also to see you. People have been asking me about as usual, and I have been in Cotuit with the Codman's, at Beverley with Boylston & Elsie Beal, at Nahant with Robert and Ellen, whose children are nice, and go next Sunday to Manchester to the John Sturgises, where two of their English cousins, Margorie Sturgis (Harry's eldest daughter) and Mildred Seymour are staying. Grafton and Howard Cushing will also be there, so we shall have a very distinguished house-party. (LGS 18 October 1897).

Santayana was back in the United States, where he continued reading, writing, teaching, and meeting people—in a word, living. Yet his words make it clear that his—absolutely justified in his own eyes—inability to feel at home in America had not dissipated. And how could it? The die was cast at his birth. His life afterwards could have had only one outcome: he was forever to be a man between worlds, a passenger of the seas, a voyager of the imagination, a guest in the world.

ANDRÉS TUTOR DE URETA

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⁵ Just before that, in December 1897, Santayana sent two letters to Harvard's President Charles Eliot (LGS 1 December 1897) to inquire about the reasons his salary was reduced. In some respects, things have not changed at all in academia today.

Santayana in 1922: A System of Philosophy Emerges

For those familiar with Santayana's mature philosophy the year 1922 was hugely significant. It was a year split between Italy and France during which he completed and submitted his manuscript of *Scepticism and Animal Faith* to his London publisher Constable and then received in return proofs of the full text. Santayana submitted the manuscript on 5 October 1922 to Constable inviting the publisher to select from "three slightly different titles" (LGS). After confirming Constable's acceptance of the main title "Scepticism and Animal Faith" and negotiating gently against their suggested subtitle phrase "the first part of" (a "system of philosophy") Santayana persuaded the publishers to go with what became the published subtitle: "An Introduction to a System of Philosophy."

From the beginning of his composing *Scepticism* Santayana was clear that it was an "introduction" to his *Realms of Being*, the title of the volume that would elaborate his ontological system. He expected to complete it far more swiftly than, as it turned out, it actually took. *Scepticism* itself was written in a period short of two years (Santayana first mentions activity on the work in January of 1921, although he had been thinking about his realms of being as early as 1911). Upon its completion he wrote to Constable characterizing the manuscript he would shortly send as "the first volume of my system of philosophy" and adding that "the second volume, entitled Realms of Being . . . I hope to have . . . ready in a year or two." (LGS 17 September 1922). In fact, the "second volume" would be published in four separate volumes over the next eighteen years: *The Realm of Essence*, first of the four realms, would not appear until five years later (1927) and the final volume, *The Realm of Spirit*, would not be published until 1940.

The year 1922 was set during a period when, in the words of John McCormick, "Santayana's name was becoming well known among common readers, for whom he had always wanted to write." (McCormick 246). Although the central focus of his writing during 1922 was on *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Santayana also completed a few well-known short articles and authorized important publications that illustrate the expanding public audience to which McCormick referred. Completion of all this work, it should be noted, is the more remarkable for the fact that 1922 seems to have been a year fraught with bodily distractions for Santayana. Besides a certain restlessness the first four months of that year while he was in Rome (referenced below), Santayana had spells of what he refers to throughout his letters as bouts of "catarrh" and the occasional "twitch of rheumatism" (RDL to Westenholz, 4 February 1922).

In February of 1922 Santayana sent Constable corrected proofs of *Soliloquies in England*, revealing to Mary Williams Winslow (the wife of a former student) his hope that the book would "in time . . . find a sympathetic public, even if a small one. They are much more me than my other books" (LGS 1 February 1922). In March of 1922 Santayana alerted Constable to the possibility of reprinting his "little volume" of "Sonnets" (originally published in 1894/1906 in New York by Duffield & Co.). In sending Constable a letter from Duffield—which remains unlocated, but

likely contained the publisher's permission to reprint—Santayana provided an outlook on his early poems that shows he was aware, as McCormick observed, of his growing reading audience:

I am diffident about my early attempts at poetry, but in America people are very appreciative of "high thoughts," and as my other books attract more attention, it is possible that such a collection of my verses as here suggested might find a public. (LGS to Constable and Co. Ltd., 21 March 1922)

Ever dismissive of his poetic talent, Santayana gave Constable an impression of ambivalence, closing the letter with the meek sentiment: "I don't want to press the matter, but submit it to you again, so as to be able to say to Mr. Hoppin (of Duffield & Co.) that I have done so." This communication would result in Santayana sending the preface to his *Poems* eight months later (November 1922) to Otto Kyllmann of Constable (LGS 15 November 1922). In 1923 Constable published *Poems: Selected by the Author and Revised*, (reprint/revised version of "Sonnets").

By April, Santayana had produced two of the short articles mentioned above—reviews of "books on America" (LGS to Charles Augustus Strong, 4 April 1922):¹ one for *The Dial*, "Marginal Notes on Civilization in the United States" (June) and the other for the magazine *Forum*, "Living Without Thinking" (September). *The Dial* must have placed a high value on Santayana's commentary on America, as it was willing to publish "in place of a formal review" Santayana's marginal notes from the book *Civilization in the United States* by Harold Stearns. The piece crackles with provocative insights, such as the provocative, unforgettable opening line: "The American conscience is not insincere; it is only belated, inapplicable" (Santayana [1922a] 188).

"Living Without Thinking" is of note for its concise send-up of the equivocal view of mind in classical behaviorism as put forth by its veritable founder, John B. Watson. (Santayana observed "We must be minds, if we can come to the conclusion that we are only habits in matter.") This brief-but-substantial engagement with Watson was still percolating in Santayana's own mind, when he wrote to Zenas Clark Dickinson in November 1922 from Nice. Dickinson had sent Santayana a copy of his book *Economic Motives: A Study in the Psychological Foundation of Economic Theory* (an award-winning 1922 Harvard dissertation-turned-book that is today listed in Amazon as a "Scholar Select" work of "cultural importance"). Santayana read Dickinson's book and wrote the author in thanks and praise: "You are an automatist like Watson, but (like me) you do not on that account renounce or deny images and feelings." (LGS 22 November 1922)

Another essay of note published by Santayana in 1922 is "Penitent Art" (*The Dial*, July). It is disappointing so little is known about the circumstances and inspiration of this essay because it remains, as James Seaton wrote in his 2005 *Bulletin*

¹ *Civilization in the United States: An Inquiry by 30 Americans* edited by Harold Stearns, and *Psychology from the Standpoint of a Behaviorist* by John Watson (these yielded the reviews referenced here in *The Dial*, and *Forum*).

essay, Santayana's "only extended comment on modernist art" (Seaton 11)² It is worth considering how much "Penitent Art" may have been the product of Santayana's transition to Paris. During his first four-month stay in Rome in 1922, Santayana resided at the Hotel Marini in Via del Tritone.³ A letter written during that time shows, that work on the reviews of "books on America" had diverted him from finishing *Scepticism* and that he wished for a change of venue to spur its completion. In it he wrote: "I feel myself a growing desire to get away. I have done very little serious work lately, being distracted by some books on America" (LGS to Charles Augustus Strong 4 April 1922).

So, Santayana left Rome and traveled to France, arriving in Paris the night of April 24. Given that he was in Paris from late April 1922 until mid-October, how aware could he have been of the first full publication in that city in February of 1922 of James Joyce's *Ulysses*?⁴ He must have caught glimpses of the cultural moment, pulsating as Paris was with modernist artistic activity. Not only was Paris the world-capital of modernist art and literature (the city where Eliot met Joyce and Joyce met Proust), but Santayana's residence in Paris at l'Avenue de l'Observatoire was just 2 miles from the Galerie Barbazanges which featured the works of Picasso, Modigliani, Gauguin, Matisse, Dufy, and Chagall. Paris of 1922 was the site of a January "World Congress of the Irish Race" with guest lecturer W.B. Yeats, an event that occasioned a major series of exhibitions of over 300 works by many of those artists at that that gallery. Some awareness of this surrounding influence must have seeped into Santayana's provocative pronouncements in "Penitent Art." In that short piece he characterizes Keats and Wilde as "hypnotized by dead beauty," and cubists as "little children" engaging in "caricature" "who, instead of daubing a geometrical skeleton with a piece of chalk, can daub a cross-eyed cross-section of the entire spectrum or a compound fracture of a nightmare" (Santayana 1922b).

However much the surrounding climate of modernism leaked into his world, it was during this second stay in Paris in 1922 that Santayana commenced completion of *Scepticism*. During this time, he kept up his usual busy correspondence, both with his personal relations—including his friend Charles Strong, his half-nephew

² Apart from a July 1922 letter to the *Dial* editors indicating that he was awaiting a further "draft" of "Penitent Art" I could find no reference to the short piece (no mention in McCormick, LGS, or RDL).

³ Whenever in Rome from 1921 to 1923 Santayana would stay at the Marini, located very near the Trevi fountain. A letter from Santayana to Strong dated "Between 5 and 11 November 1921" indicates that after having trouble finding rooms Santayana singled out the Marini: "This is the place I had in mind, at the beginning...since it is in the very centre of things, and not too dear to exclude an occasional truancy." (LGS 3:55)

⁴ Although a letter he wrote in 1932 indicates some familiarity with Joyce, Santayana makes nothing more than a vague passing derogatory reference to him, comparing him unfavorably to Proust. (LGS to Nancy Saunders Toy, 13 December 1931). Santayana praises Proust for his: "poetic quality, you feel the sentiment, the guiding thread in the labyrinth; and in the second place the details themselves are beautiful or interesting, they are selected by an active intellect" (Ibid.) (no indication of which Proust work); but he also reveals in a letter to Westenholz his distaste for Proust's "meanderings of...style [which] make it impossible for me to read him without skipping." RDL to Westenholz, 15 December 1925)

and family business manager George Sturgis, Mary Williams Winslow, and the essayist Logan Pearsall Smith who had published a set of short selections under the title *Little Essays Drawn from the Writings of George Santayana*. Santayana continually sent his publishers at Constable and Scribner's updates on all developments concerning his increasingly expanding published works.

The day after he arrived in Paris, in a letter to Charles Strong Santayana described the (still in Rome) April 10th visit of Andrew Joseph Onderdonk. The letter reveals his low intellectual opinion of Americans as opposed to Englishmen (and has echoes of the dismal view he tended to have of emerging young "modern" fellows). Onderdonk originally came to know Santayana while an undergraduate at Harvard in 1910 and continued thereafter to correspond and occasionally visit Santayana during his residency in Europe for the second half of his life. Santayana wrote to Strong:

The impression I always get when I see my former young friends after they have been for some years in "the world" is a sad one: they seem to have no intellectual interests or clearness left. I don't mean that I didn't enjoy seeing Onderdonk, and that he was not the same good friend as formerly, but that I found he couldn't understand what I said. . . . we were reduced to baby-talk. . . . Of course, this refers to Americans only, not to Englishmen. (LGS 12 April 1922)

Onderdonk was a lawyer whom Santayana named as a beneficiary of his will, although he eventually removed him. Santayana also appointed Onderdonk as his literary executor, a role Onderdonk remained in until 1928, when Daniel Cory replaced him. Beneficiary and literary executor—important roles for someone Santayana lumped with all the former "American" young friends he had come to disparage.

A letter to his friend Albert von Westenholz dated June 25 1922 reveals that Hans Reichardt, a friend of Westenholz, had sent Santayana a set of the books making up Marx's *Das Kapital*. The letter contains an example of his use of eccentric vocabulary to roast major authors and books: "Before me are the four solid volumes of Karl Marx's⁵ *Das Kapital*, the first adorned with his furibundious and disgruntled effigy" (RDL to Westenholz, 25 June 1922). Although the letter ends with Santayana's expressed intention to engage with the Marx volume—"When I have read a little of Das Kapital, I will write again to report progress"—there is no subsequent evidence that Santayana followed through.

Review of the letters reveals a gap in Santayana's months in Paris of July, August, and September. One can surmise that he was at last concentrating in earnest on putting the final touches on *Scepticism*. After sending the manuscript of *Scepticism* to Constable in October Santayana transitioned from Paris to the Nice. There he stayed at the New York Hotel—"a comfortable little apartment, a corner room with sun all day . . . and a modern bath-room adjoining" (LGS to George Sturgis, 3 November 1922)—and on November 3rd he officially sent the authorized agreement for the publication of *Scepticism*.

⁵ In RDL: 'Marx's'

Another fact about the focus of Santayana's writing during this year deserves mention. Although he remained committed to his formal philosophic system and in many letters persistently wrote about his ongoing endeavor to complete what he called his "Opus magnum," he frequently confessed to "brooding over" his "novel," the book that was already well under way and would become *The Last Puritan*.

Having authorized publication of *Scepticism* and the updated version of his *Poems*, Santayana wrote to Robert Burnside Potter on November 8th asking for Potter's knowledge of "yachts" about which he "knows nothing." "Can you tell me," he asked Potter, "of a scientific book about yachts (my novel is to be scientific) that shall tell me how they are planned, how many men are needed for the crew, what servants are usually taken, etc.?" (LGS 8 November 1922).

Santayana spent the remainder of the year in Nice, including through Christmas and New Year's, and appears to have spent it pleasantly. As he wrote to Charles Mortimer in November:

Nice has turned out a happy choice for my winter quarters, I am comfortably settled, and have established a daily routine which keeps me well and enables me to do a reasonable amount of work. The place and the weather are undeniably beautiful. (LGS to Charles Raymond Bell Mortimer, 23 November 1922)

Scribner's reached out to Santayana in December to solicit the publication of *Scepticism* in America. and Santayana included in his positive reply a sentiment that is an apt conclusion for this short profile of the year 1922 in Santayana's life:

Various indications have reached me of the increased interest in my books which is shown by the rising generation. I don't subscribe to any press-cutting agency, but my friends occasionally send me reviews, when they think I shall be pleased by them. I also find occasional references to myself in books. It is of course very gratifying, especially as I have always lived on the hypothesis that I could not expect to attract much attention, and should be content to please a small circle of kindred spirits. (LGS to Charles Scribner's Sons, 13 December 1922)

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Santayana in 1947: Cory, Poets, *Dominations*, and Family

For Santayana, 1947 was in many ways a continuation of the previous post-war years. He kept working on his book on politics, *Dominations and Powers*, and reading a great deal in aid of that project. He corresponded with friends, family, and his publishers (Wheelock at Scribner's and Kyllman at Constable's in London). To Wheelock he wrote not just about publications, but also about financial, literary, and personal affairs. His long letters to his niece-in-law Rosamond Sturgis, the ex-wife of his recently deceased nephew, exhibited his ongoing affection for his family and his wish to remain connected to them. Santayana developed a new interest in modern poetry when he read the work of Robert Lowell, a discovery that compensated for his troubled relationship with Ezra Pound. Santayana had not seen his assistant Daniel Cory since the start of World War II in Europe. Their correspondence, broken off when the United States entered the war, had resumed in the summer of 1944 and became more frequent as mail began to move more quickly. Their renewed friendship culminated in Cory's visit for nearly six weeks in the fall. Also, in commenting on one of Cory's philosophic essays, Santayana had the occasion to give a pithy synopsis of his own philosophy.

Cory comes to Rome

Daniel Cory had been Santayana's assistant since 1927. At the start of the Second World War, Santayana was concerned that he and his friend Charles Augustus Strong, for whom Cory also worked, had taken up so much of Cory's youth as to prevent him from having an academic career that would support him. Strong, who died just after the war began, had established a fellowship for Cory's benefit. Santayana had hoped Cory could receive the royalties from his publications, but during the war, when communication between Italy and the United State was cut off, that hope ran into obstacles. By the time 1947 began, most of those obstacles had been overcome. After six years in America, Cory had arrived in England in 1946 where he could start taking advantage of the fellowship Strong had set up for him. Cory and Santayana had not seen each other since August of 1939, but their correspondence, which had resumed rather erratically toward the end of 1944, had gathered momentum and become fairly regular. In September 1946, Santayana wrote to Cory: "It is very pleasant to get these frequent letters and feel that you are at hand" (LGS 13 September 1946).

Santayana's letters to Cory in 1947 deal with many topics: news, gossip, finances, reports of books and articles he was reading, and requests for books he would like to get. He was keen on reading books about history and politics, books that would help his newly revived effort to complete his own book on politics, *Dominations and Powers*. Cory also corresponded with Santayana about an essay Cory was writing on Bertrand Russell (see "Santayana summarizes his philosophy," p. 31), but Cory's hope was to see Santayana face-to-face after so many years.

Cory arrives

By March of 1947 Cory had written about going to Rome and Santayana replied cautiously:

As to your proposed visit, I think there are still more difficulties and discomfort involved than I should care to face if I were in your shoes; but that is for you to decide. Of course, I should like to see you, the sooner the better, as at 83 one is not in a position to count on the future. (LGS 27 March 1947)

After saying he was well enough, having survived a rough winter, Santayana added:

If I were sure of living until next summer, I should rather advise you to put off your trip, not only because next year travelling, etc., will probably be easier, but because my own situation would be more what I should like. (Ibid.)

By April they had agreed that an autumn trip would be in order. Also in April, Santayana wrote to his niece Rosamond Sturgis:

I have been having a long series of connected dreams about an old gentleman, very rich, with an adopted son who was always late for everything and gave the most delightful excuses; and when his adopted father or his sensible young wife lost patience, which they were very slow to do, the young man would repent and say the most touching things about his own folly. What is the reason for these dreams, and where do I or rather my psyche, get those ingenious excuses and those Christian sentiments all round? It would make a lovely comedy if I could write it down, but I can't, because I can't remember the details or the words when I awake. (LGS 15 April 1947)

In spite of Santayana's professed bewilderment, it is not too much to imagine that the dream arose in anticipation of his meeting with Cory.

At the end of July Santayana wrote:

The sooner you come the more likely you are to find me alive; but I am quite well; and as to convenience, all days and months are equally full and equally empty. The question is one of your preference, not of mine, and Sister Angela assured me, when I spoke to her about you, that they could always find a room for you somewhere. (LGS 31 July 1947)

Santayana also expressed concern for Cory's health:

If you are not quite well and want special food, you might see Dr. Sabbatucci (who comes every other day) and get a room in the Hospital wing; although if you are sensitive to noise what you had better try to get would be a room on the north side of this Ospizio [hospice] wing. (Ibid.)

Furthermore, he warned Cory about arriving too soon:

As to the date, early September is still summer here—this year, so far, unusually warm—and you must consider whether this would be good for your digestion. (Ibid.)

Cory booked a flight for 18 September with an expected arrival at the Blue Nuns' hospital about four in the afternoon. This schedule pleased Santayana who wrote that welcoming beverages would await him:

Four o'clock, if you are punctual, will be an ideal time for your arrival, and you shall have tea or a glass of Marsala to relieve the fatigue of the flight. (LGS 18 August 1947).

Cory's plane landed at three o'clock on the eighteenth.¹ He arrived at hospital by taxi and a nun escorted him to a sunny room where Santayana sat facing the window with his back to the door. The nun left and shut the door. After some moments during which Cory knocked on the closed door, Santayana realized that Cory was there. As Cory tells it:

He rose slowly and asked me to come over to the window so that he could see what I looked like after such a long absence. For quite a time he stood with his hands on my shoulders, smiling but saying little. (Cory 1963, 275-276)

Cory saw how much Santayana had changed in nine years:

His eyes were still brilliant but rather tired; his face had lost something of its fullness; but it was chiefly his stature that impressed me. He seemed smaller—perhaps even shrunken is the right word. When he asked me how I found him, I grinned and answered “Older” in a grave voice. He replied briskly to the effect that he had noticed a certain ampleness about my waistline and that I was certainly even balder than when he had last seen me. Then we laughed and sat down to tea. (Cory 1963, 276)

New dialogues

Cory stayed at the Blue Nuns' establishment five to six weeks in the room across the hall from Santayana. According to Santayana, Cory went out in the evening only once, to dine with an English acquaintance. A good deal of their conversation had to do with some writings that were ready for publication and Santayana's hope to make progress on his long-term project on politics, *Dominations and Powers* (see p.27) The writings that could be published included three new items for *Dialogues and Limbo*. Earlier in the year Santayana had written Cory about works that he hoped to have ready for Cory when he arrived. These included the third volume of *Persons and Places* and the three new dialogues. He added that there was a fourth dialogue called “The Virtue of Avicenna.” About it, he wrote:

I have had grave doubts, and I have already cut out an extremely amusing passage, which on the whole I felt was out of place and out of harmony with my tone as a whole, though not with my philosophy. . . . I think it is very good, of my best period, but out of keeping with the other dialogues, and probably

¹ Cory, in his memoir, wrote that he arrived *early* in September (Cory 1963, 275) and McCormick, in his biography, repeated that timing. Cory must have misremembered, as Santayana wrote Wheelock on 20 September 1947: “Cory arrived the day before yesterday.” (LGS).

undesirable to publish at all, so long as my reputation as a philosopher interests any section of the public. (LGS 27 March 1947)

This fourth dialogue, which Santayana also called his “naughty” one” (LGS to Cory 14 April 1947) and expected might someday be stored at the Harvard Library “to be consulted by the initiated” (Ibid.), has never turned up.

During the summer, Santayana wrote Wheelock at Scribner’s, expressing regret that his “best books should be out of print: Scepticism & Animal Faith and Dialogues in Limbo.” He then said he had three more dialogues and hoped that a new edition might come out (LGS 18 August 1947). By the time Cory arrived in September, Santayana’s typist Evelyn Tindall had prepared copies of the three dialogues. Santayana later learned that Cory, in spite of his fellowship, still had trouble managing his finances and proposed that the new dialogues “might be published at once in some review” (LGS to Wheelock, 20 September 1947), as the royalties might supplement Cory’s income. After he left Rome, Cory submitted the new dialogues to the *Atlantic Monthly*. In December, the magazine’s editor cabled Santayana that they had been accepted (LGS to Wheelock, 14 December 1947). The new dialogues were published serially the following spring (1948) and the edition of *Dialogues in Limbo* that included them came out later that year.

Santayana mulls over Cory’s stay

Regarding Cory’s finances, Santayana wrote to Cory just after his visit:

I am sorry that you find it hard to make both ends meet, and wish it were more convenient for me to help you more regularly, because it is better for you, I think, to be able to lead a pleasant life externally. (LGS 31 October 1947)

A week later he wrote to Wheelock: “It grieved me to see him getting a bit shabby and worried about money; both those things are sadly out of character with his vocation” (LGS 8 November 1947). In the same letter, he also wrote:

During his visit here he showed more self-knowledge than I had ever noted in him, and described his own incapacity to save money or to stick to work or to resist the charms of the fleeting moment; and this reminded me of the extraordinary power of self-diagnosis possessed by my friend Westenholz, who was absolutely scientific in his view of his own obsessions and illusions; except that Westenholz was deeply troubled by his own disease, and Cory seems to think it an amiable if sometimes inconvenient poetical habit. (Ibid.)

In his letter to Cory, he addressed the same topic as a matter of maturity:

You are not more settled or out of the wood of your own velléités [fleeting urges], as maturity suggests. Your maturity will doubtless begin at 50, as did my emancipation. (LGS 31 October 1947)

Earlier in the letter, however, Santayana’s words revealed pleasure and compassion. I think it best to conclude the story of Cory’s stay in Rome with those remarks:

Your visit leaves a satisfactory feeling that our relations are unchanged, and we both unchanged, in so far as it is possible in a world of flux. You are not

older in the sense of being heavier company or threatening to become a burden, as old friends and relations generally do. (Ibid.)

The dominance of *Dominations*

In his first letter of 1947, Santayana wrote:

I am reading hard on history and political theory in order to stimulate my own intelligence and bring me more up to date in the revision I am making of my old unfinished work on "Dominations & Powers". (LGS to Rosamond Sturgis, 1 January 1947)

Santayana had formulated the idea of writing a work on history and politics soon after he completed *The Life of Reason* and had drafted some preliminary sketches before World War I. He continued to work on it off and on until, as he put it:

A mass of manuscript accumulated in this way during some thirty years. There was therefore no unity of plan, no consecutive development, in my notes, although the guiding intuition remained, and became clearer and clearer with the lapse of years. (DP 22)

World War II and its aftermath brought about new attention to the topic:

Finally, however, a more vivid apprehension of the actual impact of Dominations and Powers in the political world was forced upon me by the war of 1939-1945; for I lived through it in Rome in monastic retirement, with the visible and audible rush of bombing aeroplanes over my head, and of invading armies before my eyes. Most pertinent and instructive, also, has been the experience of the after-effects of that war. (DP 22)

The years after the war were a time of political turbulence in Italy. In 1946 the monarchy was abolished and the Italian Republic established. 1947 was a year of considerable agitation, especially among the centrist Christian Democrats, the Italian Socialists, and the Italian Communist Party. Although the Socialists and Communists had been part of the newly formed government, they were expelled in May. This led to ongoing protests, especially in the streets of the cities. When Cory visited Santayana in the fall, he was quite disturbed by the marches, the rallies, and the response of the authorities. He wrote:

On several occasions I watched a noisy and obstructive crowd being violently broken up by the mobile police squads: they would drive their armed jeeps straight into any demonstration that refused to be dispersed by the orders from loud-speakers. One occasion in particular is not agreeable to recall: the sight of several bodies lying in the gutter, and the whining of the ambulances on an otherwise gentle September afternoon. (Cory 1963, 277)

Santayana, who no longer went out much, was eager to hear Cory's reports. Yet he was not as dismayed as Cory by the political unrest. "How," he told Cory, "could things be otherwise when a ravaged country was suddenly liberated and then threatened with the prospect of becoming another Communistic state?" (Ibid.)

To aid his revision of *Dominations and Powers* he endeavored to read a considerable amount of history and political theory. With Cory in England by the summer of 1946, he could request books from Blackwell's in England (his own account there was still frozen, but he could have Scribner's reimburse Cory). By the end of 1946, he had begun Toynbee's multivolume account. In his January 1st letter to Rosamond Sturgis, he wrote: "I am now reading especially 'A Study of History' (to be in 13 volumes) by Toynbee, and 'Storia del Liberalismo Europeo' by de Ruggiero, a pupil of Croce's" (LGS). Of Ruggiero, he had written: "He is a doctrinaire and not realistic in speculation, but like Hegel, he often depicts the sentiments of various epochs & parties very justly" (LGS to Cory, 27 December 1946). Regarding Toynbee, Santayana wrote to several correspondents that while he did not agree with Toynbee's theoretical approach, he found it full of fascinating observations and associations. In a letter to Cory, for example, he explained that while *Dominations and Powers* was not meant to be the retelling of historical events, the background of those events was quite useful:

The refrain of Toynbee's theory is tiresome, and he evidently has to squeeze the facts severely to make them always fit it: but he mentions a lot of interesting points and makes suggestive comparisons between widely separated political revolutions, and his book is a wonderful treasury of universal politics. Just the thing to feed my ignorance with the semblance of knowledge: and the illusion of knowledge doesn't matter for my purpose, as my book is not historical but political and moral, so that possibilities and relations concern me more than exact fact. (LGS 30 June 1947)

Work on *Dominations and Powers* moved slowly and was often interrupted or put off while Santayana read more material (or handled other affairs, such as finances, family matters, or other publications). Sometimes reading one set of things interfered with reading another. Having acquired the first three volumes of Toynbee's work, he had asked Cory in 1946 to send the next three. But early in January he wrote, "Never mind Toynbee for the moment" (LGS 7 January 1947), because he preferred another book. By mid-March he wrote: "I am running out of reading-matter and should be grateful either for the next three volumes of Toynbee or . . . [two other books]" (LGS 14 March 1947). Volumes 4 and 5 of Toynbee arrived by the end of June and the sixth volume soon thereafter.

Other books Santayana was reading in the first half of 1947 included Osbert Sitwell's autobiography (*Left Hand Right Hand!*), novels by the American authors William Maxwell and Isabel Bolton, *Jacovleff and Other Artists* (a book that had plates of the work of eight recent artists),²*The Screwtape Letters* by CS Lewis, a

² Santayana's comments on this book were mostly about Aubrey Beardsley:

Now I think in Aubrey Beardsley there often is bad taste, like bad taste in the mouth, because his lascivious figures are ugly and socially corrupt. The obscene should be merry and hilarious, . . . it belongs to comedy, not to sour or revolutionary morals. It is the mixture of corrupt sneers and hypocrisy with vice that is unpleasant to see, unless it is itself the subject of satire, as for instance in old English caricatures. But in

book commemorating the 60th anniversary of his 1886 Harvard Class, a biography of Einstein, stories by Camus, plays by Sartre, the Penguin edition of *Heraldry in England*, a book by a Harvard professor entitled *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, and one by another Harvard professor John Wild, *Plato's Theory of Man*. "What an easy time," Santayana wrote, "I should have had in holding my own at Harvard if there had been in my day a professor there who swore by Plato, Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas!" (LGS to Wheelock, 3 March 1947). Towards the end of July, he wrote to Lawrence Smith Butler (an architect, former student, and frequent correspondent): "my new (old) book, "Dominations & Powers", grows slowly, like a big tree. What really keeps me awake is reading, and I find lovely things in plenty" (LGS 26 July 1947).

Despite this abundance, he was disappointed to learn that a book he had ordered from Scribner's on the Court of Suleiman the Magnificent of the Ottoman Empire was out of print: "I am sorry, as I need to turn occasionally to something distant and romantic, in order not to be swamped altogether in contemporary talk" (Ibid.)

The desire for something remote and dream-like was for relief not escape. Shortly after the Allies arrived in Rome in June 1944, he told the *New York Times* that he lived "in the eternal." This comment, made after three and a half years of isolation from England and United States during which he had been writing about his memories and the New Testament, lent force to the notion that he led a monastic existence. Nevertheless, as Santayana himself noted, he could hear the bombing aircraft and see the soldiers. After the war, he did not shy from learning more precisely what had happened. Two of the books he was determined to read include *The Ciano Diaries* and *The Nuremberg Trial* by Robert W Cooper.

Count Galeazzo Ciano married Mussolini's daughter and was Italian minister for foreign affairs from 1936-1943. His diary, which recorded his meetings with Mussolini, Hitler, von Ribbentrop, and other political figures and ambassadors, often had unfavorable impressions of the people he dealt with and their decisions. It was published in both Italian and English in 1946. Santayana probably started reading it in May or June 1947. He wrote that he was finishing it shortly after Cory left in October. When he began reading it, he said:

Beardsley the charm of the design and the elegance of the costumes and of the ballet character of all the movement seem to recommend the vice represented: and that is immoral. (LGS to Martin Birnbaum, 22 January 1947)

Those who read Santayana as having merged the moral and the aesthetic—as when he wrote: "I can draw no distinction—save for academic programmes—between moral and aesthetic" (PGS 20)—might consider the distinction he made in his conclusion about Beardsley. In a letter in 1945 Santayana wrote that he preferred sweet things to have "something bitter or sour or ginger-like in them," as marmalade did, and "That is why I don't relish honey so much. It has no dialectic" (LGS To Raymond Brewer Bidwell, 12 June 1945). Bear this wry gastronomic observation in mind, while taking into account this:

Aubrey Beardsley, converted to Catholicism, might beg to have his naughty drawings destroyed, and perhaps they were not all in themselves beautiful or comic: but I should not destroy anything aesthetically good. *The beautiful is a part of the moral; and the truly moral is a part of the beautiful: only they must not be mixed wrong, any more than sweets and savouries.* (Ibid., emphasis added)

It is an important book for me, because it shows me the seamy side of Fascism from the Fascist point of view, which is a much better bit of information for a philosopher than declamations about the same from the enemy side. (LGS to Cory June 1947)

In the book on the Nuremberg trial, Cooper, a British journalist, used a detailed summary of the proceedings to present a narrative of the Third Reich, the horrors it perpetrated, and how its leaders reacted when confronted with what they had done. The book shows the documents that ordered the genocidal murders and has vivid first-hand accounts of their enactment. The author himself comments:

“Genocide” in theory is one thing; but how human Beings belonging to one of the most advanced countries of Europe could be found to annihilate people in their millions, not in the heat of battle, but in cold blood and by the most diabolical devices, defies logical analysis. (Cooper 113)

Santayana wrote that the book would be a good complement to the Ciano account as

the facts about the “atrocities” committed during the war would complete it nicely. (LGS to Cory June 1947)

The quotes around the word *atrocities* may seem to be scare quotes, as if Santayana doubted that anything that terrible could have happened. Another reading, though, is that that word had been tossed about so much in public discourse of the day that Santayana was calling attention to the frequent use of the label. Santayana did not mention the book again in the letters we have and a search for it among his effects did not find it.³ Yet it is still possible that he did get it and was fully aware of the extremes to which militant human depravity could go as he worked toward finishing *Dominations and Powers*.

By the time Cory arrived in September, the political book was at the forefront of Santayana’s concerns. Cory’s account has the following:

There were many things about his unpublished manuscripts that he wished to explain to me in detail. His ruling anxiety was over the disorderly condition of *Dominations and Powers*: he was rather doubtful whether he would live to whip it into shape for publication. And if he should die suddenly, he had grave misgivings as to my ability to arrange and complete the text. Not only was the material in hand a tremendous problem in itself, but his style of writing had varied over the years; he wanted to recompose some of the earlier fragments before welding them into the over-all design and coherent argument of a difficult book. (Cory 1963, 277-278)

But Cory had not read much political theory, so there was a question of how much assistance he might be able to give. The recent war had not prompted Cory to investigate the topic further. Cory ventured that political theory didn’t have anything to do with making or preventing war. To this, Santayana said something like:

³ From Herman J Saatkamp, Jr by email on 20 June 2023.

It [is] more appropriate for a philosopher to understand if possible the *natural* causes of discontent among nations, even if such a knowledge were powerless to avert our inevitable complications. (Cory 1963, 278)

Soon after Cory left, Santayana wrote him: “I did begin to get up steam for a fresh trip in Dominations & Powers, and seemed to get under way on the very morning of your departure” (LGS 31 October 1947). During his visit, Cory had come to see both the virtue of the book itself and the possibility that it could bring a nice supplement to his income. But Santayana was not to be rushed. Cory wrote to Wheelock on 7 November 1947:

When I urge him to hurry up over, he told me to drink some more red wine and ‘mind my own business.’ So there you are Wheelock, or rather, there we all are! (quoted in McCormick 466-67)

In his last letter of the year, Santayana wrote that he was still working through Toynbee:

The procession of American army men has stopped, but one or two civilian friends remain, and also some philosophical Italians who occasionally visit me. But my chief company now is Toynbee’s A Study of History, only 6 volumes as yet published. (LGS to Bob Sturgis, 28 December 1947)

Santayana summarizes his philosophy: Comments on Cory and Russell

When Cory wrote Santayana about the essay he was preparing to submit to the journal *Mind*, Russell had already been on Santayana’s mind. An American acquaintance had sent him a copy of *The Amberley Papers*, a collection put together by Russell and his wife Patricia of the history, letters, and journals of Russell’s mother and father (Lord Amberley). He had been reading that book with interest, both for the depiction of nineteenth-century British liberalism and for the accounts of Lord Amberley and Russell’s brother Frank, who had been Santayana’s friend.⁴ Also, by March 1947, Santayana knew that Cory had talked to Russell in Cambridge and had been to London to visit the “social circle” of the Russells and was eager to hear reports. (LGS to Cory, 13 September 1946, 23 January 1947, 15 March 1947).

Santayana wrote two letters to Cory in which he discussed Cory’s essay-in-progress. In these letters he tersely summarized his own philosophy. The summary started with a comment on Russell’s remark that he did not include Santayana in his *History of Philosophy* (1945) because Santayana’s philosophy was not original, as it all came from Plato and Leibniz. Santayana wrote:

This is a very interesting assertion; it shows that R. was considering me as a logician only, which of course I am not, and disregarding the real influences that have affected me. Besides, I never wished to be original, so as to

⁴ See Derham 2018 and Coleman 2021.

contribute to the growth of science. All I care for is to sift the truth from traditional imagination, without impoverishing the latter. (LGS 15 March 1947)

Here Santayana contextualized his work. He asserted his emphasis on the imagination, which he regarded as a source of truth. In his second letter (LGS 14 June 1947) he made it clear (as he did in his published works) this truth is not just the sort of truth found in literature, because all knowledge has its source in the imagination. In saying that he wished to extract truth from the imagination without impoverishing it, he showed a preference for indulging in the imagination for its own sake without succumbing to its illusions.

In addressing Cory's essay directly, he started with an objection that the proposed title—"Are Sense Data Located in the Brain?"—suggested that sense data could be somewhere—i.e., in physical space—and that they are not "compounds of physical impressions or processes with intuition of essences existing nowhere" (Ibid.) He also offered an editorial correction:

I also winced, I confess, at the word "located" in your title. It is ugly, and in this case unnecessary: "Are Sense Data in the Brain?" is enough.

(Cory published the essay the following year, not in *Mind* but in the *Journal of Philosophy*, under Santayana's suggested title with the word *in* in quotation marks.) In his letter, Santayana put forward his own response to the title's question:

My answer, as you know, would be that their organ, or at least the ignited end of it (for the total organ would be the whole psyche with the external stimulus and theoretically the whole physical world) would be in the brain, but that the feeling or image present to intuition is an essence "given" as a quality of the object, and retained as a symbol for that object in the memory and in the literary imagination. (Ibid.)

A month later, Santayana wrote that he hoped Cory's work on Russell was "going on well, or finished" and added, "I am curious, as I said before, to see how you put the matter exactly, after so many refinements fathered by Strong & Russell" (LGS 14 April 1947).

By June, Cory had sent his essay to Russell and secured his approval. Cory then sent it to Santayana. In reply, Santayana wrote that he was initially put off by something that betrayed GE Moore's influence: "talking about parts of the surface of material things being perceived just as they are" (LGS to Cory, 14 June 1947).⁵ To counter this Santayana wrote: "They are perceived just as they appear to each observer, according to his eyesight and other senses." To show that Moore and others had missed something obvious, he added: "and this is known to everybody without optics or epistemology" (Ibid.). Following this, Santayana then encapsulated his own view in a few sentences:

⁵ Toward the beginning of the published version of the essay, Cory said that some philosophers insist "vehemently that sense-perception must be a kind of immediate face- to-face acquaintance with the surface qualities of physical objects" (Cory 1948, 534).

That there is a dynamic or material reality, on the same plane as one's self or psyche (not transcendental spirit) is assumed and required, as you say, in action: and action includes any movement of alarm, attraction, or attention. Animal faith posits the rat in the hole, by smell, in the dog. That the smell, as a datum, is "in" the brain, I should not say, because in that capacity I think it is an essence, and non-existent anywhere: but the feeling or inarticulate intuition of it exists, and its organ is no doubt in the brain; although the intuition as a living act belongs to the realm of spirit, and is not in space. (Ibid.)

In this passage, Santayana brought out several central tenets of his philosophic system. One is the idea that we are animals who emerge from and live in the natural world. Our presence in that world forces us to act and the need to act requires us to believe in that natural world with things and events in it largely external to ourselves. These beliefs he called *animal faith*. Santayana also alluded to or mentioned explicitly his four realms of being. "Dynamic and material reality" is matter. The datum that appears (i.e., is given) to consciousness belongs to the realm of essence and is non-existent, but the feeling or intuition of it does exist as a moment in the realm of spirit. Animal faith's belief that a datum, like the smell of the rat, is a sign of an actual existing rat implies the realm of truth. Furthermore, he reaffirmed his notion that the self is one with the psyche and is part of material existence.

In his essay, Cory did not employ Santayana's categories, but took pains to use vocabulary borrowed from Russell to distinguish between "physical space" and "perceptual space" (Cory 1948, 538) and between "physical events" and "perceptual events" (Cory 1948, 539, 541, 543ff). In his letter Santayana told Cory that he need not adopt his framework—"This old analysis of mine . . . I don't think it worth while to reconsider" (LGS 14 June 1947)—but that he thought that without it there was unnecessary confusion between ideas and perceptions. Santayana offered an explanation why that distinction is important in understanding how we know things:

The knowledge we have of the world is a system of ideas; but it is not our psychological life, which is only feeling diversified. It is the function of parts of that life, in its vital alertness, to be the signs of existent objects and of their virtual character in terms of our own possible experience. (Ibid.)

Finally, Santayana brought his commentary back to the central role of the imagination and how the apparatus of science filters it:

We live in imagination, which we regard, often virtually with sufficient justification, as knowledge. But it is all theoretical, poetical, vaguely and floatingly sensuous; and it is science, as you say, that refines and consolidates it into literal exact abstract knowledge of "the "skeleton" of dynamic-nature. (Ibid.)

Cory wrote back to defend some of his choices. Santayana replied: "What you say in your letter about the analysis of data is reasonable, and it is better (also inevitable) that you should find a way of your own in this maze" (LGS 30 June 1947). Nevertheless, in his article Cory faults Russell for not recognizing the role of action in making certain beliefs desirable (Cory 1948, 546). Santayana's approval of this

notion⁶ indicates that Cory, while freeing himself from Santayana's vocabulary, was applying a Santayanan approach to his interpretation of Russell.

Santayana and the poets: Ezra Pound and Robert Lowell

In 1947 Santayana's difficult relationship with the poet Ezra Pound and with modern poetry generally was soothed by his discovery of Robert Lowell, whose work he immediately admired.⁷

Ezra Pound

Santayana's association with Ezra Pound began in the nineteen-thirties. Santayana had known about Pound's growing reputation starting in 1928, but found his work difficult to understand. In June 1937, Daniel Cory encountered Pound in Rapallo, Italy and came to know him rather well. His discussions of Santayana's philosophy must have impressed Pound, who offered to send Santayana a book of his poetry (Cory 1963, 187). Hearing of this, Santayana sent off a letter that began: "For heaven's sake, dear Cory, do stop Ezra Pound from sending me his book." In the same letter he wrote "I abhor all connection with important and distinguished people" and, "Without pretending to control the course of nature or the tastes of future generations, I wish to see only people and places that suggest the normal and the beautiful: not abortions or eruptions like E. P." (LGS 1 July 1937). Nevertheless, he also offered to help Pound financially as long as Pound remained unaware that he was the benefactor.

A year and a half later, in early January 1939, Pound took it upon himself to visit Santayana one evening. Santayana wrote to Cory: "He is taller, younger, better-looking than I expected" (LGS 5 January 1939). By the first few months of 1940 Pound had visited Santayana several times and even proposed rather insistently that Santayana contribute to a book on education with him and TS Eliot. (Pound 436-437) Santayana replied: "No, it is impossible" (LGS 7 March 1940). Soon after that he wrote to Cory that he was "flattered, on the whole, by Ezra Pound's visits, only a little ashamed at not understanding what he said and not being able to reply rationally" (LGS 17 March 1940). He also wrote to his nephew George Sturgis that he had a new friend, "the ultra-modern American poet Ezra Pound" (LGS 23 May 1940).

Early in the next year, 1941, Pound began making radio broadcasts in which he defended the Axis side in the war and railed against usury and the Jews. Once the United States entered the war, he denounced its participation, praised Hitler and fascism, and complained about Roosevelt, his Vice President Henry Wallace, and their wealthy Jewish influencers. After the war, he was arrested in Italy and brought

⁶ See the quotation from the letter of 14 June 1947 on p.10.

⁷ John McCormick in his biography of Santayana (McCormick 1987) gives full accounts of both the Pound-Santayana and the Lowell-Santayana relationships. But the account of Lowell given here covers the year 1947 in more detail than McCormick does in his book.

to the United States to be charged with treason, but was deemed unfit to stand trial and confined to St Elizabeth's Hospital, a federally run psychiatric facility in Washington, where he remained until his release in 1958.

Santayana wrote to Cory in March 1941 to say that Pound had been by to visit him and that in spite of Pound's "speaking through the radio for the government!" he was "Quite tame now with me" (LGS 25 March 1941). In May, Santayana reported "Ezra Pound was here yesterday, quite mad" and then added: "half his speech is undecipherable to me. I wonder if he is understood when he speaks through the radio" (LGS to Cory, 22 May 1941).

Just before the United States entered the war in December 1941, Santayana moved into the Hospital of the Little Company of Mary. How much communication with Pound took place during the war is unclear. We have just one letter from Santayana to Pound during this time, in July 1942. In it Santayana gave Pound advice about reading *The Realm of Spirit*, which Santayana had given him (LGS to John Hall Wheelock, 23 January 1947) and comments on a book by a historian that Pound may have given to Santayana.

Pound's stay at St Elizabeth's Hospital began in December 1945. In the following year he began a series of sixteen letters to Santayana. In July 1946 Santayana wrote to Pound: "I am glad to hear directly from you." He told Pound that he read his poem "The Ballad of the Goodly Fere" (published in 1909) as representing "Christ qua gangster" and then continued: "It is a nice contrast to my new book on the idea of Christ as pure spirit in the flesh. Mine would perhaps turn your stomach, yours only makes me laugh" (LGS 19 July 1946). Santayana then wrote to John Wheelock at Scribner asking him to send Pound a copy of *the Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, which had just been published that year.

In November 1946, Santayana replied to a letter from Pound's wife Dorothy Shakespear, who was still in Italy, saying that he had received a new Canto from her husband. It may have been one of the two, Cantos 80 and 81, in which Pound refers to Santayana by name.⁸

In January 1947, Santayana wrote to Wheelock:

From Ezra Pound I continue to receive communications: the last was stark mad: a few scattered unintelligible abbreviations on a large sheet of paper, and nothing else. Yet the address, although fantastically scrawled, was quite correct and intelligible. His madness may be spasmodic only. (LGS 16 January 1947).

On the same day, Santayana wrote to Cory that he had come across an Italian translation of a long article by TS Eliot on Pound, which he found "very laudatory and somewhat enlightening on the general subject of the new style of 'poetry'" (LGS 16 January 1947). A week later he wrote again, praising the Eliot article for "really throwing some light on the mystery of their kind of poetry" (LGS 23 January 1947).

⁸ See p. 23

In his article, Eliot expressed his personal gratitude to Pound for being the mid-wife of some of his early poems, including “The Love Song of J Alfred Prufrock” and “The Waste Land.” He noted that Pound had been of great help to many young poets:

No one could have been kinder to younger men, or to writers who, whether younger or not, seemed to him worthy and unrecognized. . . . He liked to be the impresario for younger men, as well as the animator of artistic activity in any milieu in which he found himself. (Eliot 327)

This perspective is surely one Santayana had not been aware of. Eliot, however, went on to show that he experienced some of the same frustration as Santayana at Pound’s quirks and obscurities: He compared the opacity of some of Pound’s cantos to that of an article he had suggested Pound write. Eliot told Pound something like:

I asked you to write an article which would explain this subject to people who had never heard of it; yet you write as if your readers knew about it already, but had failed to understand it. (Eliot 336)

Eliot went on to add:

I am incidentally annoyed, myself, by occasional use of the peculiar orthography which characterizes Pound’s correspondence, and by lines written in what he supposes to be a Yankee dialect. (Ibid.)

An example of what Eliot was complaining about can be seen in a letter Pound wrote to Cory after Santayana refused to see him in 1937:

Waal, me dear Dan’l I caynt say wot ole Jarge sounds like he fly/loserfly done his digestion much good/ but he haint troubled my sleep for the past 30 years and I reckon I won’t lose much now. (McCormick 401).

Searching for Robert Lowell

In July 1947, Robert Lowell sent Santayana a copy of his book *Lord Weary’s Castle*, which had received the Pulitzer Prize for poetry a few months before. Santayana read it with unexpected enthusiasm. He wrote to Lowell almost immediately, wondering about the poet’s connection to the New England Lowells, including the poet James Russell Lowell (who happened to be Robert Lowell’s great granduncle) and A. Lawrence Lowell, who was President of Harvard when Santayana retired. Santayana’s letter continued:

The next impression, on a first reading of your pages, was that this is the first book of poems, since those of my friend Trumbull Stickney, in the 1890s, that belonged at all to my moral or poetical world: even his, and naturally yours, are not in my conventional style; but they are in verse and not entirely cryptic. There are things in yours that I can’t make out clearly. I seem to need to know your personal history and the circumstances and the books that you had in mind. (LGS 25 July 1947)

Santayana revealed the source of his fellow feeling in the letter’s next paragraph:

The flashes of Catholic piety that appear repeatedly, contrasting with the Bostonian and Cape Cod atmosphere of the background, interest me particularly. They come a bit suddenly: and here again I feel that to appreciate the whole depth and delicacy of your verses I need to know more about you. If you have written other things that you could send me, I assure you that they would be read with a special interest and sympathy. (Ibid.)

Because Lowell's letter had been routed through the American Embassy in Istanbul, Santayana formed the mistaken impression that Lowell was a young diplomat living in Turkey. This notion added to the attraction Santayana felt for this newly discovered poet. He spent the rest of the year writing to several people about him hoping to gain more information. Santayana mailed his letter to the embassy in Istanbul, but it was returned unopened at the end of the year.

Santayana's excitement about Lowell's poetry can be seen in his frequent letters to others about the book. Within a week of receiving it, he wrote to Lawrence Smith Butler, Daniel Cory, and his niece Rosamond Sturgis. To Lawrence Butler he wrote:

It is hard for me to make it all out, and I find a lot of words that I have to look up in the dictionary, and don't always find there: but gradually I am learning to understand him, and it is worth the trouble, as most of the other cryptic poets have not seemed to me to be. He is very severe on Boston and on Convention: but he is no Communist or Atheist: on the contrary, evidently a Catholic, and a sort of Voice Crying in the Wilderness. (LGS 26 July 1947)

To Rosamond Sturgis he speculated about the diplomatic life he imagined Lowell to have:

I have just received from the author, Robert Lowell, a lovely book of modern poems actually in verse; and it comes from Istanbul (Constantinople) where he is in the American Embassy. Now think what an interesting life that must be! And there must be many such places now good for young men who are gentlemen without being poets. (LGS 1 August 1947)

On the last day of July, Santayana wrote a long letter to Cory, at the end of which he asked if Cory knew anything about Lowell. Then two and a half weeks later he sent Cory another letter, as if he had not written about Lowell before:

I have had an unexpected excitement. Have you heard of Robert Lowell and his "Lord Weary's Castle"? I had not, when I received from "Istanbul" a copy of this little book of verses, nicely inscribed; and saw by the cover that it was the third edition of a book published last year, and was taken seriously by the reviews. "The most notable event since T. S. Eliot's *Prufrock*", etc. It is modern in style and hard to decipher, but in verse, even largely in rhyme. In substance it is revolutionary, very anti-modern and anti-Bostonian and Catholic,⁹ but at the same time thoroughly American, in themes and in allegiance. *Moby Dick* is in the background. (LGS 18 August 1947)

⁹ See, for example, "The Holy Innocents" on p. 22.

Five days before this second query to Cory he had written to Cyril Clemens (a biographer who often wrote to Santayana) specifically to ask: “What can you tell me of Robert Lowell?” (LGS 13 August 1947). Then the same day he wrote to Cory, he also ended a letter to Wheelock at Scribner’s with yet another query about Lowell:

I am asking everybody for facts and comments about him. The verses are modern—cryptic or “thematic” and I don’t make them out easily: but they are verses; and they have undeniable power and originality. How a Lowell could ever be a Catholic is itself a problem crying for solution. What do you think of him or know about him? (LGS 18 August 1947)

Twelve days later he wrote Wheelock again, repeating his observations and questions:

I have been absorbed for a week deciphering and digesting Robert Lowell’s “Lord Weary’s Castle” sent to me from “Istanbul” by the author, who is there in the American Embassy. I have been writing to everybody asking for facts and opinions about him. Although I only half understand the meaning I am for the first time enthralled by the desire to do so and the feeling that it would be worth while. What do you think? (LGS 30 August 1947)

By the third week in September, Wheelock wrote with some information, but Santayana still had questions. He wrote back:

What you say of Robert Lowell and his work confirms my own impressions, and what seems to be the general feeling on the subject; but my curiosity or rather desire to understand, is not satisfied. Further re-readings of “Lord Weary’s Castle” make me see a little more clearly the Puritan or Jansenist element of religious horror and warning of hell-fire in it; also the presence of Moby¹⁰ Dick and the Leviathan in Lowell’s sub-consciousness. (LGS 20 September 1947)

Santayana continued, showing his efforts to probe Lowell’s sensibilities:

How far he and why he hates the nice American world so much, especially King’s Chapel in Boston, where my excellent friend and model Bostonian, Herbert Lyman, was a leading Elder, or whatever it is called, is a mystery to me: also why and how he became a Catholic. His Catholic piety, though admissible, is not like that of any other Catholic: more like that of some capricious Anglican. (Ibid.)

He concluded the letter expressing disappointment at not having heard from Lowell himself:

I wrote what seemed to me an appreciative letter of thanks for his book, and hoped he would reply: but no reply has¹¹ come. (Ibid.)

¹⁰ In LGS: ‘Mobie’.

¹¹ In LGS: ‘his’

By early November, Santayana had obtained more accurate information about Lowell. His father was a Navy Commander. His mother was from Virginia. His parents were living in Boston (suggesting that he grew up there). He attended Kenyon College and then was at what Santayana called “a Civilian Public Service Camp for Conscientious Objectors.” This title was most likely a euphemism on the part of Santayana (or his informant), because Lowell had served five months in a federal prison in Danbury, Connecticut for refusing to be drafted. Lowell had married the novelist Jean Stafford a few years before and became a Catholic. Santayana passed all this information on to Cyril Clemens with the following comments:

It is rumoured that he is leaving both his wife and the Church and is working for the Library of Congress.

The book of poems that roused my interest in him came from “Stanbul” and gave his address there as the American Embassy. This not unnaturally led me to suppose that he was in the Embassy staff. But it is perfectly intelligible that he should be employed by the Library of Congress to make researches at this time in Turkey, and that he should be informally attached to the Embassy . . .

The Conscientious Objectors’ Camp, the marriage to a novelist, and the entrance & exit into the Church have somewhat **dampened** my curiosity¹² about Robert Lowell, but he is an important figure in any case. (LGS 5 November 1947)

By early December, the letter to the embassy in Istanbul had come back marked “Has not called.” Santayana enclosed it in another brief letter to Lowell, this time sent to the Library of Congress. The new letter to Lowell contained the following:

Since July last I have read your book many times and made rather futile inquiries about you in various quarters. Your meaning has become clearer with familiarity, and with patience in looking up all the words I didn’t know, not all to be found in my dilapidated¹³ Oxford dictionary. But I can repeat what I wrote you at first, that knowledge about your history and ideas would very much clarify the general force of your verse. That it has power, obvious and latent, greater than any recent poetry that I have read in English, was clear to me from that beginning. But I am temperamentally not content with energy in motion: I need to see what it all comes to.

In reading you more at leisure I have notice[d] beautiful passages which at first I had hurried over in search of the prosaic sense. (LGS 8 December 1947)

Just before Christmas Santayana wrote to Cyril Clemens about the latest development and clarified his reaction to what he had learned about Lowell:

The news about that new poet rather shook my faith in his philosophical importance; for marrying a (doubtless mature) lady novelist becoming paradoxically a Catholic (not compatible with being a conscientious objector.) and then abandoning both his mature wife and his mature new religion, rather

12 In LGS: ‘by curiosity’.

13 In LGS: ‘delapidated’.

suggests wildness than wisdom. However, my mind remains open on that subject, and curious. (LGS 23 December 1947)

Santayana told Clemens he had sent the letter returned by the embassy to the Library of Congress and added: "If it returns a second time, I can still send it care of his publishers, for I am anxious to see what tone he would adopt in writing to me" (Ibid.)

What that tone would be became clear in 1948.

Family matters

Santayana's first letter of 1947 was to Rosamond Sturgis. She had been married to Santayana's nephew George, who in 1944 divorced her, married another, and died soon thereafter. Santayana had a long-term affection for her and her three children: Bob, Neville, and Nat. Bob, the eldest, had visited Santayana in Rome three times during the war while he was a soldier. After the war Bob returned to Harvard planning to become an architect (the profession Santayana would have turned to had he not become a professor). Santayana wrote to him three times in 1946, eager to hear news of both Bob himself and Harvard life. Santayana sent even more letters to Bob's mother that year, not wanting to disturb Bob. He thought he must be quite pressed for time (Bob had become President and Editor of the *Harvard Crimson*) and knew Rosamond would share any news with her children. In 1947 he wrote often to Rosamond. His last letter of the year was to Bob to congratulate him on his marriage.

Dream of travel

Rosamond had written late in 1946 to relate a dream she had of Santayana visiting her family. In his reply of New Year's Day, he described it:

I was amused by the pleasant dream, in your last letter, of a flight of mine to America and a sort of Christmas gathering in your house, where I should sit by the chimney corner (if you still have chimney corners) in a big arm chair with round goggles and an ear trumpet, to play the granduncle in benevolent imbecility.¹⁴ It would be interesting to see you all, and also the extraordinary sights on the way and in the new America. (LGS 1 January 1947)

Of course, it would never happen:

Dreams apart, however, it is utterly out of the question for me to move from here. (Ibid.)

Gifts from abroad

From the time mail between the United States and Italy resumed late in 1944, Rosamond had been sending Santayana packages of food, tea and coffee, and clothing. These gifts continued throughout 1947. Santayana wrote seven letters that year

¹⁴ In LGS: 'imbecillity'.

to thank her and to let her know each package had arrived. In April, he wrote to ask for camphor to help preserve his winter clothes and it arrived by early June. (LGS 15 April and 8 June 1947). At the end of the third week in June he wrote Rosamond:

It is very good of you to keep up this stream of presents; they are more varied and better suited to my taste than those I now get from New York, ordered by Mr. Wheelock of Scribner's, and paid for (unconsciously) by me, out of my account with them as my New York publishers. But you see I am now in the position to order what I want; so that your presents are real presents and not obligations imposed by the humane feeling that I should not be allowed to starve, in spite of already having eaten more than my just share of meals since I was born. (LGS 21 June 1947)

In this letter he also wrote of his intention to do something for Rosamond to show his gratitude. In August, he requested Wheelock to prepare a Christmas present of \$500 for her. In November he wrote to Rosamond:

I dislike the fuss of sending, choosing, and being thanked for small occasional favours. But I have for a long time been gathering a sort of sense of guilt in receiving so many parcels from you, and giving practically nothing in return. The attention on your part may reward itself by the interest and fun that goes with doing kind things, but I am troubled about causing you constant small expenses when I understand that your income is limited, whereas I don't spend half of mine. And there is the further circumstance that the rest of the Sturgis and Bidwell families are my heirs, but you now I am afraid will get nothing when I die, to be a sort of posthumous acknowledgement of favours received. . . . So I have screwed myself up to send you a little gift, to signify that I remember you with affection. (LGS 25 November 1947)

Santayana added an explanation about the source of the money, an explanation he thought necessary because of the obstacles posed by his financial managers and his late nephew to having Scribner's pay Cory from his royalties

Please notice, too, that this cheque of yours comes from Scribner's, not . . . from the Old Colony Trust Company. This different source is full of significance in my own mind; because what is in the Trust, although partly accumulations of my earnings and savings, was fundamentally Sturgis money, and much increased by the good management of George and of his father, so that I feel that it is mine only by favour and literally on trust. But what Scribner's have of mine is current earnings from my books, not Sturgis at all in origin, so that in general—and not in regard to you only—I feel that I am free to dispose of it all according to my inclination without any family claims upon it. (LGS 25 November 1947)

News of the nuptials

On the first of August Santayana learned that his great nephew Bob had a serious girlfriend, who went by the nickname Chiquita. "I suppose it is practically an

engagement,” he wrote to Rosamond. “At least they are novios [paramours].” He let his imagination wander:

Besides being in love evidently Bob is very busy and deep in his architecture. Building houses in series is no doubt useful training. When I thought of being an architect, I looked forward to finding an engineer for a partner, and doing only artistic work myself. But those were the days of individual enterprise and amateur art. Now everything is of standard democratic thoroughness, a matter of training and not of caprice. (LGS 1 August 1947).

Rosamond wrote him at the end of August that Bob and Chiquita were formally engaged. The year ended on a happy note. They were married in December and Bob wrote that day to his great uncle. Santayana wrote back: “Dear Bob, It was very nice of you to write to me on your wedding day, including me in that way in the immediate family that stood behind you at the altar.” He had hoped they might make a wedding trip to Europe, yet realized that the time was not right, even though he hoped it could happen while he was still alive. But then he added a merry thought:

The papers—now full of American news—report a record snowstorm in New York, and it occurs to me that you and Chiquita may have been caught in it if you went to New York—as might be natural at this season—for your bridal journey. Snowstorms are very cheerful things to watch or even to play with, when one is happy; so that being caught in one would probably have entertained you at such a moment. (LGS 28 December 1947)¹⁵

RICHARD MARC RUBIN

¹⁵ It was one the largest storms in New York history and, as my parents later told me, my father struggled to get home during it. I was then a few months old. In reading Santayana’s letter, I felt the connection. Here was tangible evidence—beyond what a calendar could tell—that we were alive at the same time.

The Robert Lowell poem presented here is from Lowell's Pulitzer Prize winning book Lord Weary's Castle (Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946). It illustrates the Catholic sentiment Santayana found in the book.

The Holy Innocents

Listen, the hay-bells tinkle as the cart
 Wavers on rubber tires along the tar
 And cindered ice below the burlap mill
 And ale-wife run. The oxen drool and start
 In wonder at the fenders of a car,
 And blunder hugely up St. Peter's hill.
 These are the undefiled by woman—their
 Sorrow is not the sorrow of this world:
 King Herod shrieking vengeance at the curled
 Up knees of Jesus choking in the air,
 A king of speechless clods and infants. Still
 The world out-Herods Herod; and the year,
 The nineteen-hundred forty-fifth of grace,
 Lumbers with losses up the clinkered hill
 Of our purgation; and the oxen near
 The worn foundations of their resting-place,
 The holy manger where their bed is corn
 And holly torn for Christmas. If they die,
 As Jesus, in the harness, who will mourn?
 Lamb of the shepherds, Child, how still you lie.

ROBERT LOWELL

The following short selection from a long canto by Ezra Pound is perhaps the most readily intelligible of the several references Pound made to Santayana in his poetry. It from the Pisan Cantos, a series written while Pound was imprisoned in Pisa during April and May of 1945 (London: Faber and Faber, 1946).

From Canto 81

George Santayana arriving in the port of Boston
 and kept to the end of his life that faint *thethear*
 of the Spaniard
 as a grace quasi imperceptible

EZRA POUND

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Memorandum by the Hyde Lecturer in France for 1905-06

Introduction by Daniel Pinkas

During the academic year 1904-1905 Santayana was on Sabbatical leave. He travelled extensively, visiting first France, England, Belgium, Holland and Germany, spending six weeks in the fall in Avila, a month at Villa I Tatti in Fiesole with the Berensons, a fortnight in Rome, and then visiting successively Southern Italy, Sicily, Egypt, Palestine and Greece. While in Naples, before embarking for Port Said, he received a telegram from James Hazen Hyde, a Harvard alumnus (class of 1898) interested in French literature, offering him the next one-year exchange lectureship between Harvard and the Sorbonne that he had established upon graduating. A letter would follow with more details.

Santayana was in Cairo in January 1905 when he received Hyde's letter. The lectureship involved lecturing (in English) twice a week at the Sorbonne for one trimester and then making a full *Tour de France* with supplementary lectures in provincial universities. He answered that "it is too glorious and congenial an opportunity to miss, and I accept your proposal gladly, trusting as I think it over that the right subject and method of treatment may occur to me" (LGS to James Hazen Hyde 5 January 1905). He points out at once a certain incongruity between the stated aims of the lectureship and its attribution to a non-U.S. person: "I labor under a personal disadvantage in this matter in that I am not an American, and yet shall be expected to represent, in a sense, American ways of seeing things. It will of course be impossible for me to disguise a certain external or foreign quality in my treatment of things Anglo-Saxon, and this foreignness, while it may make what I say more easily intelligible to French people, will doubtless prevent me from arousing any warm interest" (Ibid.). Santayana goes on to discuss the question of the topic he should address at the Sorbonne, suggesting at the end that it might be announced under the heading "Contemporary Philosophy in England and America." The letter closes on a note of praise for Hyde:

It is a very fine impulse in you that prompts these innovations, and a somewhat cosmopolitan person like me may perhaps appreciate even more than others the need there is of better mutual understanding among men, now that religion and distance may be said to no longer divide them" (Ibid.).

Santayana found the invitation "most opportune" not only because it gave him "two years' holiday instead of one" but also because "counting on an intelligent audience in Paris, [his] work there would be easy, and three parts pleasure" (PP 402). The first recipient of the Hyde Lectureship (for 1904-1905) had been Barrett Wendell (1855-1921), an English professor at Harvard, whom Santayana did not hold in high esteem, considering him "a sentimentalist" with "ill-governed and uncouth ways."¹ Wendell's stint in France had apparently elicited a warm interest from large audiences. Santayana warned Hyde that no such "popular success" was to be expected in his case, "but I will try to appeal to that unenthusiastic faculty,

¹ For Santayana's unflattering portrait of Barrett Wendell, see PP, 405-406.

the intellect, of which the French have so much, and I may perhaps interest a smaller number of people more deeply” (LGS to Hyde, 5 January 1905).

In Paris, Santayana settled in Hôtel Foyot, ideally located just across the Jardin du Luxembourg and the Senate, a few steps from the Sorbonne. The establishment was renowned for its cuisine ever since Nicolas Foyot, King Louis-Philippe’s *Chef*, had bought it after he had to vacate the kitchens of the Tuileries Palace during the 1848 Revolution. Until its demolition in 1937, the Foyot hosted many celebrities, aristocrats and literati (T.S. Eliot, Dorothy Parker, and Rainer Maria Rilke among others); George Sturgis, Santayana’s nephew, liked to stay there when he visited, and it was in one of the private rooms of the Foyot’s restaurant, where senators used to gather, that Santayana took a party of six for lunch after Margaret Strong’s wedding.² He would return several times until 1930, when he wrote: “I went to the Foyot and took the very same room I had had 25 years ago. But I found the noise intolerable. Busses in the old days had horses, and there were no horns and no changing of gear, and above all no earth-shaking camions” (LGS to George Sturgis, 19 July 1930).

Santayana had anticipated that he would enjoy lecturing at the Sorbonne. So it turned out. As he wrote to William James:

The lectures themselves I find delightful to give—immensely easy. The audience—fully half ladies, mostly Americans—is sympathetic. One feels that not everything is fully understood; those that have ears, let them hear, has to be one’s motto. But every one is attentive, and I find improvisation easy in that *milieu*. (LGS 5 December 1905)

Figuring out the exact content of the Paris lectures is not an easy task. We do know that the two addresses that Santayana gave in the provinces were “Emerson and the American Idealists” and “William James and the American positivists or ‘pragmatists’”³; so perhaps the Paris lectures were similarly structured in terms of the opposition between the idealism of the old guards and the innovations brought about by the pragmatists in the United States, and (probably) Russell and Moore in England. But this is conjecture.

In the letter to William James quoted above, Santayana implies that Wendell had made a fool of himself during his stay in France: “In all frankness—since you ask me to tell you everything—no one—no one, American or French—mentions Wendell here without an ambiguous smile. He evidently made a damned—Wendell of himself” (Ibid.). Yet, as he writes in *Persons and Places*, “after Wendell, I was a sad disappointment to Hyde and, I suspect, to all the officials concerned. For I avoided seeing anyone, presented none of the letters of introduction that Hyde had sent me by the dozen, and lived in my hotel just as quietly as if I had had no academic duties” (PP 412). Santayana explains his social withdrawal by referring, on the one hand, to his “love of obscurity” and, on the other hand, to “[t]he tendency to give a political colour to this lectureship”, which repelled him for two reasons: “one, that I was not an American, and was presenting myself, as it were, under false colours; the other, that the political propaganda desired was contrary to my sympathies” (Ibid.). (The Spanish-American War had ended only seven years earlier).

² See LGS to Charles Strong, 3 August 1927.

³ As stated in the second paragraph of the “Memorandum.”

Whatever the reasons for Santayana's (relative) reclusiveness, they did not prevent him from accepting an invitation to dinner from the great psychologist Pierre Janet, nor to attend "an American party" (which, however, bored him "to death") (LGS to Susan Sturgis Sastre, 7 December 1905). It is also almost certainly during this Parisian stay that Santayana met Bergson (who disappointed him)⁴ as well as the distinguished philosopher Émile Boutroux, who would later write the preface to the French translation of *Egotism and German Philosophy* and call Santayana, much to his satisfaction, "an antique sage" (PGS 603). And—if one is prone to indulge in fantasies—one can always imagine a chance meeting with Gertrude Stein, who had been Santayana's student, and who now lived a stone's throw from the Foyot, at 27, rue de Fleurus.

In *Persons and Places* Santayana recounts two significant episodes from this period, entitled respectively "A sectarian government" and "Bombast at Lyons". They deserve to be quoted in full, not just for their literary quality and the humor they display, but also because they give us a very revealing testimony of his political affects.

A sectarian government.

Before I set out on my tour of the provincial universities, I had a glimpse of French government behind the scenes. A young man in a shining red motor burnished like sealing-wax turned up at the Foyot, where I lived, and said they wished to speak to me at the ministry of public instruction, and that he would drive me there. I was received by the director of some department, who rang the bell and said that Monsieur so-and-so would explain to me the nature of a request that they desired to make of me. I bowed, said *au revoir, monsieur*, and followed the secretary into an inner room. This secretary was obsequious, yet in himself, had he been dressed in oriental garments, would have been impressive and almost beautiful. He had a pale complexion, large calm eyes, and a long silky black beard falling in two strands. We sat down. He said, with an air of mystery, and perhaps some embarrassment, that in the list of universities that they had selected for me to visit, they had included Lille. Now, there was a special circumstance about Lille to which they wished before hand to call my attention. At Lille there was also a Catholic Institute. If, going as I did under government direction, I should also address the Catholic Institute, it would cause comment which they desired to avoid. For that reason they had troubled me with this little matter; and they hoped I should understand the position in which they were placed.

I replied that I understood it perfectly; that I had never heard of the Catholic Institute at Lille, had no relations with French Catholic circles, and certainly would not repeat my lectures at Lille or elsewhere, even if, as was most unlikely, I should be invited to do so. In fact, the Catholic Institute was as oblivious of me as I was of it. But these precautions of the ministry, and the stealthy hushed tone of them, taught me something of the spirit of the French government. It was not national, but sectarian. It was afraid that a foreign lecturer should repeat to Catholic students what he had been sent to say to Government students. Apparently—though they payed me nothing, for it was Hyde that

⁴ See LGS H.M. Kallen, 5 February 1908.

payed—they felt that, while I was under their auspices, I was pledged to their policy. If I had known this, or had thought it more than an absurd pretension, I should never have stepped within the Sorbonne. (PP 412-413)

If I may venture a comment, Santayana appears to be overreacting. He ignores, or forgets, that the Law of Separation of the Church and the State, a fundamental law codifying secularism (*laïcité à la française*), had been adopted only very recently, on 9 December 1905, even while Santayana was in Paris. Evidently, the officials were groping their way and just taking understandable precautions to avoid missteps in the application of this freshly voted law.

Bombast at Lyons.

The last university I visited was that of Lyons, and there pomposity was the order of the day. Everyone was pining for the blessed moment when they should at last be transferred to Paris; but meantime they would pretend that Lyons was the light of the world. I was asked to dinner by the Rector; he said nothing about *sans cérémonie*, and luckily I dressed, for it was an official banquet, forty men, and only one lady, the Rector's wife, in full regalia, next to whom I sat, with the Rector opposite. At the end, with the champagne, my heart sank, for I foresaw that I had to make a speech—my first and last speech in French. Luckily the Rector was very eloquent about the twin republics across the sea, both enlightened, both humane, both progressive, both red white and blue. I had time to think of something to say. I had been hearing and speaking more French than usual, and I managed, not without faults, but decently, to express my thanks and to praise the young French universities— younger than Harvard—that I had been visiting. But I also said that, although I was not myself an American, I would convey the friendly sentiments expressed by the Rector to my friends at Harvard, who I knew were inspired by the same feelings. When I said I was not an American, which I did at the beginning, not at the end, I had one of the happiest moments of my life. I saw the cold douche playing on the startled nerves of all those official hypocrites and toadies, who hated all foreign countries and ridiculed America at every turn, yet licked the dust before anybody that they hoped they could get money from. Having relieved my conscience, and given them a lesson, I went on more sympathetically and ended without eloquence but with decency. “*Vous avez eu des phrases*”, said one of the guests to me afterwards, “*qui n'étaient pas d'un étranger.*” Quite so: the accent may not have been Parisian, but the sentiment was not foreign because it was human and sincere. We all move together when we pursue the truth (PP 413-414)

As both excerpts show, Santayana was (and remained) ambivalent about the French. Whatever his affection for the French language, countryside, and historical monuments and whatever his admiration for French culture and the vitality of its intellectual and artistic scene, he resented the chauvinism he perceived among the French (see the last paragraph of the “Memorandum”) and was irritated by their smooth and frivolous manners. As he wrote to one his student friends, “The Frenchmen are dulcet and disappointing” (LGS to Benjamin Apthorp Fuller 29 January 1906).

The day after giving his last lecture in the provinces, Santayana reported from Grenoble to Harvard's President, Charles W. Eliot:

The year has been a delightful one for me personally,—except that my health has not been quite as good as usual; together with the previous twelvemonth of travel, it has given me a very refreshing change of scenes and of companionships. Even in respect of my philosophic interests, I have found a great deal that is new to me, and interesting, in the movement of French speculation, which is very active at present and carried on in a most critical and open-minded spirit, as well as with a solid foundation in scholarship. (LGS 23 June 106)

He added:

My impressions about the value of the Hyde lectureship are rather too complex to be expressed in a letter; I have accordingly written the accompanying memorandum.

McCormick quotes from this document,⁵ but it remains unpublished until now. It consists of eight pages typed, perhaps by Santayana himself, on a typewriter whose English keyboard lacked French accents, requiring him to trace these meticulously by hand. The remarks are organized into five sections, all of which demonstrate Santayana's sharp insight into the Hyde lectureship's present and future relations to the French and American academic worlds and the wider geopolitical context. It ends with a short but delightful array of "personal impressions." As José Beltrán wrote upon reading the "Memorandum":

This is a little gem, not to be missed. One must admire how Santayana turns a brief academic memoir into a delightful literary exercise, with such sharp observations, not lacking in finesse and irony, gathering impressions of the host institution and with ever so stimulating references to "persons and places."⁶

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⁵ See McCormick 184-185

⁶ José Beltrán Llavador, personal communication.

Santayana's 1906 Memorandum

The subject of the Hyde Lectures given in Paris in 1906-06 was "Contemporary Philosophy in England and America." They began on November 28, 1905, and continued twice a week, on Tuesdays and Saturdays at five o'clock, until March 17, 1906. They were given in the Amphithéâtre Richelieu before an attentive audience of from one to two hundred persons, of whom perhaps half were women and half Americans.

The original aim involved giving numerous supplementary lectures in as many provincial universities as possible. Some difficulties, however, at once presented themselves with regard to this part of the project. Both the Director of higher instruction in Paris and the Rectors in the provinces seemed to take but a lukewarm interest in the affair. Noticing their hesitation, after my general plan for the journey had been sanctioned at the Ministry of public instruction, I wrote personally to each of the Rectors in turn, offering to come between specified dates (covering about a week) and to give two addresses on philosophy in the United States, the first on Emerson and the American idealists, the second on William James and the American positivists or "pragmatists." I added, after my experience at one or two places, that one of these lectures might be given alone, if it was thought advisable to do so. In answer to my letters the Rectors of Nancy, Caen, Lille, Lyons, and Grenoble accepted one lecture only; those of Montpellier, Toulouse, Bordeaux, and (after some hesitation) Dijon, accepted two.

My experience during these eight months of lecturing and travel suggests to me the following observations, which might be of some use if any doubt should arise about continuing the Hyde Lectureship, choosing the incumbent, or arranging his work.

I. The undertaking opportune.

Since 1871 the French government and people have been more interested than formerly in foreign things, and have shown a disposition to encourage a serious and respectable study of them. The appearance of foreigners, lecturing in their own language, with an official mission to interpret their national institutions to a French audience, is therefore not an unwelcome novelty. It falls in with the spirit of the times and with the direction now given to intelligent public attention.

A lecturer in the English language has at present the special benefit of the "entente cordiale", between France and England, which, though purely political, finds an echo in the tone of social and scholarly intercourse, tho sentiment of Frenchmen being largely political in all fields.

Behind this momentary openness to English influences there is an ancient, and especially republican, good—will towards the United States, increased by the sense, grown keener since the Spanish-American war, that the United States represents a formidable industrial and military force.

On the other hand two hindrances to the work of an American lecturer must be kept in mind; first, that personal, as distinguished from a politic, sympathy with what is Anglo-Saxon hardly exists in France except in Protestant circles; second,

that everybody, especially when he has active relations with England, distrusts an American accent and an American style.

II. Official welcomes.

The sort of reception which a Hyde lecturer may expect in France might be described either as festive, or as perfunctory, or as friendly. The way in which these elements are mingled will of course depend largely on the visitor's own temperament and behaviour, and particularly on his command of the French language.

The idea that a Hyde lecturer is a sort of ambassador, that he must be met at the station, toasted in an official banquet, and regaled with phrases about Sister Republics, etc. etc., had almost died out by the second year of the institution. In Paris I found no trace of it; only at Lille, Lyons, and at Dijon did something of the sort attempt to show itself. In the other provincial seats the Rector satisfied his conscience by asking me to family dinner, followed, perhaps, by a small reception. If the Hyde lecturer were an annual visitor it is clear that, given the soberness of French intercourse, his tour could not retain any festive character.

The perfunctory part of the reception given me consisted in arranging and advertising my lectures, in introducing me at first and, in the end, perhaps in thanking me. These duties were not always so gracefully performed as to cease to seem such. Several of the provincial Rectors did not disguise the worry which the whole matter caused them and the relief they would have felt to be rid of it.*

For a person who understands and speaks French, and who is interested in academic personalities, there are excellent opportunities offered for enlarging his acquaintance; and when such acquaintance reaches the dignity of an exchange of ideas, much pleasure and profit naturally comes of it. One who cares simply for having "met" people, and who can remember them, would find ample occasion to satisfy his taste.

III. The Audiences.

The audiences, while in numbers remarkably constant, differed notably in character in Paris and in the provinces. In Paris, after the first day, a nucleus of auditors came freely, for the sake of the subject or of the language, and could understand; a certain margin of curious persons, chance students or American residents, would hover about, causing no disturbance save by banging the doors, In the provinces, on the contrary, the great majority came to see whether they could understand, to see the lecturer, or to see one another. It was an audience that would have melted

* Thus the Dean of the Faculty of Letters at the University of Grenoble writes as follows to the Rector, who in turn quotes him in his letter to me of June 6, 1906. "L'expérience faite l'année dernière nous a montré qu'il n'est pas impossible de réunir à Grenoble, d'une manière un peu factice, il est vrai, un auditoire capable de s'intéresser à une conférence faite en Anglais; mais nous avons vu aussi combien il est malaisé de fixer cet auditoire, et combien il serait imprudent de trop compter sur sa fidélité." The other officials shared this feeling, though they may have expressed it less frankly. It should be added, however, that where a second lecture was actually given, it was better attended than the first except at Dijon, where the ladies only were faithful).

away if a series of lectures had been given, no matter how interesting the matter of them might have been.

At the Sorbonne a course in English might be given, like any other public course, with profit and dignity, before quite sufficient audience: at the other places, however, a lecture in English is a merely histrionic performance. The speaker's personality, the brilliancy of the public, gathered together by special and urgent invitation, to gossip about the occasion, would make its only possible success. While something of this nature is not absent from ordinary academic performances, and is perhaps inseparable from any public lecture, I think it very doubtful whether a teacher that respects his art or his subject can consent to make it his whole stock in trade. The question thus arises whether, if such social effects are desired at all, a lectureship at universities is the proper means of securing them.

IV. Recommendations

1. A lectureship in English at the Sorbonne, to deal with some subject connected with America, should, if permanently established, form a regular part of the instruction there. The lecturer should not have the character of an envoy from Harvard or from the founder of the lectureship. He should be appointed by the French Minister of Public Instruction, who in making his choice would of course be free to consult such authorities in America as he saw fit.

2. The incumbent might eventually repeat some of his Paris lectures at Bordeaux, at Lyons, or elsewhere, if it seemed worthwhile when the occasion arose. But no yearly tour of the provinces should be imposed by the Foundation.

3. If it be desired to send to France a more sensational American mission, with a vaguer scope and more personal initiative, this mission should not borrow the authority nor the machinery of the French University system. Nor would a scholar ordinarily be the best person for the work. The press, the mercantile associations, the American consuls, the Protestant churches, might furnish more suitable local backing for such propaganda. As there is Alliance Française in America, there might be an American Alliance in France, independent of the government and the government academies.

V. Personal Impressions.

Although I had formerly traversed France in several directions, this longer visit filled me with wonder at the varied and charming landscape of the country, the number and importance of its historic monuments, the well-being of its inhabitants, their wakefulness to everything new and interesting, and their singular intelligence. France, taken all in all, is doubtless the country where an open-minded foreigner can travel and reside with the greatest pleasure and profit.

French universities have no local, moral, or corporate life; they are dispersed branches of a single teaching body, appointed by the government, and addressing students quite individualistic in their habits and ambitions. A French university is merely a collection of local branches of the state professional schools. Consequently no special character or charm is to be found in any of these institutions, nor in any group of its students.

French intellectual life has a good deal of maturity. It goes on in the felt presence of opposed tendencies and rival nations; it often neglects to press theory or study very far, because it feels that so to press them would not be worthwhile. To many an intellectual Frenchman might be applied what Hume says of himself, that, free from all vulgar prejudices, he was full of his own. Where every form of culture is in the air, each man makes conscious selection of his own interests and hobbies, and thinks of them as such, instead of borrowing them from his sect and calling them principles, as he might do in England or America. He will consequently be more civil to what he leaves outside, without being really less indifferent to it.

The chief general preoccupation which stands in the way of French sympathy with foreigners, or with the truth, is perhaps national sensitiveness and vanity. A marked habit prevails of giving to everything a pro-French or an anti-French character; and this "nationalism" is not conducive to peace of mind nor breadth of judgment. It is perhaps the only illiberal note in the most liberal of people.

G.S.

June, 1906.

Un Hôte de Passage

Les cahiers français de George Santayana

CAHIER VII—Première Partie

15 décembre 1940—31 décembre 1940

Dans la Rome antique nous serions en pleines Saturnalia, quelques jours avant le solstice d'hiver, la plus joyeuse des fêtes romaines, quand les maîtres servaient les esclaves à table, se laissaient insulter par eux, l'ivresse était permise, et les jeux de hasard aussi. Dans la Rome actuelle, le calme règne et les nuits sont si noires que les horaires sont révolutionnés et l'opéra commence à cinq heures et demie, comme en Allemagne à l'époque où j'étais étudiant. À force de passer devant le Teatro Reale dell'Opera, qui se trouve à cinq minutes de mon hôtel, et de voir les affiches annonçant les spectacles, je me suis décidé à acheter un billet pour la *Götterdämmerung*, malgré sa durée de quatre heures et demie, étant entendu que je sortirais au deuxième entracte, ou avant, si le Walhalla prenait trop longtemps à brûler de fond en comble et à s'effondrer.

Le Crépuscule des Dieux

Pendant mon année d'études à Berlin, en 1886, j'avais eu l'occasion d'entendre tout le *Ring*, *Lohengrin*, *Le Vaisseau Fantôme*, *Le Prophète*, *La Flûte enchantée* et quelques opérettes ; toutes mes notions sur les possibilités de la musique en furent bouleversées. J'opinais alors que Wagner était « le plus grand de tous les compositeurs d'opéras », ce que je m'abstiendrais de dire aujourd'hui, non seulement parce que je lui préfère Verdi, mais parce que ce genre de jugement est parfaitement idiot. Mon admiration n'obnubilait cependant pas en moi l'esprit critique : je voyais bien que Wagner visait avant tout la monumentalité et la suggestivité philosophique alors qu'à l'opéra la puissance dramatique devrait primer ; je constatais qu'il présentait tant de motifs et d'intérêts à la fois qu'aucun ne parvenait à vous accaparer complètement. Certes, me disais-je, c'est ainsi que les choses se passent dans le monde réel, où l'enchevêtrement de sensations, d'intérêts, d'émotions et d'idées contradictoires abasourdirait quiconque tenterait de prêter attention à tout : une photographie totale des choses serait absolument floue et chaotique. alors qu'un art plus classique parviendrait à fixer l'attention tout entière sur *une* tendance ou *un* intérêt humain, rendant l'aspect et les causes des choses plus simples, plus « idéales », qu'elle ne le sont dans le monde (comme dans *La Flûte enchantée*) ; mais on pouvait dire aussi que Wagner sélectionnait ses éléments et composait de façon « réaliste », avec précisément l'intention de communiquer l'impression de chaos, de confusion, d'accablante multiplicité et de fouillis informe que produit le monde.

J'ai pris une place au parterre, sous le lustre gigantesque en verre de Murano qui avait tant impressionné Cory, surtout lorsque je lui avais signalé, avant le lever du rideau du premier spectacle où je l'avais entraîné pour l'initier à l'opéra italien (*L'Amico Fritz* de Mascagni, avec le compositeur à la baguette) que le lustre comportait quelque trente mille pièces, qu'il fallait nettoyer périodiquement, une à une.

A Guest Passing Through The French Notebooks of Santayana

NOTEBOOK VII—First Part

15 December 1940–31 December 1940

In ancient Rome, a few days before the winter solstice, we would have been in the midst of Saturnalia, the most joyous of the Roman festivals. It is when the masters served the slaves at the dining table and let the slaves insult them, when drunkenness was permitted and gambling too. In present-day Rome, all is quiet and the nights are so dark that schedules have to be rearranged. The opera starts at five thirty, as it did in Germany during the time when I was a student.

The Twilight of the Gods As I happened to pass in front of the Teatro Reale dell'Opera, which is five minutes from my hotel, and saw posters announcing the performances, I decided to buy a ticket for the *Götterdämmerung*, even though it runs four and a half hours. I assumed I would leave during the second intermission, or before, if Valhalla was taking too long to burn from top to bottom and collapse.

During my year of study in Berlin, in 1886, when I had the opportunity to hear all of the *Ring*, *Lohengrin*, *The Flying Dutchman*, *The Prophet*, *The Magic Flute*, and a few operettas, all my notions about what is possible in music were turned upside down. I thought then that Wagner was "the greatest of all opera composers", something I would refrain from saying today, not only because I prefer Verdi, but because this kind of judgment is perfectly idiotic. My admiration did not, however, cloud my critical judgment: I could clearly see that Wagner was aiming, above all, for monumentality and for philosophical suggestiveness, whereas in opera dramatic power must be primary; I noticed that he presents so many individual motivations and interests at the same time that none manages to monopolize your attention. Certainly, I said to myself, this is how things happen in the real world, where the web of conflicting sensations, interests, emotions, and ideas would confound anyone who tried to pay attention to everything at once: a complete photograph of all things would be absolutely blurry and chaotic. A more classical art would fix the attention on *one* impulse or *one* human interest, making the properties and causes of things simpler, more ideal than they are in the world (as in *The Magic Flute*); but one might also say that Wagner selected his elements and composed in a "realistic" manner, precisely with the intention of conveying the impression of chaos, of confusion, of the overwhelming multiplicity and shapeless jumble of things that the world produces.

I took a place in the parterre, under the gigantic chandelier of Murano glass that had impressed Cory so much when I took him there to introduce him to Italian opera (Mascagni's *L'Amico Fritz*, with the composer at the helm). Before the curtain had risen, I pointed out to him that the chandelier had some thirty thousand parts, which had to be cleaned periodically, one by one.

Avant le début du spectacle ma voisine, dame élégante et loquace de la bonne société, et apparemment wagnérienne avertie, m'expliqua que Max Lorenz, le *Heldentenor* qui tenait ce soir-là le rôle de Siegfried, *ha una voce così bella e un sostegno così forte dall'alto che nessuno osa obiettare che non sia divorziato dalla moglie ebrea*.¹ De fait, ce Siegfried-là, blond et impétueux, était la parfaite incarnation de l'idéal national-socialiste. Incidemment, il était vocalement superbe.

Lorsqu'il parut sur scène, au Prologue, enlacé à Brünnhilde, après leur première et dernière nuit d'amour, je me souvins que j'avais cité, en note de bas de page, au chapitre sur l'amour de *Reason in Society*, le cri qu'ils lancent à la fin de la troisième journée du cycle du Ring :

Lachend lass' uns verderben
Lachend zu Grunde geh'n...
Leuchtende Liebe, lachender Tod !²

C'était un exemple, parmi d'autres, de la tendance de l'amour-passion absolu à tendre les bras à la mort, et même, par une illusion transcendante, à invoquer la fin de l'univers. Les amoureux ressentent alors, poétisais-je, ce que pourrait ressentir un éphémère, bourdonnant jusqu'à ce qu'il rencontre sa compagne et s'accouple en vol avec elle. Son destin tout entier est de courtiser et, cette mission accomplie, il chante son *Nunc dimittis*³, renonçant de bon cœur à tout ce qui n'a plus la moindre importance maintenant que son bien suprême, fatidique et dévorant, a été atteint.

En rédigeant ce chapitre, intitulé lapidairement « Love », j'avais tenté de rendre justice à un sujet où l'indigence de la philosophie classique était patente. J'y déclarais que deux choses devaient être admises par quiconque souhaitait ne pas se fourvoyer irrémédiablement en spéculant sur l'amour : l'une, que l'amour a une base animale ; l'autre, qu'il a un objet idéal. Or, comme ces deux propositions sont généralement considérées comme contradictoires, aucun auteur n'avait présenté plus que la moitié de la vérité, et encore cette moitié-là, par la force des choses, restait comme cloisonnée en elle-même, coupée de ses relations véridiques. Deux grands philosophes illustrent ces limitations : Platon, qui avait exprimé avec éloquence la charge idéale de la passion, et qui en avait deviné les implications politiques et cosmiques, mais en avait aussi

Comment parler de l'amour en philosophe

¹ « Il a une voix si belle et des appuis si forts en haut lieu que personne ne trouve à redire au fait qu'il ne divorce pas de sa femme juive ».

² En riant perdons-nous,
En riant allons vers l'abîme...
Amour qui brille,
Mort qui rit !

³ Ce sont les premiers mots du « Cantique de Siméon », un hymne du IV^e siècle apr. J.-C. tiré de l'Évangile selon Luc. Il commence par « Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine » (Maintenant, Seigneur, tu peux laisser partir ton serviteur). Il fait allusion à la réalisation d'une très chère espérance qui permet de mourir en paix. (note de l'Ed.)

Soon after I found my place, a woman seated near me, an elegant and talkative lady of good society, and apparently a knowledgeable Wagnerian, explained to me that Max Lorenz, the *Heldentenor* who was playing the role of Siegfried that evening, *ha una voce così bella e un sostegno così forte dall'alto che nessuno osa obiettare che non sia divorziato dalla moglie ebrea*.¹ In fact, this blond and impetuous Siegfried was the perfect embodiment of the National Socialist ideal. Incidentally, he was vocally superb.

When he appeared on stage, in the Prologue, entwined with Brünnhilde after their first and last night of love, I remembered that I had quoted, in a footnote, in the chapter on love in *Reason in Society*, the cry they launch into at the end of the third day of the Ring cycle:

Lachend lass' uns verderben
Lachend zu Grunde geh'n...
Leuchtende Liebe, lachender Tod!²

This was one example, among others, of absolute love's profound impulse to welcome death, and even, by a transcendental illusion, to invoke the end of the universe. Lovers then feel, I said poetically, what a mayfly that lives for a day might feel, buzzing about until he meets his mate and mates with her in flight. His whole destiny was to woo, and, that mission accomplished, he sings his *Nunc dimittis*,³ renouncing heartily all irrelevant things, now that his all-consuming, predestined supreme good has come to him at last.

In writing this chapter, with its succinct title "Love," I had attempted to do justice to a subject on which the poverty of classical philosophy was obvious. In it I stated that two things must be admitted by anyone not wishing to go irremediably astray in speculating about love: the first, that love has an animal basis; the other, that it has an ideal object. Now, as these two propositions are generally considered to be contradictory, no author had presented more than half of the truth, and even that half, by the nature of things, remained cloistered as its true goal, inside itself, cut off from its genuine relationships. Two great philosophers illustrate these limitations: Plato, who had eloquently expressed the ideal urgings of passion and who had divined its political and cosmic implications, but had

**How to speak
of love in
philosophy**

¹ has such a beautiful voice and such strong support from those in high places that no one dares to complain that he does not divorce his Jewish wife.

² Laughing let us be destroyed.

Laughing we'll go down [to the abyss]...

Love that dazzles, Death that laughs

³ These are the opening words of the "Song of Simeon," a 4th century AD hymn taken from the Book of Luke. It begins, "*Nunc dimittis servum tuum, Domine*" (Now, Lord, you can let your servant go). It alludes to the realization of a deeply longed-for hope that allows one to die in peace (Ed. note).

occulté les origines naturelles sous des mythes pittoresques ; et Schopenhauer, dans le système duquel un traitement naturaliste aurait si facilement pu s'insérer, mais qui avait permis à sa métaphysique de l'entraîner sur ce point dans des inanités verbales, parfois dans de vrais délires, comme quand il expliquait que toute union a pour but véritable, quoique ignoré des acteurs, la procréation d'un enfant spécifique dont l'individualité est strictement déterminée⁴.

Quant au sentiment populaire, sa tendance est d'imaginer l'amour comme une énergie absolue, non naturelle, dont le but ultime, pour une raison inconnue, ou sans raison aucune, serait d'élire domicile chez des personnes particulières et de s'y installer pour l'éternité. Cette façon de voir rend l'origine de l'amour divine et son objet naturel : ce qui, selon moi, est l'exact opposé de la vérité.

The Life of Reason, l'ouvrage dans lequel se trouve le chapitre précité sur l'amour, me paraît aujourd'hui arrogant, pédant, prolix, superficiel, positiviste et philistin. C'était l'élaboration des notes d'un cours que je donnais alors, et ça se sent. Par endroits, pourtant, ce n'était pas si mal, par exemple dans les descriptions des émotions amoureuses de divers animaux, correspondant à diverses modalités de leur vie sexuelle (un poisson incapable de coït, dégagé de toute obligation à l'égard de ses petits, qu'il ne voit jamais ou ne distingue pas des nageurs occasionnels qui fument sur son chemin, un tel poisson ne peut avoir les instincts, les perceptions ou les émotions qui appartiennent aux animaux qui protègent, nourrissent et éduquent leur progéniture) ; et aussi dans mon interprétation naturaliste de la chute d'Adam.

Pourquoi les passions sexuelles sont-elles si enténébrées chez l'homme ? Pourquoi tant de barrières conventionnelles les rejettent-elles dans la clandestinité ? Pourquoi les passions franches de la jeunesse suscitent-elles des grimaces d'horreur

Qu'est-ce que le péché originel ?

de toutes parts, avec *rumores senum severiorum*⁵ et une telle insistance sur la retenue et l'hypocrisie ? Pourquoi ce plaisir si nécessaire est-il le sujet de mille blagues et insinuations graveleuses ? J'avais une explication scientifique, simple dans son principe mais compliquée dans le détail : l'organisation psychique de l'homme, en devenant plus complexe, devint aussi moins stable. Son instinct sexuel, au lieu d'être intermittent, mais violent et hardiment annoncé, comme chez les autres mammifères (les grands singes mis à part, paraît-il) devint pratiquement constant, mais pour cette raison même empêtré dans toutes sortes de contre-courants de besoins et de désirs, compromettant l'opération régulière d'autres adaptations tout aussi imparfaites et labiles. L'impulsion instinctive tend à devenir excessive et importune ; elle peut être excitée artificiellement, stimulée hors de propos, contrariant les autres activités. Les sens, une imagination trop bouillonnante, certaines paroles, l'amour-propre, tout peut attiser l'instinct sexuel—car toutes ces forces agissent désormais sur un

⁴ Santayana fait sans doute référence à la « Métaphysique de l'amour », chapitre XLIV des suppléments au *Le monde comme volonté et comme représentation* (note de l'Ed.).

⁵ les murmures de vieillards sévères, Catulle 5,2 (note de l'Ed.)

also concealed its natural origins inside picturesque myths; and Schopenhauer, into whose system a naturalistic treatment could so easily have been inserted, but who had allowed his metaphysics to lead him into verbal inanities in this regard—sometimes into real delusions, as when he explained that every sexual union has even though the participants are unaware of it, the procreation of *one* specific child whose individuality is strictly determined.⁴

As for popular sentiment, its tendency is to imagine love to be an absolute, unnatural drive, the ultimate goal of which, for some unknown reason, or for no reason at all, is to take up residence in particular people and settle there for eternity. This view renders the origin of love divine and its object natural: which, in my view, is the exact opposite of the truth.

The Life of Reason, the work in which the aforementioned chapter on love is found, seems to me today arrogant, pedantic, long-winded, superficial, positivist and philistine. It was the elaboration of the notes of a course that I was giving then, and it shows. In places, however, it was not so bad, for example in my naturalistic interpretation of Adam's fall or in the descriptions of the amorous emotions of various animals, corresponding to the various forms of their sexual life (like a fish incapable of coitus, released from all obligation towards its young, which it never sees or distinguishes from the occasional swimmers that dart its way—such a fish cannot have the instincts, perceptions, or emotions that belong to the animals that protect, nurture, and educate their offspring).

Why are the sexual passions in man under such a cloud? Why do so many conventional barriers drive them into hiding? Why do the frank passions of youth arouse grimaces of horror everywhere, accompanied by *rumores senum severiorum*⁵ and with so much hypocrisy and insistence on restraint? Why is a pleasure so necessary the subject of a thousand coarse jokes and innuendos? I had a scientific explanation, simple in principle but complicated in detail: the psychic organization of man, in becoming more complex, also became less stable. His sexual instinct, instead of being intermittent (though arriving violently and boldly) as in other mammals (the great apes apart, it seems), became practically constant. But for this very reason it gets entangled in the crosscurrents of all sorts of needs and desires and it compromises the regular functioning of other equally imperfect and unstable adaptations. The instinctive impulse tends to become excessive and demanding; it can be artificially excited, stimulated in an inappropriate context, and interfere with other activities. The senses, a seething imagination, language, pride—everything can arouse the sexual instinct—because all these forces act at the same time on a common

What is original sin?

⁴ Santayana is probably referring to the "Metaphysics of Love," chapter XLIV of the supplements to *The World as Will and Representation* (Ed. note)

⁵ rumors of severe old age (Catullus 5,2—Ed.)

terrain de jeu commun où leurs incitations s'entremêlent. Étant une sorte d'impératif catégorique de la nature, l'instinct sexuel déborde constamment de ses occasions appropriées et empiète sur celles des autres instincts. Je spéculais que ce sont ces dissensions qui sont à l'origine de la condamnation sociale d'une chose qui est en elle-même parfaitement innocente. On érige des digues pour la contenir et l'on fixe des limites externes et arbitraires à son action : une guerre entre la nature et la morale éclate dans la société et dans chaque poitrine—une guerre perpétuelle dans laquelle chaque victoire est une affliction et chaque défaite un déshonneur.

Banni de la vie à l'air libre, couvert d'opprobre et de moqueries, publiquement ignoré, le plaisir inéluctable de la chair se développe pourtant à la dérochée dans les recoins sombres et secrets de l'âme. Sa présence familière là où l'on est le plus soi-même, contribue à scinder le monde en deux. Dans le mysticisme qui ne peut masquer ses affinités érotiques, cette dislocation atteint une forme absolue. Freud, que je n'avais pas lu à cette époque, dit des choses assez proches et considère comme un terrible malheur le fait que l'homme n'ait pu acquérir ses fonctions supérieures sans déranger les inférieures. Rien, hormis la doctrine officielle de l'Église, qui restreint le terme aux penchants de la chair, ne s'oppose à ce qu'on appelle ce dérangement congénital « péché originel ». L'enseignement gnostique sur la Chute, sans être incompatible avec mon interprétation scientifique, me semble cependant plus profond. Le fruit défendu qui pousse sur l'arbre de la connaissance n'est ni la connaissance à proprement parler, ni le sexe en tant que tel, mais quelque chose de plus général que j'ai vu appeler quelque part (était-ce chez Freud ?) « la structure érotique de la désobéissance ». Hume l'avait dit : « nous désirons naturellement ce qui est défendu et prenons plaisir à accomplir des actions uniquement parce qu'elles sont illicites ».⁶ La faute d'Eve et d'Adam se présente alors comme une diabolique rébellion contre l'obéissance à un commandement, simplement parce que c'est un commandement. En ce sens, l'orgueil est bel et bien *radix omnium malorum*³⁸.

Je peinais à comprendre le texte du livret de la *Götterdämmerung*, malgré l'excellente acoustique de la salle ; ma surdité n'était pas seule en cause : tous les chanteurs sauf Siegfried et Brünnhilde étaient italiens. La

**Retour au Crépuscule :
l'Oiseau-prophète**

mise en scène desservait la musique, comme souvent chez Wagner, frisant parfois le grotesque : lorsque Brünnhilde appela son cheval, une marionnette grandeur nature, montée sur roulettes et dodelinant de l'encolure fut poussée sur scène ; le ténor peinait à trouver l'étrier et autour de moi des bruits suggéraient que l'on pouffait de rire, et c'est à grand-peine que je maîtrisai ma propre hilarité. Mais, ah, la musique ! J'attendais le thème de l'Oiseau, annoncé par un passage de doubles croches en tierces rapides dans les cordes et entonné par Siegfried au troisième acte.

⁶ Cette citation est tirée du *Traité de la nature humaine* de David Hume, tome II, Partie III, section IV. (note de l'Ed.)

³⁸ La racine de tous les maux.

playing field where their excitations intertwine. Being a sort of categorical imperative of nature, the sexual instinct constantly pushes past its appropriate occasions and encroaches on those of the other instincts. I speculated that it is these conflicts which are the origin of the social condemnation of a thing which is in itself perfectly innocent. Dikes are erected to contain it and external and arbitrary limits are placed on its activities: a war between nature and morality breaks out in society and in every human breast—a perpetual war in which each victory is a misfortune and every defeat a disgrace.

Banished from life in the open air, submerged in opprobrium and mockery, publicly ignored, the ineluctable pleasure of the flesh nevertheless develops by stealth in the dark and secret recesses of the soul. Its familiar presence when you are most yourself helps to split the world in two. In mysticism, which cannot mask its erotic affinities, this dislocation takes on an absolute form. Freud, whom I had not read at that time, said things that were quite similar and considered it a terrible misfortune that man could not acquire his higher functions without disturbing the lower ones. As this misfortune is a kind of congenital disturbance, nothing stands in the way of calling it "original sin" other than the official doctrine of the Church, which restricts that term to inclinations of the flesh. On the other hand, the alternative Gnostic teaching on the Fall may well be compatible with my scientific interpretation. Yet in some ways it is more profound. The forbidden fruit, which grows on the tree of knowledge, is neither knowledge strictly speaking nor sex as such, but something more general which I have seen called somewhere (was it in Freud?) "the erotic structure of disobedience." Hume had said: "we naturally desire what is forbidden and take pleasure in performing actions only because they are illicit."⁶ The fault of Eve and Adam then presents itself as a diabolical rebellion against a commandment simply because it is a commandment. In this sense, pride is indeed the *radix omnium malorum*.⁷

I struggled to understand the text of the *Götterdämmerung* libretto, despite the excellent acoustics of the room; my deafness was not the only cause: all the singers except Siegfried and Brünnhilde were Italian. The staging did a disservice to the music, as is so often the case with Wagner. It sometimes bordered on the grotesque: when Brünnhilde called to her horse, a life-size marionette, mounted on wheels and bobbing from the neck down, was pushed onto the stage. When the tenor struggled to find the stirrup, noises around me suggested giggling, and I barely controlled my own laughter. But, ah, the music! I was waiting for the theme of the bird, announced by a passage of sixteenth notes in rapid thirds in the strings and intoned by Siegfried in the third act.

**Return to Twilight:
The Prophetic Bird**

⁶ This quote is from David Hume's *Treatise on Human Nature*, Volume II, Part III, Section IV. (Ed. note)

⁷ the root of all evil.

Quand il se fit entendre, je me remémorai la scène de mon roman où le héros, Oliver, qui étudie la philosophie à Harvard (où il suit mes cours), entend soudain à travers sa fenêtre les trois premières notes descendantes du chant de l'Oiseau : *Hei, Siegfried !* C'était le klaxon de la superbe nouvelle voiture de son cousin Mario, que celui-ci avait choisi parce qu'il considérait son cousin comme une sorte de Siegfried, tandis qu'il se voyait lui-même dans le rôle du petit oiseau de la forêt wagnérienne, venu réveiller le héros de ses rêves d'adolescent et lui apprendre une ou deux choses sur la vie.

En l'occurrence, Mario, sur le point de commencer sa première année d'études, aussi à Harvard, vient de Newport pour demander conseil à Oliver au sujet des cours de philosophie auxquels il devrait s'inscrire, puisque le délai d'inscription était fixé au lendemain. Oliver lui recommande le cours de philosophie indienne du Professeur Woods (mais c'est un cours matinal, et Mario ne l'est guère), celui de métaphysique que donne Royce et Platon en anglais : *La République, Phèdre et Le Banquet*, un enseignement « léger et digeste », d'après Oliver, « juste ce qu'il te faut ».

« Qui est le professeur ? »

« Santayana. »

« Bon Dieu, » s'exclame Mario, « lui, je peux le voir autant que je veux en dehors des cours. Tu peux venir avec moi chez lui pour le thé. Si on lui demande quels cours prendre en philosophie, étant donné qu'il peut difficilement dire "les miens et aucun autre", il répondra que cela n'a pas grande importance ; parce que dans tout système de philosophie, on peut trouver quelque chose d'important – à éviter : et vous risquez beaucoup moins de tomber dans le panneau si vous l'avez vu clairement déroulé sous vos yeux que si vous vous promenez sans vous douter de rien, la tête dans les nuages. En outre, il m'a expressément mis en garde contre ses propres cours ; il dit qu'il serait très dangereux pour moi de devenir plus civilisé que je ne le suis. »

Mais revenons à nos oiseaux !

Quel est donc le secret de l'effet de l'épisode de l'Oiseau des bois dans le *Ring* ? Pourquoi le récit de la protection que le petit oiseau apporte au preux Siegfried, associé à la mélodie, d'abord ascendante puis descendante, émeut-il pareillement ? Quand Siegfried entend le gazouillis de l'oiseau pour la première fois, il a l'impression que celui-ci veut lui dire quelque chose dans une langue qui lui reste inaccessible ; mais lorsqu'en récupérant le glaive avec lequel il a terrassé le Dragon, il se brûle la main au contact du sang du monstre et porte ses doigts à la bouche pour en rafraîchir la brûlure, son oreille s'ouvre soudain à la voix de l'oiseau-prophète, qui lui dévoile, dans une langue qu'à présent il comprend, ce qu'il ne peut voir et qu'il doit pourtant savoir pour accomplir son destin : comment récupérer l'Anneau, qu'il doit se méfier du nain Mime qui projette de le tuer, et qu'une femme, Brünnhilde, la plus belle de toutes, l'attend, endormie sur un rocher entouré de flammes.

When I heard it, I remembered the scene from my novel in which the hero, Oliver, who is studying philosophy at Harvard (where he takes my classes), suddenly hears through his window the first three descending notes of the bird's song: *Hei, Siegfried!* It was the horn of his cousin Mario's superb new car. Mario had chosen the horn with those three notes because he considered Oliver a kind of Siegfried, while he saw himself in the role of the little bird from the Wagnerian forest, come to wake Oliver from his adolescent dreams and teach him a thing or two about life.

Mario, about to start his first year of studies, also at Harvard, comes from Newport to ask Oliver for advice on which philosophy courses he should enroll in, as the deadline was set for the next day. Oliver recommends Professor Woods's course in Indian philosophy (but it's an early morning course, and Mario is hardly a morning person), Royce's metaphysics course, and a course on Plato in English: the *Republic*, the *Phaedrus*, and the *Symposium*—"Light and airy" according to Oliver, "Just the thing for you."

"Who is the teacher?"

"Santayana."

"Good Lord," exclaims Mario, "I can see all I want of him outside. I'll take you to tea in his rooms. If you ask him what classes you'd better join in philosophy, as he can't very well say, 'Join all mine, and don't join any others,' he will tell you that it doesn't very much matter; because in any system of philosophy you can find something important—to avoid: and you're much less likely to fall into the snare if you've seen it spread out plainly before your eyes than if you were wandering about unsuspectingly with your nose in the clouds. Besides he has expressly warned me off his own lectures; he says it would be highly dangerous for me to become more civilised than I am."

But back to our birds!

So, what is the secret of the effect of the wood-bird episode in the *Ring*? Why is the story of the little bird bringing a warning to the brave Siegfried combined with the melody, first rising then falling, so moving? When Siegfried hears the chirping of the bird for the first time, he has the impression that it wants to tell him something, but he cannot comprehend the bird's language. He tries to retrieve the sword he used to slay the dragon, but burns his hand as it touches the monster's blood. To cool his fingers, he brings them to his mouth and suddenly he understands the language of the bird-prophet. The bird tells him the way to recover the Ring, that the dwarf Mime plans to kill him, and that Brünnhilde, the most beautiful of all women, waits for him, asleep on a rock surrounded by flames

Quand j'étais jeune, le thème central du Ring avait frappé mon imagination : la lutte, vouée à l'échec, du dieu Wotan pour se sauver et sauver le monde du mal déchaîné par la *libido dominandi*³⁹, dont il est lui-même une incarnation, symbolisée par l'anneau. La représentation de la *Götterdämmerung* à laquelle j'assistais, au beau milieu d'une guerre où les Allemands invoquent à tout propos la figure de Siegfried, oubliant un peu trop sa triste fin, raviva mon intérêt, de sorte que je tins bon jusqu'à la fin. Une fois Siegfried trahi et assassiné, Brünnhilde immolée, le Walhalla réduit en cendres et les dieux anéantis, les filles du Rhin en possession de l'anneau tant convoité et le leitmotiv de la Rédemption par l'amour joué une dernière fois par les violons, annonçant l'avènement d'un monde meilleur, je me levai, fort ankylosé, et retournai à l'hôtel, content d'avoir pris la précaution de commander à l'avance, en service de chambre, de quoi combler le petit creux que des pensées apocalyptiques ne manquent pas de susciter chez moi.

DANIEL PINKAS

Notes du traducteur

Voici une brève anecdote :

Lorsque j'ai visité Auschwitz en 2006, il y avait près de l'entrée, une fois passé le célèbre signe incorporé dans l'arche métallique au-dessus de la porte qui dit "Arbeit Macht Frei", deux panneaux imprimés avec une citation attribuée à Santayana. L'un, en polonais, disait "Któż nie pamięta historii skazany na jest na jej ponowne przeżycie". L'autre, en anglais, disait quelque chose comme "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it." Il y avait donc là la phrase la plus connue de Santayana dans des termes qui n'étaient pas les siens. On aurait dit une traduction en anglais à partir du polonais. (Une version plus récente du panneau anglais est presque identique à l'original).

En traduisant cette sélection d'Un Hôte de Passage de Daniel Pinkas, quelque chose m'a fait penser à ces panneaux. Il y a un passage où Santayana se rappelle quelque chose de The Last Puritan. Certains passages en français étaient déroutants, j'ai donc cherché ce que Santayana avait écrit dans le roman et j'ai découvert que dans au moins un paragraphe, Pinkas semblait traduire directement à partir du texte du roman. Ma traduction était une paraphrase de l'écriture originale de Santayana. J'ai écrit à Pinkas pour lui demander s'il voulait suggérer que Santayana se souvenait imparfaitement de son roman de sorte qu'il n'était pas nécessaire que la formulation soit exacte. Il m'a répondu que nous devons utiliser les termes originaux de Santayana.

Néanmoins, à un autre endroit des carnets, Santayana repense à ce qu'il a écrit sur l'amour dans Reason in Society. Ici, Pinkas insère des réflexions de son cru et, dans ce cas, une paraphrase de Reason in Society semblait préférable à une citation. En outre, Reason in Society avait été publié trente ans avant la date de ces carnets imaginaires, alors que The Last Puritan ne l'avait été que quatre ans plus tôt, ce qui rend plus probable que Santayana ait eu un exemplaire à portée de main, qu'il se soit souvenu exactement de ce qu'il avait écrit, ou peut-être simplement qu'il ait eu à cœur de préserver le texte de son roman en rédigeant ses notes en français.

³⁹ Volonté de puissance, *Wille zur Macht*

When I was young, the central theme of the Ring had captured my imagination: the doomed struggle of the god Wotan to save himself and the world from the evil unleashed by the *libido dominandi*,⁸ a force symbolized by the ring and of which he himself is an incarnation. Attending the performance of the *Götterdämmerung* right in the middle of a war in which the Germans constantly invoke the figure of Siegfried, somewhat forgetting his wretched fate, revived my interest, so that I held on until the end. Finally, with Siegfried betrayed and assassinated, Brünnhilde immolated, Valhalla reduced to ashes and the gods annihilated, the Rhine maidens in possession of the coveted ring, and the leitmotif of redemption by love played one last time by the violins to announce the advent of a better world, I got up, very stiff, and returned to the hotel. I was happy to have taken the precaution of ordering in advance, from room service, something to satisfy the appetite apocalyptic thoughts never fail to arouse in me.

DANIEL PINKAS

translated by Richard M Rubin
with the help of Google Translate,
Linda Eastman, and the author

Translator's notes

Here's a brief story:

When I visited Auschwitz in 2006, near the entrance, somewhere past the famous sign wrought into the wire metal arch over the gate that says "Arbeit Macht Frei," there were two printed signs with a quotation attributed to Santayana. One, in Polish, said "Któż nie pamięta historii skazany na jest na jej ponowne przeżycie." The other one, in English, said something like, "Those who forget history are doomed to repeat it." There was Santayana's most well-known saying in words that were not his. It seemed to be a translation back into English from the Polish. (A more recent version of the English sign is almost the same as the original.)

In translating this selection from Daniel Pinkas's Un Hôte de Passage, one thing reminded me of those signs. There is a section where Santayana recalls something from The Last Puritan. Some passages in the French were confusing, so I looked up what Santayana had written in the novel and found that in at least one paragraph Pinkas appeared to translate directly from the text of the novel. My translation was a paraphrase of Santayana's original writing. I wrote to Pinkas to ask whether he meant to suggest that Santayana was remembering his novel imperfectly, so the wording need not be precise. He replied that we should use Santayana's original words.

Nevertheless, in another place in the notebooks, Santayana thinks back to what he wrote about love in Reason in Society. Here Pinkas interjects some reflections of his own invention and so, in this case, a paraphrase of Reason in Society seemed better than a precise quotation. Furthermore, Reason in Society was published thirty years before the date of these imagined notebooks, whereas The Last Puritan was published only four years earlier, making it more likely that Santayana had a copy handy, remembered exactly what he had written, or perhaps just cared to preserve the text of his novel in making his notes in French.

⁸ Will to Power

Are Metaphysics and Naturalism Contradictory? Santayana's Temperamental Objection to Metaphysics

In his review of John Dewey's *Experience and Nature*, Santayana asks: "In what sense is [Dewey's naturalistic metaphysics] naturalistic? In what sense is it metaphysical? How comes it that these two characters (which to me seem contradictory) can be united in this philosophy?" (DNM 674) On the face of the matter, metaphysical naturalism seems to be a perfectly conceivable and reasonable position. Spinoza's metaphysics comes to mind, or the atomism of Democritus and Epicurus, but so do a host of contemporary positions that equate nature with all of existence and its reality with that which is scientifically discoverable. So, it is not obvious, *prima facie*, why metaphysics and naturalism should appear, to Santayana, to be contradictory.

There is, admittedly, a conceptual tension between Santayana's specific definitions of *naturalism* and *metaphysics*, as I will show, but not an obvious logical contradiction. The ultimate opposition that Santayana identifies in his review of Dewey's work is actually not conceptual so much as temperamental—a case of humility versus arrogance. By a temperamental opposition, I mean that Santayana describes naturalism and metaphysics as expressing contradictory dispositions or attitudes about the relation between human intelligence and natural existence. More specifically, Santayana sees in naturalism a humility regarding our epistemological powers and capacities, and in metaphysics (or, as I will show, a certain form of metaphysics), an arrogant assimilation of existence into human conceptual frameworks.

My aim in examining Santayana's assumption about the temperamental incompatibility of naturalism and metaphysics is twofold. First, I show that, contrary to Santayana's claim, the two concepts need not be contradictory, and, in fact, Santayana does not really treat them as such, at least insofar as we might think of metaphysics as equivalent to speculative philosophy. Ultimately, Santayana's antipathy toward metaphysics is an objection to philosophical humanism and, more specifically, to what he called transcendentalism or psychologism. Second, I argue that much of what goes by the name *naturalism* in academic circles today fails to be naturalism in this temperamental sense of epistemological humility. Ultimately, Santayana's treatment of the contradictory nature of metaphysics and naturalism can be used to affirm the worth of naturalistic metaphysics against today's scientific naturalisms that equate nature with our theoretical interpretations of it.

Naturalism versus Metaphysics

To address the apparent incongruity of naturalism and metaphysics (terms Dewey himself uses to characterize his system), Santayana first explains his own sense of *naturalism* as implying a philosophical rendition of commonplace beliefs about the existing world. The everyday natural attitude, he claims, treats reality as made up of substantial entities and processes that have the power to affect us and one another in various ways, and its philosophical version describes and catalogs nature's salient features as a means of coming to terms with them and with one's place in the broader scheme of things. According to naturalism, then, the objects one comes across are taken to be things in their own right rather than mere objects for the experienter. Though a naturalist philosophy may describe subjective conditions and empirical objects and even treat them as real in some sense (thus naturalism need not imply either a reductive or eliminative materialism), "any immaterial things which are recognized shall be regarded as names, aspects, functions, or concomitant products of those physical things among which action goes on. A naturalist may distinguish his own person or self, provided he identifies himself with his body and does not assign to his soul any fortunes, powers, or actions save those of which his body is the seat and organ" (DNM 674). Essentially, the aspect of naturalism that renders it incompatible with metaphysics, for Santayana, is its refusal to grant causal power to subjective existence and its ideal or phenomenal objects. Naturalism treats the physical world as substantial and experience as ultimately rooted in, and generated by, physical substances and their processes.

Santayana asserts that naturalism will "break down, however, so soon as words, ideas, or spirits are taken to be substantial on their own account, and powers at work prior to the existence of their organs, or independent of them. Now it is precisely such disembodied powers and immaterial functions prior to matter that are called metaphysical" (DNM 674). Metaphysics, according to Santayana, turns ephemeral ideas into things, giving them both power and weight that, he thinks, they cannot be said to possess, and thus "[t]o admit anything metaphysical in this sense is evidently to abandon naturalism" (DNM 674). So, if metaphysics is equated with the hypostatization of that which is immaterial, there can be, by definition, no materialist metaphysics. This would be puzzling, on the face of it, since it seems relatively uncontroversial to call a position regarding the basic nature of reality a metaphysical one. But, it becomes clearer when we see that Santayana reserves the term *metaphysics* for a particular interpretation of reality, or rather, a particular kind of focus on and appropriation of it. He labels this emphasis a "dominance of the foreground" and claims that "[i]f such a foreground becomes dominant in a philosophy naturalism is abandoned." By *foreground*, Santayana means that which is "relative to some chosen point of view, to the station assumed in the midst of nature by some creature tethered by fortune to a particular time and place" (DNM 678-9), in other words, to the way that some aspect of nature is experienced by a living being. Attention to the foreground is not, by itself, a commitment to metaphysics, for the way things seem to individuals is the subject matter of many a gifted poet and literary figure, and a naturalist thinker may well be given to express her own sense of nature's

appearing. The foreground becomes dominant and the philosophy metaphysical only when the human point of view is treated as ultimate.

The metaphysical move, as Santayana sees it, is to make a science out of a subject matter proper to literary expression. He claims in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* that metaphysics is “dialectical physics,” namely, “an attempt to determine matters of fact by means of logical or moral or rhetorical constructions” (SAF vii). Because metaphysics conflates two ostensibly distinct means of human engagement with the world—dialectics and physics—it thus similarly conflates their subject matter, and immediate objects of human attention become substantial realities. A metaphysical method is thus “a hybrid of [physical speculation, pure logic, and honest literature], materialising ideal entities, turning harmonies into forces, and dissolving natural things into terms of discourse” (SAF vii). Metaphysics, by Santayana’s lights, is a confused methodology that forges monstrosities in the style of Doctor Moreau, and this makes clear that Santayana does not describe metaphysics in order to praise it. His argument is not just that metaphysics is incompatible with naturalism, but that it is a “half-hearted” and short-sighted philosophical approach (DNM 680).

The characterization of metaphysics as a philosophy of the foreground in which experience and its objects become hypostatized also exposes the fact that the object of Santayana’s criticism is not speculative philosophy in general but, more specifically, German idealism and its offshoots. That Santayana aims at transcendentially-oriented philosophies is evinced by his identifying as *natural philosophy* other ostensibly metaphysical positions, such as those of Spinoza, the Greek naturalists, and even Indian mysticism. These sorts of systems, thanks to their denigration of the foreground, amount to “speculative insight” (DNM 679) about the natural world and are not metaphysics but cosmology (SAF viii). By contrast, he claims that a dominant foreground “has always been the source of metaphysics” and is “the soul of transcendentalism and also of empiricism” (DNM 679). It may seem odd to sweep the work of thinkers such as Aristotle into this category (though Santayana does) (SAF vii) and to link that explicitly anti-metaphysical philosophy, empiricism, to both transcendentalism and metaphysics in general. So, Santayana clearly does not mean to provide a dispassionate account of first philosophy but instead produce a contortion of *metaphysics* to fit his agenda against what he called the egotism of German and German-influenced philosophy. The empiricism Santayana likely has in mind is not that of Hume or Locke (who were each happy to suggest a nature transcendent to human ideas) but the radical empiricism of William James, which he then unjustly reads back into Hume (such as when he mockingly supposes that Hume, for all “his corpulence, was nothing but a train of ideas”) (SAF 200).¹ Ultimately, Santayana sees in James, Emerson, Dewey, and others the spirit of a philosophical approach he considers egocentric in its nullification of mind-independent reality, and this reification of lived experience he then equates, in a chastising manner, with metaphysics.

¹ For a more sustained analysis of Santayana’s treatment of Hume, see my “Corpulent or a Train of Ideas? Santayana’s Critique of Hume” (Wahman 2007).

Natural Humility and Humanistic Hubris

Santayana's characterization of the temperamental opposition between naturalism and metaphysics is, in actuality, indicative of an argument between naturalism and humanism, where the former is said to minimize human significance in relation to nature while the latter inflates it. While the term *humanism* has many meanings and connotations, as a philosophical position it emphasizes the significance and centrality of human endeavors.² In other words, it places human beings—their concerns and aspirations—in the foreground of philosophical subject matter with nature as the environmental backdrop. Santayana tacitly equates metaphysics with philosophical humanism when he calls it a philosophy of the foreground, and it is this particular kind of attention to the human that Santayana characterizes as arrogant. Once metaphysics is identified with the humanistic temperament, there cannot, by this light, be a truly naturalist metaphysics. This is because, instead of treating nature as the ultimate reality of which we humans are a part and within which we are ultimately subsumed, the humanistic metaphysician, according to Santayana, reduces nature to a mere implement in the service of human life or, as he puts it, to a story.

Santayana's argument with Dewey's claim to a naturalistic metaphysics is not, as we have seen, primarily a logical concern but instead a temperamental—and even moral—one.³ Santayana is not ultimately claiming that Dewey's reasoning is flawed, though he does carefully argue that a naturalistic position posits different sorts of objects and relations than one attending to the human foreground. Ultimately, Santayana accuses metaphysics—including Dewey's—of arrogance and of unjustly inserting the actualities of human experience into the very engine of existence. The centrality of human perspectives and powers in Dewey's philosophy rankles Santayana's own sense of humility and even piety towards the natural world. Santayana's criticism of metaphysics, therefore, is of a piece with the general philosophical argument between naturalism and humanism, a dispute over the significance of human experience, energies, and efforts in the grand scheme of existence.

The problem, as Santayana sees it, with humanistic approaches such as Dewey's is that “natural events are conceived to be compounded of such qualities as appear to human observers, as if the character and emergence of these qualities had nothing to do with the existence, position, and organs of those observers.” In other words, Santayana thinks Dewey reduces nature to the human experience of it without regard to the material conditions productive of it. Nature's aspects and elements are nothing but “appearances integrally woven into a panorama entirely relative to human discourse. Naturalism could not be more romantic: nature here is not a world but a story” (DNM 680). Dewey's position, Santayana claims, reduces nature to a narrative, making it nothing more than what human beings say it is. By contrast,

² Several dictionary definitions include the philosophical connotation of the term (Oxford Languages, Merriam Webster, etc.), but Wikipedia summarizes the philosophical position especially well (Wikipedia 2022).

³ As Richard Rubin similarly notes, the dispute between Santayana and Dewey is not a disagreement about facts but a difference in “moral emphasis” (Rubin 2020, 75).

naturalism might assert that, while nature is the ultimate *object* of a variety of stories about it, it nonetheless overflows all such tales in complexity and possibilities, and its various features are not determined by how we depict it.

Santayana's critical sense of humanism is echoed by Simone de Beauvoir (though Beauvoir hardly means this as a criticism), where she states, "[t]he idea that defines all humanism is that the world is not a given world, foreign to man, one to which he has to force himself to yield from without. It is the world willed by man, insofar as his will expresses his genuine reality" (Beauvoir 1976, 17) For the humanist, then, the world is one of human making, ultimately to be molded by our interpretations, choices, and actions. As such, experience becomes both epistemologically and ontologically prior to physical existence (the latter being a specific sort of conception of experienced reality), while, for the naturalist, it is only epistemologically prior in that the order of discovery is not the order of origination. According to Santayana, the naturalist, in recognizing this discrepancy, treats "the inner processes of matter with respect and not with *transcendental arrogance*" (DNM 686-7, my italics). The arrogance, according to Santayana, lies in the illusion that the world is a friendly home for human interests. Humanists "can henceforth believe they are living in a moral universe that changes as they change, with no sky lowering over them save a portable canopy which they carry with them on their travels" (DNM 686).

The assertion that the metaphysical devotee of the foreground has made nature into a "home vista" in line with human morals and interests may explain Santayana's inclusion of Aristotle in the category of metaphysicians rather than cosmologists. Santayana's criticism here resembles Spinoza's reproof in the *Ethics* of teleological explanation, where he claims men believe "that all things in Nature are like themselves in acting with an end in view," a supposition Spinoza then rejects as nothing more than superstition and "ingrained prejudice" (Spinoza 1982, 57-8). It is likely not only the ontological priority of form to matter but the teleology in Aristotle's metaphysics—the belief that all of nature is goal-oriented and in line with human values—that makes Santayana label him a purveyor of "dialectical physics," in the same camp with transcendental philosophers.

Naturalist cosmology, in contrast with humanistic metaphysics, de-emphasizes experience as one organic production among many. Santayana reduces experience to a sort of necessary illusion and intellectual discourse about it to literary psychology, or, "the art of imagining how [animals] feel and think" (SAF 252). Basically, the temperament that inspires this diminution of the human perspective is one of humility and piety toward nature, as when Santayana claims that naturalists like himself, "heartily despising the foreground, have fallen in love with the greatness of nature and have sunk speechless before the infinite" (DNM 679). The modest naturalist, in other words, recognizes her relative insignificance when compared to the immense scope of natural existence. Naturalists see us as late comers on a small planet in an unimaginably vast universe that is largely indifferent to our (or anything's) welfare. The world is not our home and is not wedded to our way of seeing things. As Santayana notes, "nature laughs at our dialectic and goes on living in her own way" (DNM 682). Human logical functions, he explains, do not dictate the unfolding of existence; rather, logic simply makes explicit those forms of animal

inference that effectively accommodate the human psyche to the flux of natural processes. We succeed in living in the world only to the extent that our experience can fit the ways of physical reality. The naturalist who opposes herself to humanism, then, is criticizing humanism for its alleged anthropocentrism, its focus on the foreground of human experience and on human well-being and progress as a driving force in, and even concern of, nature.

From the point of view of the humanist, by contrast, Santayana's version of naturalism presents a disposition of needless diffidence. John Dewey, in his response to the review of his book, notes Santayana's focus on temperament and correctly observes that Santayana thinks Dewey's "empiricism" makes him a "speculative egotist" (Dewey 1927, 62). Dewey responds with the rejoinder that "Santayana . . . is confident that a whole-hearted naturalism is inarticulate, a kneeling, before the unknowable and an adjuration [sic] of all that is human" (Ibid. 58).⁴ In an ironic twist, he accuses Santayana of separating human life from nature and of making subjective experience effectively unnatural. From Dewey's point of view, then, Santayana's naturalism entails an utter dismissal of human concerns and a surrender in adoration of that which cannot be understood. The humanist is not an arrogant narcissist; instead, Santayana is a bowing and scraping penitent to a transcendent deity.

In actuality, matters are not quite as either Santayana or Dewey have made them appear. The concepts *naturalism* and *humanism* are not so easily teased apart; it is probably not the case that humanists are egomaniacs nor naturalists shame-faced sycophants; and, in the end, Dewey's naturalist metaphysics is not actually self-contradictory. As Dewey notes, "[t]here is no word in the history of thought which carries more varied meanings than 'nature'; naturalism shares in its diverse significations" (Dewey 1927, 57). There are naturalistic humanisms, such as Dewey's, and humanistic naturalisms, such as Santayana's. (Nora Horvath offers that Santayana's own stated humanism is "something cultural [rather than metaphysical], an attitude that appreciates [the] humanities as well as the natural world") (Horvath 2019, 90). There are assertions that humanism and naturalism are fundamentally opposed and assertions that they fall hopelessly together in their failure to acknowledge the religious truths of supernaturalism. The differences between Dewey and Santayana, in the end, do not indicate a logical incompatibility between philosophies so much as a temperamental and moral approach to doing philosophy in the first place. While the difference in emphasis between humanism and naturalism is real, it turns out that (as is often the case) the smallest point of contention between largely sympathetic positions has become the most furious—and significant—of battlegrounds.

⁴ Given the context of the passage, it seems clear that Dewey must intend *abjuration* (a renunciation) not *adjuration* (an oath).

Naturalistic Cosmology versus Scientific Naturalism

Leaving aside the pejorative interpretations, then, the difference between philosophical humanism and naturalism can be more dispassionately understood as a variation in focus.⁵ One is more interested in analyzing human endeavors, and thus treats nature as an environment in which problems arise and solutions emerge. The other tends to place human life in the context of broader existence and to view nature as reality's overarching power, the giver of life and the cause of its eventual destruction. As a result, humanism may be more optimistic about human possibilities and naturalism more circumspect. Curiously, this distinction can imply that what goes by the term *naturalism* in academic circles today is actually a hybrid of traditional forms of humanism and naturalism. Even though contemporary, mostly analytic, naturalism tends to reject humanism as insufficiently attentive to physical facts, its own focus on human interpretations of nature—in the form of scientific discoveries and inventions—and its equation of those discoveries *with* nature itself puts contemporary naturalism at odds with Santayana's sense of naturalist cosmology and makes it vulnerable to his accusations of humanistic hubris.

Discoveries about the workings of nature, according to Santayana, will come from scientists rather than metaphysicians. In this way, Santayana's position is very much in line with philosophies that affirm the findings of the natural sciences as truths about nature rather than technocratic forms of socio-political discourse. However, unlike those scientific philosophers who tend to equate nature with scientific accounts of it, Santayana stresses the relative truth of even the most stable scientific knowledge, recognizing that models, theories, and experimentally derived accounts of nature's behavior do not get at the heart of nature itself. As he notes, "science is a part of human discourse, and necessarily poetical, like language" (DNM 685). As a result, one should not confuse Santayana's own philosophical language about nature with the technical terminology of the sciences. When he examines his claim "everything immediate—sensation, for instance, or love—emanates from something biological," he stresses, "[n]ot, however, (and this is another verbal snare) from the concepts of biological science, essences immediately present to the thoughts of biologists, but from the largely unknown or humanly unknowable process of animal life" (DNM 685, fn.). Even though Santayana claims that scientists give more systematic accounts of natural behavior than do philosophers, he insists that a naturalistic philosopher be attentive to the partial, interpretive, and fallible—the *human*—nature of scientific practices and conclusions. In failing to do so, one could argue, many of today's academic naturalists, in their singular focus

⁵ In a more dispassionate moment, Santayana expresses a sympathetic attitude toward Experience and Nature and similarly characterizes his disagreement with Dewey as one of focus: "I agree with him in his own field: the difficulty is that I find that field framed in, in my own mind, with much nearer and much wider realities—the spirit, the truth, and the universe" (Santayana 1939, Letter to Paul Arthur Schilpp, November 26, cited in Rubin 2020, 83).

on scientific knowledge and their equation of scientific truth with natural philosophy, are far more humanist than they realize.

When we consider the distinction between humanism and naturalism in their temperamental and moral sense, then, scientific forms of naturalism, though they claim to reject humanistic hubris, do not fit the bill. They inscribe onto nature one set of stories about it—scientific ones—and treat those renditions (or, for the strict physicalist, one of those renditions) as fundamentally and literally true. Dewey's humanistic metaphysics, with its pragmatic epistemology and experimental account of truth, is far more circumspect about human knowledge of nature than are today's naturalists. Thus, while the truths generated by the natural sciences are a far cry from Santayana's notion of a dialectical physics, the treatment of these truths by scientific philosophy can actually amount to a kind of hubris and thus fail to be naturalism in Santayana's sense of the term.

Santayana's naturalism, in the end, distinguishes itself from some forms of metaphysics and humanism and from any form of scientism. His cosmology may be metaphysical in the general sense of being speculative—and so naturalism and metaphysics need not be contradictory—but he successfully differentiates his position from those of dialecticians, transcendentalists, and scientific reductionists. In doing so, he probably overstates the contrast between Dewey's system and his own, for both thinkers provide a pragmatic account of knowledge and recognize the organic origins of human subjective existence. Any Hegelian residue in Dewey's philosophy is more descriptive than logical, and dialectics are made relative to human practices. In his social focus, Dewey is more centered on the human condition than is Santayana, and he is probably more optimistic in his tone and his sense of human possibilities (though he could express despairing frustration at what he saw to be the state of American affairs). It is likely Dewey's anthropic focus within nature that puts off Santayana and causes him to read the American pragmatist as a mutated German idealist. That said, there is a distinction between Santayana's naturalism and Dewey's humanism, and it reveals the extent to which the articulation of a worldview is as much as moral endeavor as an ontological one. Speculative visions of natural conditions—whether we call them ontology, metaphysics, cosmology, or just insight—say as much about our individual psychological dispositions as they do about the structure of existence. And this, overall, is perhaps what makes even natural philosophy something humane.

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Reading “The Secret of Aristotle,” Part II Causality as Radical Instability

Both editions of *Dialogues in Limbo* close with “The Secret of Aristotle.” The concluding speech by Avicenna¹ claims that theological cosmogonies are poetic and philosophical “parables” (DL 248)—including theories of emanation that, in various versions, were common to neo-Platonists of late antiquity and some medieval Aristotelian Islamic philosophers. (Santayana had discussed the relations of neo-Platonism and Christian theology in earlier writings. Cf. IPR 52-53, 58; LR3 54-55, 79-83, 92.)

Avicenna: [I]n truth it is the pulse of nature that creates the spirit and chooses a few thoughts . . . and a few perfections . . . to which it shall aspire; and the special harmony which . . . the revolving world makes as it spins is the joy and the life of God. (DL 248, punctuation altered).

Avicenna admonishes the Stranger not to dishonor “the transitive virtue within you,” which virtue is love. The love within an individual body—kinetic, dynamic, mundane—is “a portion of that yearning which fills the world with thought and with deity, as with a hum of bees” (DL 248). The analysis of this “pulse of nature” requires a return to the dialogue’s central discussion of causality. That discussion yields a concept of cause—not so much as a force or entity but rather—as a basic condition of *radical instability in material existence*.

Readers of Part I of the present study may recall that I there argued that “The Secret of Aristotle” is a multilayered text the literary form of which is crucial to interpreting its cultural significance. The dialogue can be read as a satire on the West’s reception of Islamic and Arabic philosophy in the guise of a satire on the latter’s reception of Greek philosophy. The text is thereby ironic and ambivalent, if not ambiguous. Santayana’s imagined geography of Occident and Orient in the history of philosophy also led to consideration of the hermeneutic uncertainties surrounding the imagined geography of Ibn Sina’s account of philosophy. Ultimately, though, for both thinkers, Aristotle represents the pinnacle of philosophy through his transformation of prior naturalistic and dialectical philosophy; the fourth century BCE Hellenic world remains key to understanding traditional metaphysics—and, for early Santayana at least, moral philosophy (LR1 18-19)—even as subsequent developments in science, religion, social forms of living, and the arts have a certain priority within their respective proper scopes. Their roughly shared appreciation is what makes both Ibn Sina and Santayana *classic* philosophers in their otherwise quite different historical eras and locations.

How far, and by what expressive means, does Santayana’s representation of the Aristotelian theory of causality depart from the *Metaphysics*? Recall that the preface to the second edition of *Dialogues in Limbo* conveys Santayana’s “regret” that Aristotle, though a naturalist in his empirical science, was still too much of a Platonic dialectician in his theorizing—a critique which Santayana “ventured” to express from “under the mask of a supposed Arabic attempt to discover a secret

¹ In this article, Ibn Sina refers to the real philosopher-physician born during the late 10th century in what is now Uzbekistan and who died in 1037 CE in what is now Iran. Avicenna will refer to the fictionalized depiction of Ibn Sina, whom the Stranger, Santayana’s stand-in, encounters as a “wraith of . . . wisdom” inhabiting limbo (DL 248).

doctrine in Aristotle” (DL, Preface). In Part I, I looked at that “mask” in relation to the theme of Orientalism as critically theorized by Edward Said (1979). In the present article, I examine Santayana’s rhetorical maneuver in terms of its conceptual products. I find that the allegory of rays of interpretation, by way of transforming Ibn Sina’s autobiography of his education, consolidates Santayana’s early efforts at translating Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*. The account of causality that “The Secret” presents can be compared with the reception of ancient Western materialism in late Louis Althusser’s project of *aleatory materialism*²; both the latter and Santayana’s dialogue are late modern attempts at re-envisioning materialism in terms of contingency.

Variae figurae causarum³

Avicenna’s struggle to understand the doctrines of *Metaphysics*—including reading it forty times to the point of memorization, without comprehending it—is straight out of Ibn Sina’s *Autobiography* (AAT 17). As is his acquisition of a commentary from a book peddler, with this difference: the peddler was not the author of the real book; the author al Farabi had died decades prior to Ibn Sina’s birth. The device of personal transmission of knowledge fosters a sense of esoteric initiation; the symbolic exchange is not commercial but a relation of discipleship.

The real book was *On the Purposes of the Metaphysics* (AAT 17); Santayana’s becomes *The Wheel of Ignorance and the Lamp of Knowledge*. The latter’s brilliant metaphor of rays emanating from a revolving lamp supported by the finger of Allah makes an allusion to a Quranic verse 24:35, which in the translation of Khattab reads:

Allah is the Light of the heavens and the earth. His light is like a niche in which there is a lamp, the lamp is in a crystal, the crystal is like a shining star, lit from the oil of a blessed olive tree, located neither to the east nor the west, whose oil would almost glow, even without being touched by fire. Light upon light! Allah guides whoever He wills to His light. And Allah sets forth parables for humanity. For Allah has perfect knowledge of all things. (Quran 24:35, Khattab trans., internal quotation marks omitted)⁴

² Louis Althusser (1918-1990), a philosopher who taught at the École Normale Supérieure in Paris, came to prominence in the 1960s as a practitioner of careful exegesis of Marx’s writings, articulating what can be considered a structuralist approach to historical materialism. By the early 80s, he broke with his own approach and began sketching a theory that he called aleatory materialism, premised on chance encounters rather than necessary processes.

³ Michel Villey, in his *Carnets*, writes: “CAUSE en romain = conditionnement – environment situation de l’affaire plutôt que cause au sens dénoncé par Auguste Comte. // Peut-être faut-il distinguer des αἰτίαι. [...] Variae figurae causarum” (XV.40, p. 324). “Cause in Roman [law] = condition – environment [,] situation of a case-in-controversy rather than cause in the sense denounced by Auguste Comte. Maybe it is necessary to distinguish among αἰτίαι. [...] [There are] various causal figures.” (my translation)

⁴ Aminrazavi cites the following translation variant:

God is the Light of the heavens and the earth, the likeness of His light is as a niche wherein is a lamp, the lamp is a glass, the glass as it were a glittering star kindled from a blessed tree, an olive that is neither of the East nor of the West, whose oil well-nigh would shine, even if no fire touched it; light upon lights; God guides to His light whom He will. And God

The verse itself may be such a parable set forth by Allah. Allah it is, not dialectic, nor commentators, nor the Philosopher, who enlightens. As its blessed fuel comes from neither Orient nor Occident, neither Khorasan nor Greece, the lamp of knowledge described by Avicenna may be illuminated by this verse.

There is a slide in “The Secret” in the use of “principle” from denoting the act of perceiving to denoting the perceived; that is, as “principles in the understanding” or “principle of interpretation,” the four principles are to be thought of “as rays shed by the light of an observing spirit” (DL 238-240). Then, a shift takes place within the same speech, such that the “principles” are what the rays reveal, not the ray itself. Memory, the blue ray, reveals change.

The other three principles, made visible by the other three rays, have nothing to do with genesis or change, but distinguish various properties of accomplished being; namely, existence, essence, and harmony. (DL 240)

The red ray of sense “brings instant assurance of material things and of our own actuality in the midst of them,” hence, existence (DL 240). The white ray is the faculty of “logic or contemplation” which “discerns essence,” while the green ray of love fills the heart with “wonder and joy at the greatness of Allah” and the beautiful harmony of the heavens (DL 240-241). All of this could have been offered as an interpretation of the Aristotelian four causes, and so there would be no need to lampoon the latter doctrine as ignorance; instead a crucial inference is made. The fictional Avicenna says that

memory only, if its ray could spread to the depths of the infinite, would reveal the entire efficient principle, the only proper *cause* in the world; namely, the radical instability in existence by which everything is compelled to produce something else without respite. (DL 240, italics in original)

This leap is significant for it encapsulates in a sentence the trajectory of the long history of reduction of a pluralistic discourse of causality into the modern conception of causation. The only “proper” cause is the efficient. The only ground for this assertion is the premise that the production of change is the proper meaning of the word *cause*. However, that is only the case if we have already restricted the term to efficient cause—a *petitio principii*.

The Stranger is right to ask, as he does twice, whether this doctrine accords with Aristotle’s text (DL 243-244). The reply—“If it is the truth, it must have been his doctrine” (DL 244)—has to be read as a clue Santayana is pulling the reader’s leg. The notion that the Philosopher is infallible is a caricature. We can now appreciate why, in the passage from the preface, Santayana uses the words “attempt” and “regret”; the attempt to find a secret doctrine is described as such because it doesn’t fully succeed. Now, to “regret” the attitudes of others is a curious attitude; it presupposes that the regrettor in some sense identifies with the regrettee. But again, what is regretted is that the positions Aristotle stated do not accord with what Santayana would like him to have stated. This situation gets dissembled in the dialogue. Both the Stranger and Avicenna are strongly persuasive. The Stranger chides the “[a]dmirable principle of exegesis which assigns all truth to Aristotle and absolves

strikes similitudes for man, and God has knowledge of everything. (Quran 24:35, Aminrazavi 2021)

us from consulting his works!” (DL 244). The reply is vivid, but doesn’t address the concern.

Avicenna: On the contrary, for that very reason, we need to consult and to ponder them unceasingly. Why else read a philosopher? To count the places where his pen has slipped? To note his inconsistencies? To haggle over his words and make his name a synonym for his limitations? Even if with some fleck or some crack, he is a mirror reflecting nature and truth, and for their sake only do we look into him. (DL 244)

After Leonard Cohen, we can affirm that “there is a crack, a crack in everything”; rather than take the text for a mirror reflecting truth, we may imagine that it is precisely through the crack in the text that “the light gets in” (Cohen, “Anthem”). Slips of the pen, inconsistencies, and other parapraxes may well be indices of the unconscious or preconscious text beneath or beyond the text.⁵ Moreover, and it is here that the irony at play in Santayana becomes Borgesian⁶, the very reading that the Avicenna character is advocating *requires* the attribution of something like a slip of omission or an inconsistency in the *Metaphysics*. To see how this attribution operates, “we need to consult and to ponder,” briefly at any rate, Aristotle’s text.

The possibility for the shift in the dialogue from the sense of *principle* as a principle of understanding to a principle as the entity to be understood is more than provided for in Aristotle’s Book Delta, which analyzes several senses of ἀρχή (*archē*)⁷ (Metaphysics 1013a). The analysis of *archē* is an instance of a method that has been called *pros hen* equivocity, wherein a core meaning unifies the different senses. In Santayana’s translation:

The common mark . . . of all principles, is that they should be the basis of a thing[’s] being, or becoming, or being known. . . . Hence nature may be called a principle, also the elements of a thing, and understanding of it, and that which wills it, and its essence, and the ends for which it exists. (SM 367-368)

It is clear that where a proper, unifying sense can be found it is preferable to the situation of a disparate plurality of senses. Thus, for example, Aristotle offers primary, proper meanings of the concepts of nature (*physis*, φύσις) and necessary (*anankaion*, ἀναγκαῖον) (Metaphysics 1015a-b). Medieval scholars would argue that there are various ways, too, one can analyze Aristotle’s procedures of prioritizing a sense; Boethius distinguishes *ab uno* from *ad unum*: from one vs. toward one; other variants abound, with how to conceive being as their major concern (Ashworth §4). It is fundamentally important, for our purposes, that Aristotle did *not* reduce the four *aitia* to one primary meaning. “Explanation”—as when classifying them into four “kinds of explanation”—is Santayana’s preferred rendering, but he sometimes used “cause” too: e.g., “the final cause is by rights the best and the end of all the other causes” (SM 375). Approximately two decades separate Santayana’s translation effort from the appearance of the *Dialogues* (Hurt 3-7).

⁵ Althusser’s method of “symptomatic reading reveals the unconscious infrastructure of a text by investigating what it does not, or rather cannot, say as well as what it actually does say” (Resch 177).

⁶ In Part I of this study, I compare Santayana’s “The Secret” with Borges’ story “Averroes’ Search” (Borges 93-104).

⁷ Usually translated as ‘beginning’ or ‘principle’.

Nonetheless, we cannot avoid noticing that the language of Santayana's translated Aristotelian text is at odds with the claims of the Avicenna character.

Or rather: what that discrepancy allows us to see, by functioning as a crack symbolizing a fault-line running through the *longue durée* of Aristotle's reception, is the difference between late modern associations with *cause* (in English, for our case, but similar words in other languages too) and 4th century BCE Greek αἰτία. That is unsurprising, but its import for philosophy is not always recognized. Additionally, the fate of *cause* in relation to Latin *causa* has roughly analogous effects; the process of conceptual genealogy is, but is not only, one of etymology.⁸

The simplest reason why Aristotle did not conceptually reduce the four kinds of αἰτία is that he thought them irreducible. The closest he comes is a remark stating that all causes are also principles.

ἰσαχῶς δὲ καὶ τὰ αἰτία λέγεται: πάντα γὰρ τὰ αἰτία ἀρχαί. (*isakhōs de kai ta aitia legetai: panta gar ta aitia archai*) (Metaphysics 1013a).

Santayana gives this as :

All explanations, too, are equally well called principles: for all explanations are principles. (SM 367)

Ross puts the sentence in parentheses:

(Causes are spoken of in an equal number of senses; for all causes are beginnings.) (McKeon 752)

So does Tredennick, who also turns one of the uses of the word αἰτία and that of ἀρχαί into mentions:

("Cause" can have a similar number of different senses, for all causes are "beginnings.") (Metaph. 1013a, trans. Tredennick)

If, as I think, ἰσαχῶς (*isakhōs*) is derived from ἰσάζω (*isázō* to equalize) (Liddell et al., "ἰσ-ἄζω"), then each of the above renderings, in their way, work. It could be construed hyper-literally as something like the following:

that which is causal-explanatory speaks itself, equalized (in this manner to principle); for, all (instances of) *aitia* are *archai*.

But the proposition is not a definition of what it is to be causal or explanatory, since it doesn't give what is specific to *aitia* among principles; nor is the converse proposition affirmed. In sum, Aristotle does not indicate that the relation of the various concepts of cause to the concept of principle provides a proper sense for the former, as he usually does when making a *pros hen* sort of logico-linguistic claim. He isn't making that sort of claim.

⁸ It is beyond my competence to follow the no less consequential path of examining 'illa (cause) and *mabda'* (principle) in Ibn Sina's Arabic, except to offer a wild conjecture. The seeming preference for emphasis on principles rather than causes in his metaphysics, or ontotheology – and so in effect emphasizing Aristotle's *archē* over *aitia* – reflects a differentiation of the former from the physical sciences and hence also from the art of medicine. Because he was so attuned to issues of causation in medicine, a distinct concept becomes prominent by contrast when the area of research is the metaphysical, that is, the science of divine things (*llāhiyyāt*).

The inferential leap the character Avicenna makes, presupposing as self-evident that the proper sense resides with that attached to the concept of efficient cause, is not supported by the Greek or the Latin classics. A few examples suffice—from pre-Socratic, Socratic, and post-Aristotelian sources.

Pindar's first Olympian Ode from 476 B.C.E. contains the line: "It is seemly for a man to speak well of the gods; for the blame is less that way." Although Diane Arnson Svarlien translates *aitia* as "blame," Myers gives the same passage as "Meet it for a man that concerning gods he speak honourably; for the reproach is less" (Pindar, Olympian 1.35). The rhetoric of reproach or blameworthiness seems to express concern to avoid blame being directed against the poet. Pindar's pretend avoidance of impiety pushes the envelope, speaking in the Freudian form of negation, *Verneinung*: "But to me it is impossible to call one of the blessed gods cannibal" (Olympian 1.52, Myers trans.); literally, "glutton," as Svarlien has it, but the reference in context is to divine consumption of a man. Though Pindar isn't all that serious, the topic is; here *aitia* concerns accusation, not explanation.

A similar sense, in a different rhetorical context, is found roughly a century later in Plato's *Phaedo*. Socrates says he heard a man reading from a book purportedly by Anaxagoras, propounding a doctrine of νοῦς (*noûs*, intellect) as πάντων αἰτιος (*pántōn aítios*), cause of everything (Phaedo 97c). Excited initially, Socrates finds the book disappointing because it didn't explain things in terms of the good and thus

did not assign any real causes for the ordering of things, but mentioned as causes air and ether and water and many other absurdities. (Phaedo 98b-c, Fowler trans.)

These "absurdities" are ἄτοπα, *atopa*, literally, off-topic. Socrates compares the naturalist approach to explaining why he, Socrates, is "now sitting here"—recall he has already been convicted and sentenced to death and awaits the time of execution—"because my body is composed of bones and sinews, and the bones are hard and have joints which divide them . . ." and "the sinews, by relaxing and contracting, make me able to bend my legs now, and that is the cause of my sitting here" (Phaedo 98c-d, Fowler trans.) That would leave out "that which is truly causal" (my translation of τὰς ὡς ἀληθῶς αἰτίας, *tas ōs alethōs aítias*), namely,

that the Athenians decided that it was best to condemn me, and . . . I have decided that it was best for me to sit here and that it is right for me to stay and undergo whatever penalty they order. (Phaedo 98e, Fowler trans.)

The "real causes" (Fowler) are reasons; that is, *aitia* is not limited to efficient causation within the domain of material things, but has to do with personal decisions and collective action in a practical, in this case juridical, context. Political practices precede metaphysics.

Turning from Greek to Latin, uses of *causa* in Roman law were numerous, in nuanced senses, some of them technical, some quotidian, some oratorical; for instance, the sense of a "just cause" (Lewis and Short, "causa"). Cicero can speak on behalf of that sense:

meum fuit cum causa accedere ad accusandum: quae causa fuit honestior, quam . . . (Cicero, Against Verres 2.1.21)

Yonge translates:

It was my business to act as accuser only if I had a good cause. What cause was ever juster ...

What cause was ever more honest than to be constituted and delegated as defender of an illustrious province, consulting regarding the public good, and to prosecute and condemn a scoundrel like Verres, Cicero asks rhetorically. Note that Cicero the lawyer is not calling himself the cause, as Aristotle's sculptor, physician and absent ship-pilot, *were* called causes (Metaphysics 1013b). The just cause is akin to final causality and the agents to efficient causality.

Nor, of course, did the variety of uses of *causa* cognates cease; the English language of Santayana's day and our own, preserves and practices a variety of causal concepts. Scientific presumptions sometimes occlude such simple facts. Publication of the newer edition of *Dialogues in Limbo* and a few years later the death of the old philosopher in Rome, both occurred inside the decade or so between the psychoanalyst Lindner's book on the psychiatry of crime *Rebel without a Cause* and the James Dean film which adopted its title, while telling a different story. The film called *Rebel Without a Cause* is indeed about radical contingency and aleatory swerves, but its title is not suggesting that those contingencies lack explainable causal connections. The absent cause here is a privation of any teleological aim or inspiring reason for conduct. The debate⁹ between orthodox Wittgensteinians and Davidsonians on how to divide up what they consider a confusion of reasons and causes must be grasped in light of conceptual history. It is not that "cause" and "reason" ever had each a univocal meaning that later got confused. Rather, a word like *causa* was polysemic from as long as the literary record attests.

It is the problem of causation—the attribution of the noun "cause" to an event A answering affirmatively a question, posed with the verb "cause," of the form "did A cause B?"—that has tended to interest philosophers (Foot 505-506). However, Western languages' inheritance of terms rooted in *causa* reflect a variety of senses developed under the pervasive influence of Roman law. One much debated concept is that of *causa* in the law of contractual obligations. Although in the English common law tradition, the doctrine of consideration supplanted *causa*'s role as traditionally played in the continental tradition of civil law (Lorenzen 621-622), the term still adorns the code in some American jurisdictions. For instance, under §1550 of the California Civil Code of 1872, still in effect, the "essential" conditions for the existence of a contract are: "1. Parties capable of contracting; 2. Their consent; 3. A lawful object; and, 4. A sufficient cause or consideration." Here, object and cause denote two distinct notions of teleological cause or finality. Though "cause" in American contract law is largely vestigial, and *causa* was the subject of jurisprudential debates among civilians in the modern era, even of Roman antiquity it has been said that the word *causa* had multiple meanings within the law of contracts such that "[n]o general theory can be deduced from the Roman texts" (Lorenzen 630).

Stepping beyond contracts, in contemporary American legal discourse there persist generic notions of cause of the sort "cause of action," "probable cause," and "order to show cause," which are operative and not merely vestigial. They each denote a reason or set of reasons for some action or decision taken, to be taken, or not to be taken; thus they have an aspect of final cause. Habeas corpus proceedings

⁹ Cf. Queloz 2018.

supply an illustration of how multiple senses of “cause” may be at play in a given context. In discussing various habeas writs in the English common law tradition, Blackstone uses “cause” to refer mainly to the cause of a person’s imprisonment, the “wherefore” or reason of their caption and detention; but he also speaks of the probable cause for the crown’s judges to issue a writ and of the cause of action of another party against a person detained (Blackstone 3:129-137). In California today, “[a] person unlawfully imprisoned or restrained of their liberty, under any pretense, may prosecute a writ of habeas corpus to inquire into the cause of the imprisonment or restraint.” (Cal. Penal Code §1473(a)). In those cases where the habeas petition is based on a dispute about expert medical, scientific, or forensic trial testimony, the code provides that “If the petitioner makes a prima facie showing that they are entitled to relief, the court shall issue an *order to show cause* why relief shall not be granted.” Cal. Penal Code §1473(b)(4)(F) (emphasis added). In such a situation, it might be said that the judge requires a (teleological) cause why she should not decide in favor of the petitioner’s cause, which petition challenges the cause of imprisonment, on the grounds of, for example, an evidentiary dispute in a homicide case concerning a forensic expert’s analysis of the (efficient) cause and manner of death. It would be absurd to argue that the former distinct uses of the word were not strictly correct and that only the sense of “cause” in attributions of causation (in turn, consisting of distinguishable senses of “but for” cause and proximate cause) reflects a true concept of cause. A non-reductive, Aristotelian approach persists in legal discourse.

“Yes, perhaps, doubtless, but...”¹⁰

To assess the theoretical significance of “The Secret”, I revisit the description given of the one true cause according to the dialogue: *the radical instability in existence by which everything is compelled to produce something else without respite*. Readers of Marx will be tempted to historicize this description in a historical materialist direction: the description’s language fits the tendencies of capitalist production; the mechanism of nature is conceived as reflecting the élan of the factory. More fundamentally, it is a return to, and intense statement of, the Heraclitean *panta rhei*. Unlike pre-Socratic cosmology, however, abstraction is made from all natural elements. The Lamp of Knowledge is not fueled by earthly oil or Heraclitus’ fire. What about the more abstract materialism of the Democritus-Epicurus-Lucretius lineage¹¹ of which Santayana was so fond? The Stranger asks for clarification of the image of the Lamp:

¹⁰ Althusser asks whether Epicurus’ theses, as he interprets them, are materialist and answers himself: “Yes, perhaps, doubtless, but on condition that we have done with a conception of materialism which, setting out from the questions and concepts it shares with idealism, makes materialism the response to idealism” (Althusser 171).

¹¹ The first several dialogues of *Dialogues in Limbo* feature Democritus; Lucretius was one of the three exemplary “philosophical poets” in the earlier study on that genre. Santayana had somewhat disparaging things to say about Epicurus relative to his predecessor and successor; Epicurus’s “decadent materialism” is called such because he “feared life” and, thus denying animal instincts, had a “sickly hold on materialism” (TPP 39, 31, 36). Santayana appreciates however the piety of Epicurus who worshipped with religious sincerity the gods who dwelt in the “quiet spaces between those celestial whirlpools which form the various worlds” (TPP 37).

The Stranger: Allegory has its charm when we know the facts it symbolizes, but as a guide to unknown facts it is perplexing Am I to understand that matter alone is substantial, and that the other three principles are *merely* aspects which matter presents when viewed in one light or another? (DL 241, italics added)

The whole of problem of reductionism is contain in the mere word “merely,” a presumptuous adverb. The interlocutor balks.

Avicenna: Matter? If by that word you understand an essence of materiality, matter would be something incapable of existing by itself, much less could it be the ground of its own form or of its own impulses or transformations But the matter which exists and works is matter formed and unequally distributed, the body of nature in all its variety and motion. So taken matter is alive, since it has bred every living thing and our own spirit; and the soul which animates this matter is spontaneous there; it is simply the native plasticity by which matter continually changes its forms. (DL 242)

Animism of the material, then, rather than materialism. He continues:

Therefore my benefactor boldly concluded that this habit in matter, which is the soul of the world, is the only principle of genesis anywhere and the one true cause. (DL 242)

It is not matter which is the true cause; indeed, fictive Avicenna has already denied the reality of material cause of the Peripatetics; the principle corresponding to the ray of sense is matter.¹² Change and production are the objective correlates of the ray of memory. The true cause is “this habit in matter”; it is *in* matter, not matter itself.

Radical instability, habit, native plasticity: these are synonymous for the true cause, the equivalent of the ultimate source of *kinesis*. For Aristotle the chain of efficient causes is grounded in an unmoved mover, itself conceived according to an erotic notion of final cause. As early Santayana’s translation of Book Lambda (*Metaphysics* 1071a) put it, the model is that “the objects of desire and intellect impart motion in this manner, are unmoved movers” (SM 630). In his translation, Santayana had Aristotle assert the position precisely opposite to that of the Stranger and the fictive Avicenna (as discussed in the first section above); Aristotle is the “idolatrous” imaginer who has lovers circulate around the beloved (DL 242). “It excites

¹² The principle of matter here is that of the fictional Avicenna’s doctrine; the latter is not to be identified with or taken as homologous to Santayana’s system of realms. There is a non-alignment between the allegory of rays and the system of realms, as both the red and blue rays would seem to fit with aspects of the realm of matter; the system and allegory thus appear to be related in the manner of a paradigm shift for which there is no neat correspondence between realms and rays. (Similarly, there is no simple correspondence between the “realms” sketched in 1905 vs. those of the system of the late 1920s-1940s. Cf. footnote 11, *infra*.) The text of *Dialogues in Limbo* itself is unambiguous. The red ray corresponds to the faculty of sense which reveals the property of existence of material things; the blue ray corresponds to memory which reveals change (DL 240-241). If Santayana had wanted to revise the dialogue in the 1948 edition, which appeared after the *Realms of Being* was completed, he could have changed it, but he did not (DL 240-241; Santayana [1925], 184-185). There was no need to do so since *inter alia* Avicenna is not in any straightforward way Santayana’s mouthpiece.

motion even as a beloved object excites motion; and that which is moved by it, moves all things else.” (SM 633; *Metaphysics* 1072b). The unmoved mover is given in the following sentence: ἔστι τι ὁ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ, αἰδῖον καὶ οὐσία καὶ ἐνέργεια οὐσα (*esti ti ho ou kinoumenon kinei, aidion kai ousia kai energeia ousa*) (*Metaphysics* 1072a). Literally, it would be:

There is that which, unmoved, moves; eternal, being both being¹³ (*ousia*) and actuality.

Now, the critical hypothesis I propose and leave to my imagined readers to ponder, refute, or deconstruct is this: Santayana’s *radical instability* is his revision of the unmoved mover. In this transposition to the domains of matter and efficiency from that of final cause, the aspect of pure activity of the unmoved mover becomes a process without a subject. Pure moving; no mover, not even a “that which” as in my above translation. Change happens. The result of reconstituting Aristotelian concepts in this way is a return to a strain of pre-Socratic naturalism, a gesture that repeats certain post-Aristotelian versions of materialism as well.

We are in territory close to what the late Althusser called “a kind of transcendental contingency of the world” (Althusser 170). In an interpretation pairing Epicurus with Heidegger, Althusser compares the former’s atomism and the latter’s *Es gibt*. The essay “The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter” lives up to its title, including the hint of esotericism. Suggesting that even if Lucretius (or someone in-between) invented the *clinamen*, or swerve, it served a structural need latent in the Epicurean atomic materialist system, Althusser leaves this caveat behind, speaking of the “audacity of Epicurus’s thesis” (Althusser 169). To wit:

the origin of every world, and therefore of all reality and all meaning, is due to a swerve, and that Swerve, not Reason or Cause, is the origin of the world. What other philosophy has, in the history of philosophy, defended the thesis that *Swerve was originary*, not derived? (Althusser 169)

He goes on to find echoes of this idea in Heidegger’s structure of given-ness, “the expression *es gibt* of the ‘there is’, ‘this is what is given’, makes short shrift of all the classic questions about the Origin” (Althusser 170). Althusser proceeds in perhaps the most impressive sections of the essay to find resonances of the materialism of the encounter in the political thought of Machiavelli and Hobbes. Epicurus’s/Lucretius’ atoms fall like rain in the void, in parallel; the *clinamen*, itself without explanation, produces an encounter or encounters; and the taking-hold (*prise*) of agglomerated atoms yields a world—or it doesn’t (Althusser 167-170). There is in all of this a “subordination of necessity to contingency” (Althusser 170). Althusser does not shy away from positing a paradox:

¹³ I bracket the frustrating question of the best translation of οὐσία (*ousia*) since it would distract from my focus regarding Aristotle’s sentence. Santayana gives it as “a substance,” which captures the individual character of the form of being in question, but thereby occludes the connection with the line’s *ousa*. So the first occurrence of “being” in my rendering of the sentence is the participle *ousa* and the second is an abbreviation for “the being of individual beings” as translation of *ousia*. “Essence,” another candidate term for translating *ousia*, is apt to be too misleading in a context of Santayana scholarship as Santayana developed a technical sense for the term “essence.”

the encounter ... confers their reality upon the atoms themselves, which, without swerve and encounter, would be nothing but abstract elements, lacking all consistency and existence. ... [W]e can say that *the atoms' very existence is due to nothing but the swerve and the encounter* prior to which they led only a phantom existence. (Althusser 169, italics altered)

The logical relation of these propositions and those in "The Secret of Aristotle" can be discerned. Althusser's positing of Swerve *in lieu of* Reason or Cause at the origin takes one step further Santayana's elimination of three out of four causes. At the same time, Santayana's transformation of causality into a generalized changeableness and event of change, suggests the way that the paradox in Althusser—that the encounter of atoms creates the atoms that swerve and encounter one another—should be interpreted: generalized *clinamen*. Matter is the materialization of swerving; pure *energeia*, without an unmoved mover. Swerving swerves. The return to Heraclitus' fire in its true meaning . . .

That is not quite the path Santayana followed. Closer to his ultimate view is one of his early gestures toward an ontology utilizing the metaphor of "realm":

The divine and the material are contrasted points of reference required by the actual. Reason, working on the immediate flux of appearances, reaches these ideal realms and, resting in them, perforce calls them realities. One—the *realm of causes*—supplies appearances with a basis and calculable order; the other—the realm of truth¹⁴ and felicity—supplies them with a standard and justification. (LR2 124, italics added).

How to square the circle of a calculable order of causation combined with generalized change, spontaneity, plasticity, instability is a challenge, perhaps an aporia, in his philosophy.¹⁵

Concluding Remarks

Radical instability is a conception of pure change. Althusser's unfinished project of aleatory materialism and Santayana's suggestion of a theory of pure change both represent attempted recuperations of pre-Aristotelian materialism. Perhaps ironically, as a satire on the West's anachronistic reception of its own history, Santayana's dialogue pushes the modern tendency of eliminative reduction a step further—by eliminating anything traditionally recognized as a cause. However, Santayana did not develop the suggestion further; indeed, almost as soon as it is

¹⁴ Though in this passage near the end of *Reason in Society* the division of realms is posed as a duality, when you synthesize it with the listing of three realms of being in *Reason in Common Sense* "nature, sense, and spirit" (LR1 83) and the account of "essences" as concretions in discourse (LR1 103-104), the later four realms are implicitly covered. What characterizes the development of Santayana's system, then, is not the discovery of the realm of truth, as it is often said; that notion was already there in *The Life of Reason*. Rather what happens is "nature" is substituted by "matter" in the registry of realms; while elevating "essence" to a realm; and eliminating "sense" from being a realm, instead it is, as part of *psyche*, the surface-boundary between matter and spirit.

¹⁵ Kerr-Lawson suggests that the concept of causation drops out of Santayana's mature ontology altogether (Kerr-Lawson 31-32).

introduced, he has the Avicenna character retreat from the theory of pure change, back toward a prioritization of efficient cause (DL 242).

“The Secret of Aristotle” advises consulting the text but practices textlessness. An imaginary esoteric book substitutes for exegesis. The dialogue thereby represents, with irony, the comedy of modern Western philosophy which, desirous of univocal concepts to facilitate formal reasoning and eager to subordinate itself to modern science, forgets that philosophy is a practice of reading, talking, and living. For modern scientific philosophy, cause must be one, the traditional variety of causality reduced to the modern notion of causation. Santayana’s ontology is designed to be a nonreductive account of the distinct modes of being, and thus recovers a vast richness of vision bearing comparison with some of the classics of medieval and ancient thought; but as for the semantics of *cause*, he is still all too modern.

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DL 1957 [1948][1925]. *Dialogues in Limbo. With Three New Dialogues*. Ann Arbor: U. Michigan Press

IPR Interpretations of Poetry and Religion. Critical edition.

LR1 Introduction and Reason in Common Sense. Critical edition.

LR2 *Reason in Society*. Critical edition.

LR3 *Reason in Religion*. Critical edition.

SM Santayana’s Translation of *Metaphysics*. Transcribed by Austen Hurt from Santayana’s holograph manuscript. <https://digitalsantayana.iu-pui.edu/metaphysics/index.html>

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The Democritean Tradition in Santayana, Nietzsche, and Montaigne Part III

In this article, published in three parts, my aim is to find four ideas associated with laughter and the comic in four philosophers. The four ideas are laughter, self-referential laughter (or self-laughter), cheerfulness, and the *metanoia* from the tragic to the comic¹. I shall refer to these as *the four notions*. I find the four notions in the thought of Democritus, the laughing philosopher, and in the works of his followers: the modern laughing philosophers Montaigne, Nietzsche and Santayana. I hope what I reveal enlightens the thought of each philosopher and also makes clear both the commonalities found among the four philosophers and the connections among the four notions. Thus, the aim of this three-part article is to understand the underlying logic of laughter which is at work in the thought of these laughing philosophers.

In the first part of the article, I noted the relationships between the three modern philosophers that may ignite an initial interest in the topic; I argued for the significance of Democritus for Santayana, and I presented the four notions as expressed in the thought and the life of both Democritus and Santayana. In the second part of the article, I investigate the relationship of Nietzsche and Montaigne to Democritus and probe the evidence supporting the centrality of the four notions in their thought and life.

In this third and last part, I rely on my presentation of Santayana in the first part to reflect on the commonalities that the three modern philosophers share and on the origin of their differences in regard to the four notions. I conclude by formulating the inner logic that governs these four notions so we may unravel the key to the thought of laughing philosophers in general.

Recalling Santayana's Views

Before comparing the relative significance of the notions in the three modern philosophers' thought and life, Santayana's in Part I (Amir 2020) and Nietzsche's and Montaigne's in Part II (2021),² we should briefly recall the main points of Santayana's views of the four notions, and especially his own *metanoia* from the tragic to the comic.

Although there is no disputing that Santayana laughed a lot, there is controversy about the nature of his laughter as well as the kind of laughter that he advocates.

¹ I use the term *metanoia* (fundamental change), which Santayana used in his autobiography to refer to a great change of heart that occurred the year he turned thirty, to characterize a change of view that turns the tragic into the comic.

² For a fuller treatment of laughter in Santayana's thought, see Amir 2019a and Chapter 3 of Amir's *Laughter and the Good Life*. Montaigne and Nietzsche are addressed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, respectively.

Santayana bases his view of laughter on both the naturalistic tradition, taking Democritus as his forerunner, and the spiritual tradition, proving that the two are not antagonistic and may be united, albeit in laughter.

Horace Kallen identifies the laughter of Santayana and Democritus as the commonality of their philosophies.³ David Dilworth, moreover, sees the entirety of Santayana's philosophy as framed by Democritus's worldview (1989). Santayana recognizes Democritus and Socrates as his real masters (DL 1) and locates the roots of his materialism in the ancient materialism of the Greek atomists. Santayana appreciates not only Democritus's naturalism, but also the laughter associated with it (DL 206). Democritus's laughter is scornful and Nietzsche recognized it as such (LE 224; see also TP 21). To Heraclitus's weeping over the human condition, Santayana prefers "to laugh with Democritus" (DL 206) for both naïve and satirical motives that he describes in the third volume of his autobiography. The description of Democritus's ethics hints to Santayana's ascription of his own ethics to the Greek philosopher and indicates the role of scorn in it:

The ethics of Democritus, in so far as we may judge from scanty evidence, were merely descriptive or satirical. He was an aristocratic observer, a scorner of fools. Nature was laughing at us all; the wise man considered his fate and, by knowing it, raised himself in a measure above it. All living things pursued the greatest happiness they could see their way to; but they were marvelously shortsighted; and the business of the philosopher was to foresee and pursue the greatest happiness that was really possible. This, in so rough a world, was to be found chiefly in abstention and retrenchment. If you asked for little, it was more probable that the event would not disappoint you. It was important not to be a fool, but it was very hard. (TP 18)

Santayana recommends *laughter* both as the adequate response to a naturalistic view of the universe laughing at us and as a momentarily self-transcendent spiritual phenomenon. Laughter appears as a burst of spirit and not as an aspect of spirit's material counterpart the psyche, for "it is the spirit that makes human nature human" (RB 776), spirit being "the culmination of life, at least in our planet" (RB 839). Being "the function of transcending the self" (RB 714) or "an intellectual and moral self-transcendence" (RB 751), spirit's alliance with laughter is natural, for laughter is self-transcendent.

Laughter can be used as a tool of liberation, which also enables a partial union of the spirit with the good (see "transition to laughter" in *The Realm of Spirit*). Thus, laughter's main function in Santayana's philosophy is to enable both the liberation from false restrictions and the unification of spirit with the immediate. Laughter's role is primordial in enabling deracination and self-knowledge, which are intrinsic to Santayana's moral philosophy and essential to the Santayanan good life. Laughter liberates because it arises from the recognition of the fundamental contingency of all forms of existence and from the awareness of the potentiality and the liberty which epitomize matter for Santayana.

³ Kallen 1964, 35; 1968, chapter 4.

Self-laughter is a necessity for the philosopher, who cannot afford the ridicule that qualifies others who do not recognize the contingency of their chosen good (SE 160). Because the philosopher is keen on criticizing all the others, he should criticize his own tragic mask as well or even first (RB 713). Thus, Santayana declares in “Emotions of the Materialist” that “the only true dignity of man is his capacity to despise himself” (LE 230).

Cheerfulness or good humor defines Santayana’s ethics, his frequent mood of tranquil, disillusioned, detached, even humorous, spirituality, as Dilworth characterizes it (1996). This “ethics of cheerfulness” sits at the heart of his eclecticism, with his commitments to pluralism, historicity and relativity. The polarity between the ideal neutral or objective understanding of behavior, on the one hand, and the committed and vested interest of particular living beings, on the other hand, which Jessica Wahman notes (2005, 81) may be a source of constant fun and an injunction to cheerfulness. Spiritual men are not necessarily alike (RB 751), yet wise men seem to have something in common, since wisdom is to take everything with good humor, with a grain of salt (ES 11, 14). Echoing Plato, Santayana declares that “unmitigated seriousness is always out of place in human affairs” (SE 6). That means that a sense of humor is necessary for happiness, for “to be happy, you must be wise” (EGP 152).

Both Santayana and his commentators bring up the notion of *metanoia*; John McCormick argues that the comic “sits cheek by jowl with the tragic in Santayana’s mind, and particularly in his old age,” when “comedy and tragedy merge” (McCormick 1983, 10–1) Todd Cronan traces the same evolution in Santayana’s view of art. He notes that “satire, caricature, and the comic in general are not terms in high regard in Santayana’s early writings,” yet he points to a newly conceived “comic outlook,” an “aesthetic *metanoia*” around 1911, when Santayana left Harvard (Cronan 2007, 21, 23). Santayana enunciates the new outlook in the preface to the *Realms of Being*: the best part of our destiny—the tragic destiny of the body—is that we may often forget it (RB xii). A living creature’s “play-life is his true life” (RB xi).⁴ Both Kallen (1964) and Henry Levinson (1990) trace the evolution in Santayana’s thought from a more tragic view of life to one in which the comic is predominant.⁵

Santayana also notes this evolution in his thought. While he explains in his autobiography, “between the laughing and the weeping philosopher there is no opposition; *the same facts* that make one laugh make one weep. No whole-hearted man, no sane art, can be limited to either mood” (PP 156), he still maintains that “when laughter is humble, when it is not based on self-esteem, it is wiser than tears” (SE 97). Wisdom fits the second part of life better than the first: In the *Dialogues in Limbo* Santayana has Democritus say, “Shed your tears, my son, shed your tears. The young man who has not wept is a savage, and the old man who will not laugh is a fool” (DL 57), and he testifies to a deliberate change of perspective in the revised introduction to the second edition of *Reason in Common Sense* (1922), in

⁴ Quoted in Cronan, 2007, 23.

⁵ See also my study of Santayana, Chapter 3 of Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana, (Bergson)*.

which he comments on the book he wrote 20 years earlier: “I now dwell by preference on other perspectives . . . things seem to me less tragic than they did, and more comic” (quoted in Flamm 2001, 19).

Thus, the capacity to appreciate the laughter of nature or the gods, even at one’s expense, increases in the second part of life, but only if one chooses to adopt the perspective that discloses that “it is the thing that jokes, not I” (LGS to William Morton Fullerton, 28 December 1887). That one “is not to blame for the absurdities of nature” was a thought that accompanied Santayana from a young age; however, the *metanoia* that Santayana underwent leads him to recognize that “play-life” is our “true life.” During his youth, he considered it an insult to a philosopher to say he should never be serious: “I am always serious. It is a great mistake to suppose I am ever in fun,” he writes in the letter quoted above.⁶

If it is life that has imposed “the pathetic, the tragic, and the absurd” upon our attention (SB 138); and if the comic and tragic aspects of life become reconciled because they are not contradictory, as Dickens and Cervantes have noticed, nevertheless, free life has the spirit of comedy (SE 102–3). If, in *The Sense of Beauty*, the pleasure in the comic is mixed with pain, we are now asked to meet existence on its own terms, with the adequate response of joy and amusement (SE 141, 144) to “the whole drift of things,” which “presents a huge, good-natured comedy to the observer” (AT, G-2–3, 98). A significant argument in favor of comedy is that it is preferable to tragedy because “the happy presence of reason in human life” is perhaps better exemplified in the former than in the latter (PP 510).

Comparing Santayana, Nietzsche, and Montaigne

We can now compare the three thinkers. I cannot repeat here the analysis of Nietzsche and Montaigne’s views, however; thus, I encourage the reader to read the previous part, Part II, of the article (Amir 2021).

Amongst the three philosophers studied in the two parts of the article, Montaigne stands out for his theoretical emphasis of the significance of self-laughter and cheerfulness and for the actual practice of both. Santayana notes that we refuse to be absurd, even though we are absurd, and stresses that we should not laugh at the way tragedies are experienced by those who suffer from them. I am not sure that Montaigne would have such scruples, especially if vanity were involved.

There is a difference in their laughter, however. The tragic seems to be foreign to Montaigne, but not to Santayana. The Nietzschean experience of the tragic is yet something else; his suffering restricts the levity he advocates. Nietzsche may not have attained the levels of self-laughter and cheerfulness whose significance he emphasized. Although Santayana mentions Nietzsche when writing about the scorn of the materialist, the contempt that Nietzsche’s destructive laughter expresses and

⁶ The full quotation is: “But as to your prohibition to be serious, I consider it an insult to a philosopher. I am always serious. It is a great mistake to suppose I am ever in fun. It is the thing that jokes, not I. If this world, seriously and solemnly described, makes people laugh, is it my fault? I am not to blame for the absurdities of nature.” I am grateful to Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. for attracting my attention to it.

the buoyancy of his liberating laughter may be foreign to Santayana. However, Santayana laughs more easily than Nietzsche, and the liberation which the former advocates seems to be less willful and destructive than Nietzsche's efforts to become who he is. Thus, while all three modern philosophers undergo a *metanoia* of sorts and emphasize the value of laughter for life, the respective sense of the tragic that each has colors his capacity for self-laughter and cheerfulness.

The ways these philosophers view the "evenly distributed property" of absurdity influences how they laugh at themselves (Basu 2012, 10). While Santayana would agree that normal madness involves inanity, I do not know if his sympathy with others on this point is as democratic, warm, and intimate as Montaigne's is. Nietzsche, of course, is even more impaired in this direction, as he does advocate the pathos of distance, which cannot include an egalitarian view of his and others' faults.

Finally, the achievements of these philosophers, and perhaps their goals, differ. These differences color the quality of the respective laughter of each, just as their different sense of the tragic colored their cheerfulness and self-laughter. Despite his affirmative injunctions, Nietzsche rejects life as it is now in favor of a distant and uncertain ideal, while Montaigne teaches us to enhance our love for life by accepting ourselves, and to renounce some things in life only in order to better enjoy it. As Epicurean as Santayana may be, the liberation he advocates involves renunciation as well as distance, for he lives in the eternal.

Self-enjoyment is different for all three, depending on the view of what they are and what is to be enjoyed. Again, the gaiety of Montaigne cannot be surpassed, as he embraces everything, including his own inanity, of which he cannot free himself. The liberated Santayana sides with only a part of himself, however, which necessarily tames his laughter, whilst Nietzsche departs from himself altogether in favor of his "grand-children," the cherished future of humanity which is predicated on his sacrifice.

The Internal Logic Governing the Notions Studied

Laughing philosophers, according to Santayana's student, Kallen, are either naturalists, as Democritus was, or humanists for whom the supernatural was either an episode in nature or an illusion spontaneously woven of human hopes and fears, as it was for Erasmus. Even so, Kallen rightly remarks, "not many take laughter for their signature" (Kallen 1968, 69). I have attempted to show that not only laughter, but all four notions allied to the comic, including self-laughter, cheerfulness and *metanoia*, characterize the four laughing philosophers studied in this three-part article: Santayana and Democritus in Part I (Amir 2020) Nietzsche and Montaigne in Part II (Amir 2021). The question is, what can we conclude from this study? May we generalize and consider the four notions as plausible characteristics of laughing philosophers? Let me attempt to do so by disclosing the coherence of these features when the intimate ties that unite them are unravelled.⁷

⁷ For a fuller exposition of the coherence internal to the movement between these notions, see the Concluding Remarks of Amir's *Laughter and the Good Life*.

First, because laughing philosophers are philosophers, they do not only laugh at others but also at themselves. While the view that laughter is normally self-directed is controversial (for example, Roger Scruton argues that self-laughter is not natural [1987, 169] and Matthew Hurley, Daniel Dennett and Reginald Adams maintain that it is the paradigm of all humor [2011, 131–3]), Avital Ronell sees it as the mark of the philosopher (Ronell 2003, 298–9). Allow me to elaborate on the move from laughter to self-laughter and explain what may be philosophical about it.

In *Inside Jokes: Using Humor to Reverse-Engineer the Mind*, Hurley, Dennett, and Adams make “the twinge of ridiculousness that you feel when you’ve made a mental blunder . . . the core of basic humor”; the “first-person phenomenon” is the fundamental source of humor in their model: “The (first) person both makes the mistake and discovers it. Laughing at others is a more sophisticated development of the funny bone . . .” (Hurley et al. 2011, 132–3). Other philosophers, while not going as far as recognizing self-referential laughter as the basic form of laughter, emphasize the philosophic advantages of this kind of laughter. To take a few examples, John Lippitt draws on Nietzsche and Søren Kierkegaard (1996) to define a kind of laughter he deems existential and argues that self-referential humor can be a tool in self-perfection (1999; 2005); and in Kierkegaard’s wake, Robert Roberts suggests that humor can be a tool for moral growth in virtue ethics, and a form of wisdom: “A sense of humor about one’s *foibles*,” he writes, “is a capacity of character-transcendence; but character-transcendence is basic to the very concept of a moral virtue” (Roberts 1988, 127). Others have argued that humor and self-referential humor are virtues (Basu 1999; Amir 2002). John Morreall, who has dedicated his academic career to foster the philosophic interest in humor, sees self-referential laughter as the most basic and most significant kind of humor (Morreall 2010, 20) as it enhances both moral and intellectual virtues (2009, 112–9). Finally, Simon Critchley views humor, which teaches us to laugh at ourselves rather than at others, as philosophy in action (Critchley 2002; see 2003; Morreall 1983).

Second, self-laughter is best described in terms of humor, because humor is inclusive and compassionate, rather than exclusive as irony or satire are usually considered to be.⁸ The move from laughter to self-laughter that humor represents enables to span the entirety of the human condition, and as we all partake in it, and constantly so, cheerfulness or constant merriment is likely to ensue.

This move cannot be made without adopting the view that humanity is preposterous and applying this notion to oneself. Understanding the ridiculous condition of humankind should lead one to accept one’s own absurdity and find comfort in it: the more ridiculous I am, the more I exemplify the human condition and, therefore, the better I am as a human being. In *The Tragic Sense of Life*, Miguel de Unamuno voices a similar thought inspired by Don Quixote: “One must know how to make oneself appear ridiculous, and not only in the eyes of others but also in one’s own eyes” (Unamuno 1972, 322). Similarly, Kierkegaard suggests that “humor wants to be a fool in the world” (JP 2, 1690/ *Pap.* II A 102), Georges Bataille maintains that it is necessary for the human being “to want to be comical, for he is so, to the extent

⁸ On this point, see Amir 2022, Chapter 2 and Concluding Remarks.

that he is a man (it is no longer a question of characters who are the targets of comedy) without a way out” (Bataille 1988, 169). Along the same lines, the contemporary philosopher Clément Rosset argues that “whoever wants to be earnest is a clown” (Rosset 1964, 144; my translation), because the clown (*guignol*) expresses the freedom of being as being, which horrifies the moralists; for Rosset, what is at stake in philosophy is accepting the clown that we are, and embodying it as we probe the anguish and desperation of living.⁹ And, as noted above, Ronell makes the capacity to see oneself as ridiculous the mark of the philosopher.

Knowing you are being ridiculous marks you as a philosopher or at least targets the philosophical component of your *Dasein*. Being ridiculous is already philosophical, because it implies the act of laughing at oneself. In “l’Essence du rire” Baudelaire defines this ability to laugh at yourself falling (on your ass, back into childhood, forward into old age) as the moment that constitutes philosophical consciousness. What de Man interprets as irony—the philosopher split in two, accelerating time while collapsing on the self—is set up by the fall, which indicates a split between the dumb buddy, on the one hand, and the one who ridicules the faltered ego, on the other. When the philosopher falls, prompting the opening act in the ur-scene of philosophical consciousness, this produces the double effects of ironic consciousness. The subject laughs at himself falling; indeed, the fall heralds the moment the subject becomes a philosopher precisely by means of laughing at himself. The act of laughing makes the laugher himself ridiculous, *sich lächerlich machen*. Thus, while the act of falling is ridiculous, it takes a different frame of reference to notice how ludicrous the fall is, as if it were another person looking at the person falling. Laughing at yourself distinguishes the philosopher from the non-philosopher in the sense that a position is taken outside the self, from which the self, detached, can be observed. (Ronell 2003, 298–9)

Non-philosophers laugh at others, whereas the person who understands that this other is himself and laughs accordingly becomes a philosopher. The necessary distance from oneself that philosophy requires divides the philosopher’s consciousness, making him both the laugher and the butt of the joke. I would add to Ronell’s argument that the immaturity of the non-philosophical aspects of the self are a source of perpetual amusement to the philosopher’s cool and sobering awareness, just as immaturity is the stuff from which comedy is made.

Third, we are not born cheerful, even less so constantly. Only prophets are born that way, at least according to an ancient tradition attributed to Pliny the elder: Zarathustra or Zoroaster was born laughing, as a sign of being a prophet.¹⁰ To the contrary, the common mortals that we are usually need a kind of *metanoia*, which

⁹ For Kierkegaard, see Amir 2014, Chapter 2; for Bataille and Rosset, see Amir 2022, Chapters 1 and 3, respectively.

¹⁰ Bakhtin 1984, 69. Zarathustra thereby transgressed the norm established by Aristotle according to which laughter appears in the human being, the only animal that laughs, not before the 40th day of his birth (Aristotle 1961, V.10, 673a).

often happens not before mid-life, which enables us to exchange our tragic sense of life with a more comical or humorous sense of it.

How does this happen? How can this happen? First, we can account for the rationality of this shift by pointing to a few commonalities between the tragic and the comic: humor is not antagonistic to suffering and melancholy, as Kierkegaard and Nietzsche affirm, and humor research confirms; the history of the genres of tragedy and comedy point to their intimate relationships, and tragic oppositions can be transmuted into comical incongruities.¹¹ The latter point is my own contribution to the field of the philosophy of humor.¹²

Modern thinkers who advance the view that we are ridiculous usually consider our absurdity tragic. For example, Simon Critchley suggests that “the pretended tragical sublimity of the human collapses into a comic ridiculousness which is perhaps even more tragic” (Critchley 2002, 43). Critchley’s assertion echoes the view of Arthur Schopenhauer, deemed the philosopher of the absurd (Rosset 1967), as well as the view of the playwrights of the theatre of the absurd, such as Samuel Beckett and Eugène Ionesco. Schopenhauer writes:

Thus, as if fate wished to add mockery to the misery of our existence, our life must contain all the woes of tragedy, and yet we cannot even assert the dignity of tragic characters, but, in the broad detail of life, are inevitably the foolish characters of a comedy. (Schopenhauer 1966, I, 322)

Commenting on the ambiguity found in Samuel Beckett’s plays, Alfred Simon tells us that “not only are human misery and comicality inseparable, they also are each other’s paroxysm.”¹³ Referring to *The Chairs* as a “tragic farce,” Eugène Ionesco says that

The human drama is as absurd as it is painful. It all comes to the same thing, anyway; comic and tragic are merely two aspects of the same situation. . . . There are no alternatives; if man is not tragic, he is ridiculous and painful, “comic” in fact, and by revealing his absurdity one can achieve a sort of tragedy.¹⁴

In *Immortal Comedy*, Agnes Heller argues that although terming existential comedies “tragicomedies” is a misnomer, it still points to the specificity of existential comedy:

Whereas paradoxes are dissolved in a joke, and this is why it is a joke, they remain unresolved in the existential comic novel or drama. Whatever is ridiculed is also mourned; the thing which has been lost is mocked, but the loss still hurts. (Heller 2005, 97)

¹¹ For elaborate arguments and relevant references for these claims, see Amir 2014, Chapter 3, and Amir 2019b.

¹² The thesis of *Homo risibilis*. See Amir 2019b, and Amir, *The Incongruous Human Being*.

¹³ Simon, *Le Monde*, 27 dec. 1989; my translation.

¹⁴ *The New York Times*, June 1, 1958, sec. II, 3; quoted in Esslin 1961, 101.

It is interesting to note, moreover, that philosophers of the absurd have no sense of humor.¹⁵

But if human absurdity is thought to reveal human tragedy, it does so because we take ourselves too seriously even when acknowledging our absurdity. In Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, the visitor in Ivan's nightmare insists: "Yet men, with all their indisputable intelligence, do take the farce of existence as something serious, and this is their tragedy" (quoted in Kallen 1968, 379–80). The contemporary American theologian, Reinhold Niebuhr, considers that

what is funny about us is precisely that we take ourselves too seriously. We are rather insignificant little bundles of energy and vitality in a vast organization of life. But we pretend that we are the very center of this organization. This pretension is ludicrous; and its absurdity increases with our lack of awareness of it. The less we are able to laugh at ourselves the more it becomes necessary and inevitable that others laugh at us. (Niebuhr 1969, 140-1)

Because we are so serious about our own selves, we see life as tragic in the first place; we are ridiculous because we take ourselves seriously and even more ridiculous when considering our ridiculousness, a tragedy.

If it is true that works of existential comedy have expanded the phenomenon of the comic to territories from which they have been formerly excluded because "they sharpened our perception for a broader sense of the comic" (Heller 2005, 95–6), they did not expand it enough.¹⁶ I differ from those whose view is tragic-comic, including the playwrights of the absurd, in suggesting that as soon as we acknowledge the ridiculousness of our situation, the comedy is over. Absurdity acknowledged is absurd no more. By being aware of the comicality of our condition, we cease to be the butt of the joke. By ceasing to be the object of scorn, we cease to be tragic as well because our comic reaction is due to our tragicity. Through the embrace of ridiculousness, we transcend both the tragic and the comic. We sober up in a lucid embrace of our condition.

This view, which I call *Homo risibilis*, is brought here to enlighten the wisdom that may be gained by the combined effect of the four notions of laughter, self-laughter, cheerfulness, and *metanoia* from the tragic to the comic. *Homo risibilis* becomes active through our acceptance of our very own ridiculousness, whose rejection is the commonality that unites us all. The benefits that follow are far-reaching: contentment and peace, joy and happiness follow this new-found harmony within oneself, with others, and with the world at large.

LYDIA AMIR

¹⁵ On this point, see Amir 2014, Chapter 3.

¹⁶ French philosophy, developed in the 20th century in the wake of Nietzsche, expand our notion of ridicule and of the comical. I am thinking here especially of heterodox existentialists, such as Georges Bataille, but also of the contemporary philosopher, Clément Rosset, both mentioned above. The views of both thinkers on these topics are described along with Gilles Deleuze's views in Amir 2022.

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Santayana's Sublime: The Empyrean of Essence and the Contemplation of Pure Being

the true amalgam of reason and ecstasy: repose
—Glenn Gould

The sublime, going back to Longinus, has had two dominant modes: one purely sensational, as in a can't wrap-your-head-around-it scene of cognitive overload like Poe's "Descent into a Maelström," a short story starring a three-mile wide vortex, like God's own bathtub drain, in the north sea; and one moral, not originated by Kant, but having a full flowering in his *Critique of Judgment* (1790), as the sublime for Kant is not resident in an object; it is not a primary feeling, or a sudden awestruck state, but a creative reaction to a shock, and an inspired expansion of reason's possibilities while, and after, being daunted by something like the oceanic vortex in Poe's story.¹

When Santayana considers the sublime in *The Sense of Beauty* (1896), he (unsurprisingly, given his interests in practical intelligence and the imagination) extends this second, Kantian path, rather than endorsing any sort of sensational thrill or raw wonder as aesthetic. Yet Santayana also avoids Kant's glancing attractions to power, as Kant includes as examples of sublimity: masters of battlefields or other physical spaces, and God as a figure of physical power (Kant 263); Santayana favors a meditative and contemplative response to that which challenges finitude and reason.

Reviewing Santayana's engagement with the sublime becomes a key to understanding how an avowedly skeptical naturalist, one who frequently holds that only matter, not ideals, has a generative function, or one who tends to understand life as "growing from seeds and shifting its character in regeneration" (LR1 23) is also a meditator on essences. He becomes their devoted advocate as they are "obvious and universal" while being neither the source of spirit (his name for imaginative, aspirant consciousness) nor the whole of being: they are the terms through which we experience and understand all of existence and non-existence.² Essences possess "only logical or aesthetic being;" they frame experience, but are no material portion of it; the realm of essence consists of "all possible terms in mental discourse" (RE viii). Santayana has many tortuous refinements of what may seem at first light, portable definitions of this idea; he can make a practical description (i.e., that essences are the terms that characterize experience) sublimely challenging to reach. For example, in the same paragraph he can note that essences exist "nowhere" yet are "visionary equally" whether discovered through sense, thought, or imagination (RE viii). Essences have being, but not existence; a crucial distinction in later Santayana and one that he highlights with language connoting sublimity. This

¹ "[W]hat is to be called sublime is not the object, but the attunement that the intellect [gets] through a certain presentation that occupies reflective judgment" (Kant 250).

² "[I]n its outlook, spirit rests in essences, in its origin it springs from matter" (RE 49).

distinction is not exhausted by the contrast of an idea's presence in consciousness and the brute fact of material existence. Existences occur in a particular time and place; essence is universal, and *its* essence, pure being, makes all essences "omnipresent and identical everywhere." Pure Being "transports" all things and external relations into "a realm of being which is necessarily infinite, in which [the presence of any essence] therefore is no temporary accident;" in this realm of universality, pure being, the presence of essences is no longer a temporary accident, as their existence in the world *is* (RE 48-49).

This distinction of matter and essence helps define Santayana's valuation of the physical world: matter is the source of life, but is unworthy of deification. Matter may be so fundamental to life as to invite such a valuation, but Santayana avoids claiming, as pantheistic visions do, that all instances of matter are divine. Nor is matter definitive of value; spirit is the vehicle of meaning, and therefore of value, and essence its vocabulary. His use of sublime terms to describe essence in *The Realms of Being* (1927-1942), shows how Santayana transposes the sublime from matter (its conventional aesthetic location) to essence, especially to "pure being," the essence of essences—it is the quality, not the substance, of being. By contemplating pure being, Santayana is not denigrating matter, no more than a poet who turns from a mountain to face the sky in a contemplative sonnet denies the substance of the mountain;³ but Santayana describes the awareness of essence as a turning "in the opposite direction" (RE 47) from matter. Matter exists by physical oppositions in "time, place, and the exclusive characters of particulars: being has being by virtue of its universal identity" (RE 49). To contemplate it affords a sublimity finer than any available to pantheistic raptures (common in romantic poets like Byron,⁴ and Wordsworth, e.g.).

Santayana describes the contemplation of pure being the "union, ecstasy, and goal" of religious discipline wherever "spiritual life has been seriously cultivated" (RE 61). So, ironically, given his naturalism, materialism, and frequent differences with Kant, Santayana demonstrates a heart nearer to ideals than to worldly strife in his evolving uses of sublime language. Rather than emphasizing vertiginous feelings, awe, the lordly weight of substance itself, the danger of proximity to abysses, or reason as a power competitive with nature, Santayana focuses on a meditative sublime or what he calls the contemplation of essence. The sublime, already refined by Kant from expressions of horror and awe to an elevation of reason, is focused by Santayana in greater clarity, further detachment, and calm than even Kant affords.

Santayana's emphasis on interpretation (of any experience that might be sublime) leads him to dispense with a rhetoric of wonder for its own sake or reverence for majesty, especially an awe of physical scale. But phrasing (some ironic, but

³ Santayana himself makes this pivot from mountain to a more essential realm in his 1895 sonnet called "Mont Brévent," in which the poet urges a "valley" dweller to contemplate the "perfect peace" in the "being, far from all that dies" above even the "drift of cloud" at Brévent's summit. (LGS 1:144).

⁴ See From *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, on p. 120.

much sincere) which echoes the romantic sublime (an experience of transit and reflection) occurs in key parts of Santayana's *Realms of Being* as he lauds the "infinity of essence" above vast landscapes or religious ideals. Rather than being a diminution of sublimity, this streamlining of its rhetoric and focusing of its proper object allows Santayana to value thought or moral action,⁵ parallel to Kant's emphasis on reason, but distinguished from Kant by a contemplation of pure being. Already within *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana implies contemplation of essence affords more considered moral action, peace of mind, and clarity of judgment than Kant's emphasis on duty or imitation of power; a decent portion of Kant's conclusion is that sublimity should inspire us to get back to work (*duty*, which could mean service, especially military, to the state) or to figure out our own grand plan that might compete favorably with nature's displays (*power*). Santayana's consideration of the sublime from *The Sense of Beauty* (where he treats the idea directly) demonstrates that his definitions of the sublime prefigure the contemplative and meditative emphases of his later philosophy, and how his later philosophy distills the conventional sublime and lifts it above a mere imitation of physical power.

A Brief History of the Idea

First, though, I briskly review the history of the idea of the sublime to bring us back to Kant in the late eighteenth century, as Kant is the primary model and interlocutor for Santayana in his direct discussions of the idea and then review Santayana's first major discussion of the sublime in *The Sense of Beauty* (1896). The sublime for Longinus was a quality of awe-inspiring writing rather than of (as in Burke and others in the eighteenth century) fearsome or rapture-inducing natural views. Theories of sublimity were used by Longinus (Roman, c. AD 200) to value elevated, enrapturing styles of discourse, and, under Longinus' influence, were much later employed by a variety of writers in the mid-eighteenth century (influenced first by French, then English translations) to praise art that allegedly sprang from independent genius or concerned mysterious, supernatural, or otherwise wild subjects, rather than cohering to tidy, neoclassical mandates about art and beauty. In Burke, especially, the aesthetic sublime was relocated from art to natural experiences of terror or awe. Flourishing in contrarian enthusiasms during the English Augustan (rule-bound, neoclassical) artistic period, theories of the sublime laid portions of the theoretical ground for the next generation's romantic ideals of independent, unruly creativity (Monk 4-5). Important to the theorists of the sublime and the later romantic writers is the ideal that a spirit in the wilderness at once challenges and inspires human development. The sublime became a key ideal in the aesthetics of romanticism, but also in the philosophies of Kant, Hegel, and Nietzsche. The sublime experience, derived from a scene in art or nature that is simultaneously awesome, threatening, reason-challenging, and inspiring, is related to any image of the artist as a spontaneous, independent figure fed by nature's inspiration rather than yoked by leading lines to tradition and schools.

⁵ "Thoughts and actions are properly sublime, and visible things only by analogy and suggestion when they induce a certain moral emotion" (SB 149).

As of the early eighteenth century, the term was still associated with discourse that “elevates” and “ravishes” the reader (as cited in Monk 1935, 32). The idea that nature could be a source of sublimity is a fairly recent (i.e., eighteenth and nineteenth century) development. In *Philosophical Inquiry Into The Origin of Our Ideas of The Sublime and Beautiful* (1757), Edmund Burke collated a number of influences with a burgeoning emphasis on astonishment at a natural object, a feeling shadowed by “horror” so that the mind becomes “so entirely filled with its object, that it cannot entertain any other” (Burke 95-96). The influence of Burke’s emphasis on fear aroused by objects is still present in Santayana’s *The Sense of Beauty*, where he refers to the objects of the sublime as “evil,” in the Burkean sense that what is especially wonderful (a glacial vista, the sea in a storm, etc.) may also be indifferently dangerous to life. The sublime would be less interesting if it did not provoke (in addition to awe or fear) a growth-producing challenge. Such developmental challenges are a consistent element across the idea’s history: the challenge of lofty speech to emulate grandeur (Longinus); the challenge of vast spaces to a viewer to persist and thrive (Burke); and the challenge to reason to reconceive its goals on its own terms (Kant).

With Kant (and Santayana) the emphasis in sublime experience shifts from the content of the scene or artwork to an *act* in response to the sublime object; Kant says “For the beautiful in nature we must seek a basis *outside ourselves*, but for the sublime a basis merely *within ourselves* and *in the way of thinking* that introduces sublimity into our presentation of nature” [246, emphasis added]. Santayana refines this line of an action “within ourselves” to claim that there is a stalwart satisfaction in self-assertion against the dangers of the natural event that inspired the sublime feeling (SB 149).

As in his relationship to many romantic ideas (including nature as a source of values, or the power of the imagination to make meaning) relative to theories of the sublime, Santayana is neither windswept enthusiast nor stodgy doctor, but he goes his own peculiar way: he was a naturalist who believed people learn from reason-challenging shocks;⁶ he subscribed to few traditionalist mandates aesthetically, nor was he philosophically (and certainly not religiously) a follower or purveyor of idealist doctrines. Key to his resistance to traditional idealism is his sharp aversion to providential optimism of the “every event happens for a cosmic good” sort (found in Leibniz’s *Theodicy* and famously mocked by Voltaire in *Candide*), related forms of pantheism, or any form of theocracy. With this precis in view, it is plausible that Santayana, as a naturalist, would be sympathetic to the idea of the wilderness sublime, and might have a theory of how we learn from nature’s reason-challenging, daunting surprises at the micro and macro levels. But what Santayana offers is a unique revision, not an imitation, of the Kantian sublime. Despite his naturalism, sublimity’s eventual destination in his thinking is in essence, not matter, and this turn is actually predicted within *The Sense of Beauty*, where his direct

⁶ The word “shock,” connoting an educational jolt, usually coming from the realm of matter, occurs over two dozen times in Santayana’s *The Life of Reason* (1905) and almost three dozen times in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923).

interaction with aesthetic theories of the sublime succinctly unfold. While Santayana does restate Kant's take on the sublime in *The Sense of Beauty*—that it is not a quality of *nature*, but a quality of *response*—Santayana's analyses are not *simply* restatements of Kant's ideas of the sublime but revisions and expansions of those ideas, which I review prior to analyzing the sublime of *The Sense of Beauty*.

Kant and the Moral Consequences of the Sublime

The standard eighteenth-century aesthetic theories were that beauty was intellectual,⁷ and the sublime was emotional.⁸ The key Kantian inversions of this convention were that he claimed: 1) beauty was based on a *universal emotional* response and 2) the sublime is a trained, educated intellectual response, as it is a moral act *after* a shock, not merely a feeling of wonder *at* a shock.⁹ Kant's innovative reading of the sublime is that the significant part of the experience is moral and reflective ("cultivated"), not merely sensory and emotional. It is not *in* the natural event that caused it, but of a rational response *to* it. Kant distinguishes between events that are "mathematical," which are challenges merely of scale that result in reason's conception of physical dimensions, unto infinity, bigger than those given in natural experience; and "dynamical," which are physical threats from forces in movement. (While Santayana seems to be responding to Kant within *The Sense of Beauty*, Santayana does not mention this distinction, and seems content to conflate them). In Kant's aesthetics of the sublime, reason is outstripped by an experience in the world of matter, and then recovers some sense of its own competence, with some gratitude for the educational shock just imparted. In the romantic versions of this experience, this often occurs on mountain peaks, under threats of avalanches, glacial overhangs, or, ice and height aside, on or near the ocean.

There is in the Kantian sublime a joy of self-assertion (a claim that Santayana will repeat), and despite the terrible winds that blow around the observer's chalet (i.e., a point of view close enough to inspire awe or fear, but necessarily insulated from the sublime event), the feeling is pleasant. If it weren't, it wouldn't inspire

⁷ Typical terms of praise in the Scottish critic Alexander Gerard's chapter "On the Taste of Beauty" are "uniformity" and "intricacy" which are "indications of design, wisdom, and contrivance" as pleasant "qualities of mind." (Gerard 1780 36); this distinction of eighteenth-century attitudes toward the sublime and beautiful is noted in Monk (110).

⁸ As a typical example of passion and "enthusiasm" being foundational to early eighteenth century expressions of the sublime, here is John Dennis' analysis that by an inspired transit from a "storm at sea" to the "wrath of Jove," the poet Horace comes at last to something "astonishing and amazing" as "the spirit of the poet rises with his thoughts, which is a sure sign, that the one is *nothing but the passions* that attend the other" (37, *emph. added*).

⁹ "Beautiful nature contains innumerable things about which we do not hesitate to require everyone's judgment to agree with our own, and can in fact expect such agreement without being wrong very often. But we cannot with the same readiness count on others to accept our judgment about the sublime in nature. For it seems that, if we are to pass judgment on that superiority of [such] natural objects, not only must our aesthetic power of judgment be far more cultivated, but also so must the cognitive powers on which it is based" (Kant 2010 [1790] 265).

Kant, Santayana, and their host of predecessors to take up the idea within *aesthetic* theory. Nonetheless, Kant says, the “liking” we have for this experience is not a matter of “charms” (Kant 245). The portion of the sublime that is most valuable is our being called to recognize that “we have forces to overcome any resistance” (Kant 273). A detachment that results in a “languid” response is decadent, “groveling,” and a “false humility;” the sublime is not to be found in “insipid romances” or sentimental moral precepts, but in those vigorous responses that accord with “the stern precept of duty” (Ibid.). Our separation from the material event is premised on the sublime’s being something wild and humanly “purposeless” in nature; the sublime results from a human assertion of duty or meaning as an alternative to the unpurposed material event. Kant thus says: “Indeed, who would want to call sublime such things as shapeless mountain masses piled on one another in wild disarray, with their pyramids of ice, or the gloomy raging sea? But the mind feels elevated in its own judgment of itself when it contemplates these without concern for their form and abandons itself to the imagination and to a reason that has come to be connected with it—though quite without a determinate purpose, and merely expanding it—and finds all the might of the imagination still inadequate to reason’s ideas” (Kant 256).

Kant’s sublime, in both the “mathematical” and “dynamical” modes, is a prime example of what scholar of the romantic sublime Thomas Weiskel called a “negative” sublime, or an experience that begins in awe of nature and evolves into a praise of reason’s scope, as reason takes on a “quasi-theological” import as an alternative refuge from nature (Weiskel 76). There may even be an implied “disdain” for nature in favor of reason (Weiskel 76). The theological character of the negative sublime is that the untamable object so threatens the ego of the subject that it promotes a laudatory vision of a general, stoical reason (as in Kant) or of a providence in and above nature (as in Hegel). What is “negative” is *not* that it is an unpleasant experience, though there is often physical danger in the distance of an event inspiring the dynamical sublime, but it is “negative” in the sense of what is great in the sublime is “not me,” not of the subject, and then the attitude turns in favor of reason (or God) above (negative toward, in Weiskel’s terms) nature.

Parting Company with Kant: Identification with Essence in *The Sense of Beauty*

Santayana, as is his frequent custom, does not cite sources and seldom names precedents in his discussion of the sublime in *The Sense of Beauty*, but his phrasing and import suggest he is responding partly to Burke and, especially, to Kant. Though Santayana refines and refutes Burke’s emphasis on terror as the source of the sublime, he extends Burke’s argument that self-preservation is a corollary of the experience. Burke had claimed, “Whatever is fitted in any sort to excite the ideas of pain and danger, that is to say, whatever is in any sort terrible, or is conversant about terrible objects, or operates in a manner analogous to terror, is a source of the sublime” (Burke 61). Santayana counters that in such assertions sublime fear is confused with the mental rebound and the moral reconsideration that

really constitute it, as it is an “act,” not simply a feeling, otherwise it wouldn’t be a portion worthy of aesthetics, or pleasant, but merely scary:

What we objectify in the sublime is an act. This act is necessarily pleasant, for if it were not the sublime would be a bad quality and one we should rather never encounter in the world. The glorious joy of self-assertion in the face of an uncontrollable world is indeed so deep and entire, that it furnishes just that transcendent element of worth for which we were looking when we tried to understand how the expression of pain could sometimes please. (SB 149)

Santayana’s further analysis resembles Kant’s in some key ways, but Santayana adds several flourishes of his own. The basic pattern of reason being challenged by the material world, retreating, and then re-consolidating its grip on reality and also reason’s ability to conceive events greater than the one at hand—these are the core of Santayana’s version of the sublime, and this accords much with Kant.

Santayana also shares with Kant that the basic distinction of the beautiful and the sublime: beauty is a *sensation* of harmonious appreciation for, or union with, an object; the sublime is an *act* inspired by an object; and Santayana emphasizes that the sublime is an act resulting in reason’s reconsolidation. This similarity becomes, though, the point at which Santayana departs from Kant: Santayana’s reaction to possible sublimity becomes a moral evaluation rather than a specifically aesthetic phenomenon. Santayana uses the language of sublimity to laud a contemplation of essence rather than to invoke force or its imitation; in Kant such an invocation may include a rhetoric of inspired competition of the viewer with nature. Kant says, e.g.,

consider bold, overhanging and, as it were, threatening rocks, thunderclouds piling up in the sky and moving about accompanied by lightning and thunderclaps, volcanoes with all their destructive power, hurricanes with all the devastation they leave behind, the boundless ocean heaved up, the high waterfall of a mighty river, and so on. Compared to the might of any of these, our ability to resist becomes an insignificant trifle. Yet the sight of them becomes all the more attractive the more fearful it is, provided we are in a safe place. And we like to call these objects sublime because *they raise the soul’s fortitude* above its usual middle range and allow us to discover in ourselves an ability to resist which is of a quite different kind, and which gives us the courage [to believe] that we could be *a match for nature’s seeming omnipotence* [emphasis added]” (Kant 261)

There is also in Kant an occasional invocation of stalwartness as the virtue inspired by sublimity: this grace under fire has ancient reverence, because even a “savage” has “highest admiration” for one who “does not yield to danger” but sets to work, in midst of the chaos of battle, “with vigor and full deliberation.” The warrior’s mind “cannot be subdued by danger” (Kant 262). After noting that generals typically strike people as having more aesthetic appeal than mere “statesmen” (one assumes that large hats were key in this historical contest); Kant says, “Even war has something sublime about it if it is carried on in an orderly way and with respect for the sanctity of the citizens’ rights. At the same time, it makes the way of

thinking of a people that carries it on in this way all the more sublime in proportion to the number of dangers in the face of which it courageously stood its ground. A prolonged peace, on the other hand, tends to make prevalent a mere[ly] commercial spirit" (Kant 263). This distinction between a dutiful, vigorous creativity and a languid, sentimental, or "commercial" attitude is premised on an idea of mastery of environments and other beings (even in war) that will be left behind by Santayana, who advocates identification with the pure being of essences, not the mastery of nature.

Kant's conclusion to section 28, "On the [dynamic] Might in Nature," allows us to highlight Santayana's departure from Kant in the analytic of the sublime. Kant says:

Whatever arouses this feeling in us, and this includes the *might* of nature that challenges our forces, is then (although improperly [because the sublime is an act]) called sublime. And it is only by presupposing this idea within us, and by referring to it, that we can arrive at the idea of the sublimity of that being who arouses deep respect in us, not just by his might as demonstrated in nature, but even more by the ability, with which we have been endowed, to judge nature without fear and to think of our vocation as being sublimely above nature. (Kant 264)

Meanwhile, the relation of the sublime to religion In the *Critique of Judgment* is ambiguous, because the typical reaction to the sublime is to re-assert reason's mastery, which could avoid any claims of faith in the supernatural, but as religious sublimity *does* promote "quiet contemplation" and "free judgment," for Kant it may also tend toward the supernatural. One should recognize, he says, a sublimity that conforms with "God's will" and is thereby "elevated above any fear of such natural effects" (Kant 263).

Santayana would agree that we are necessarily, in our humane conception of ideals and goals, "above nature" in our values, as he held that nature, while it was the ground of our being, does not prescribe ideals to us. A typical expression of this conviction is in *Reason in Religion*: "Nature neither is nor can be man's ideal. The substitution of nature for the traditional and ideal object of religion involves giving nature moral authority over man; it involves that element of Stoicism which is the synonym of inhumanity" (LR3 83). Santayana is less interested in an ethos or aesthetic of human force that upstages or competes with nature, as in inspired architectures or theories of reason's ability to master reality than in a theory of essence; rather than force conceived as a world spirit that moves like an ineluctable tide or transitively embodies itself in a Napoleon or a Bismarck, the insight that essence has a being without existence is a contemplative antidote to egotism, an "insight with a force" to "vanquish" all will, "transcend" all animal limitation, and "cancel" every fear (RE 48).

Within *The Sense of Beauty* Santayana approaches this contemplative sublime by distinguishing between what he terms "Stoic" and "Epicurean" variants (SB 150); the latter anticipates his mature, contemplative, observant sublime. The Stoic sublime is the recognition of infinite or hostile events too fatal for a finite being to

process, and the experience chastens the viewer while leaving them “conscious” of their “independence” in that the viewer restricts herself from the event (SB 150). This is liberation by restrictive consciousness of “evil” or by what is hazardous to life. This could be caused by material events (like a cliff face too steep to climb, or a surf too strong to swim, or an atmosphere with no oxygen) that inspire awe and tempt us to master it, yet we avoid them, thus standing alone in our finitude, a restrictive education predictive of Santayana’s frequent use of the word “shocks” to describe reason’s developmental experience in *The Life of Reason* ten years later and in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* in 1923.

The Stoic sublime is phrased in the negative, as an *I will not attempt that—it is too hazardous or fatal*. Thus, Santayana calls it a sublime via a denial of instinct to confront challenges. Natural scenes that suggest infinity register as potential “hostility” and make us “conscious of our independence;” in response, a stoic asserts “equilibrium and indifference” as well as the “exclusion” of the self from the sublime event (SB 150).

The Epicurean sublime considers the pleasant possibilities left after the sublime has been confronted. That is, we may think we want “it all,” whatever the ultimately excessive “it” is, but instinct ultimately craves a limited pleasure in balance. Thus Santayana calls the stoical sublime a chastening of instinct by “evil” and the Epicurean sublime a rewarding of instinct by “equipoise” (SB 150). For Santayana it is also a harmony with a limited nature instead of a Kantian attempt at dominion inspired by a grand-scale dynamic or mathematical challenge from nature.

From here, Santayana foretells his mature philosophy, saying that if the sublime is understood primarily in Burkean terms of danger and awe before the “vast mass, strength, and durability of objects,” we “miss the point” of it (SB 152). The point is not *fear* of the object, but identification with its non-human, not-me essence, a skill “characteristic of all perfect contemplation” as we (and here he anticipates his later vocabulary) “identify ourselves with the abstractest essence of reality” (SB 152). In such an identification, rational thinking is not incarnate meaning, or even its own object: thinking is a human agency of evaluation and limited harmony. There’s no restored grandeur or elevation of reason above nature in this, which had been key to Kant’s variant of a negative sublime. Santayana is thus closer to the position of poet Shelley’s sublime at the end of “Mont Blanc”—in this poem, the “voice” of the mountain is not merely (to use Santayana’s terms of contrast) a concretion in discourse (an essence as an idea), but a massive concretion in existence (an essence as an experienced physical fact), a truth so awesome and undeniable that when one anchors judgment in such factuality, it could be foundational to social reform, it can “repeal great codes of woe.”¹⁰ (That is, in Shelley’s image, positive social change is rooted in attention to natural fact, which will supersede devotion to superstitious myth, compulsory tradition, or imperial edicts.)

A similarly unselfconscious observing is described by Santayana in his concluding remarks on the sublime within *The Sense of Beauty*: in the presence of the sublime, the “sense of suffering disappears *in the sense of life* and the imagination

¹⁰ See From “Mont Blanc” on p.120.

overwhelms the understanding" (SB 152, emphasis added). Santayana revises Kant's assertion that the sublime makes us "think of our vocation as sublimely above nature." (Kant 264); for Kant this can mean (but not exclusively so) to compete with nature for mastery or force; in Santayana to be "above" nature is to contemplate its depiction in essences.

Beyond the Pantheist Sublime

Before turning to the celestial language of essence's "Empyrean" distance in Santayana's later work, we should review the two, polar (one ideal, the other material) philosophical hazards that Santayana marks and steers clear of on the way to his sublime. These frequently appear in his evaluations of religion, and he also reviews such errors in his engagement with the sublime: on the one side, one might be tempted to embrace an hypostatized ideal above nature (Kant's reason), or one could be tempted to see all of nature as incarnate of providential guidance and justice (the pantheism of Hegel). Santayana thus qualifies or avoids Kant's recourse to reason as an ideal agency apart from nature or a worshipful pantheism; he will also demystify any pantheist rapture before chaos or mere vastness. Once the sublime moves from mere awe to a worshipful attitude, in examples as diverse as the poetry of William Wordsworth¹¹ or the philosophy of art of Hegel,¹² the moment of the sublime may expand into a pantheistic devotion. At the cost of some emotional torque (sensible in the Wordsworth excerpt), Santayana avoids pantheism because it is ethically problematic to subsume human morality to inevitable cosmic progress, or, especially, to physical power in a naturalized deity. Santayana holds that the human and its particular vision of excellence in its contingent circumstances may be obviated or submerged in a rapt regard of all nature or all reality as having its own ideal or imagined telos before which a human surrenders as if before God in classic monotheism. In his later work *Realms of Being*, Santayana affirms that a human can calm itself in contemplation of pure being, but this does not mean that "pure being" is matter in any way or that contemplation of it entertains (as pantheism or Hegel's philosophy does) an image of matter's telos, which would inevitably be some form of human effort, or political or scientific order, projected onto matter or the vagaries of nature, as purpose, even cosmic, imagined by a human (as Santayana frequently affirms in his religious criticism) is but a theme in a human tale.¹³

In *Reason in Common Sense*, Santayana reckons that a sublime regard for nature often implies a deification of nature or a form of pantheism with an inhumane morality, as the human in awe of nature sees itself as unworthy:

¹¹ See From Wordsworth's *The Prelude* on p. 120.

¹² In the imagination of pantheism, which mainly unfolded in the direction of material substance an infinite extension of range was most remarkable: what we most are amazed at here is the power of spiritual exaltation which suffers everything else to fall away that it may declare the unique Almightyness of God (Hegel 103).

¹³ Religion, especially when it proposes cosmic, trans-human purposes, is "merely symbolic and thoroughly human" (LR3 9).

To this picture of physical instability furnished by popular science are to be added the mystical self-denials involved in pantheism. These come to reinforce the doctrine that human nature is a shifting thing *with the sentiment that it is a finite and unworthy one*: . . . *man's only goal would be to escape humanity and lose himself in the divine nebula* that has produced and must invalidate each of his thoughts and ideals. As there would be but one spirit in the world, and that infinite, so there would be but one ideal and that indiscriminate. (LR1 164, emphasis added)

In its frequent references to the “shocks” of natural experience,¹⁴ within *The Life of Reason* Santayana qualifies a negative sublime, neither chastisingly moral nor rhapsodically aesthetic; that is, he resists any deification of nature (a resistance key to the “no” in that attitude) but also avoids any image of reason as an agency supremely above nature. He rests in the moment where the human is humble before nature; reason is contingent and finite, not supreme: “Reason must be eclipsed by its supposed expressions, and can only shine in a darkness which does not comprehend it. For reason is essentially hypothetical and subsidiary, and can never constitute what it expresses in man, nor what it recognizes in nature” (LR1 121).

This argument against a reified reason or a pantheist response to sublime awe is resumed in *The Realm of Spirit*. Here, too, the problem is moral: if the “eyes” are open in wonder but the mind is tied into an idolatry of a presumed providence, “[i]n such pantheistic allegiance and respect for nature as a whole, spirit may be philosophical, absorbed in curiosity and wonder, impressed by the size, force, complexity, and harmony of the universe; the eyes are open, but the mind is still in leading strings” (RS 198), that is, tied to a vision of a religion derived from nature. Santayana’s negative sublime does not place nature above humanity, nor does he simply laud reason in alternative to nature but offers a moral interpretation of nature: “the naturalist, being a man, must also be a moralist; and he must find himself dividing this seamless garment of nature, by a sort of optical iridescence, into the shifting colours of good and evil” (RS 198). This knowledge will be framed not as a cosmic imperative, but in humility and intermittent serenity; Santayana’s essences are not Platonic absolutes or moral imperatives but provisional signs of interests, goals, or harmonies: “If a thing is beautiful this is not because it manifests an essence, but because the essence which it manifests is one to which my nature is attuned, so that the intuition of it is a delightful exercise to my senses and to my soul” (RE 7). Thus he steers between the imperatives of cosmic optimism (a pantheism that declares all material events holy and part of a grand plan) and an idealism of static, absolute virtues. The morality of Santayana’s vision of essence is implicit rather than dictated in behavioral mandates, as it encourages people to respect their finitude and the provisional nature of knowledge; the “moralist and poet” of this sort may miss

¹⁴ “When the conditions surrounding life are not rightly faced by instinct they are inevitably forced upon reflection through painful shocks; and for a long time the new habit thus forced upon men brings to consciousness not so much the movement of consciousness itself as the points at which its movement impinges on the external world and feels checks and frictions.” (LR5 100)

“the truth of nature, as in many things as probable,” but “he will at least have achieved a work of imagination. In such a case the universe without being mapped as a whole in the fancy, will be enriched at one point by the happy life enacted there, in one human focus of art and vision” (RE 6).

Perhaps Santayana, even as a naturalist, had a bias for contemplation of essence rather than a total mastery of environments (in science, militancy, or industry) as he considered that the social reform which followed nineteenth-century science tended to follow the morality of the jungle or its competition for finite resources more than a dispassionate evaluation of facts put to compassionate use. As early as 1905, Santayana directly signaled his disagreement with the technical and commercial trajectory of the West in the twentieth century; a “materialist democracy” with “furnaces” of consumerism at “full blast” could demonstrate “the mind of a worm and the claws of a dragon” (LR2 81). Commonplace market-based rationalizations of nature’s violence, making for what Joseph Conrad called in 1912 “a world more or less homicidal and desperately mercantile” (Conrad 7) may have pressed Santayana into a more contemplative and less instrumental consideration of natural truth. Santayana’s position of awe, reserved as it is, is not a view of nature-as-a-whole, apart from reason as a domination apart from nature.

The costs of a deified nature or its imagined absolute embodiment in a world spirit are writ in the totalizing militancies of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The benefits of Santayana’s turn toward essence are a diminution of egotism and the conception of a goal of repose rather than an imitation of, or competition with power, as in Kant’s or Hegel’s versions of the sublime. Curiously and provocatively, while moving away from views of physical vastness and from reason’s alleged upstagings of nature (in Kant’s sublime), Santayana preserves a rhetoric of awe in his framings of essence. In *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, which serves as the introductory volume to *The Realms of Being*, Santayana makes the case that truth (as an essence, and as nothing exclusively human) is properly the object of sublime consideration:

The eternity of truth is inherent in it: all truths—not a few grand ones—are equally eternal. I am sorry that the word eternal should necessarily have an unction which prejudices dry minds against it, and leads fools to use it without understanding. This unction is not rhetorical, because the nature of truth is really sublime, and its name ought to mark its sublimity” (SAF 268).

He continues in repurposing the language of sublime studies as he pivots attentively toward essences: “Awe very properly hangs about [the truth], since it is the immovable standard and silent witness of all our memories and assertions . . . [i]t is an essence involved in positing any fact, in remembering, expecting, or asserting anything” (268).

In Nietzsche’s *Beyond Good and Evil*, the aphorist has a staring contest with an abyss and affirms that the abyss “looks into” him, as if in potential awe of the author.¹⁵ The moment is a classic of sublime literature, as the author seems re-assured,

¹⁵ “And when you look long into an abyss, the abyss also looks into you” (Nietzsche 89).

like a tamer of lions observing an amused feline wink from that which could annihilate him. In point of contrast, for Santayana, contemplation of the not-me of an essence has no egoic color or value, so essence (especially truth) might annihilate “self” as one considers it. But this is not physical death resultant from a headlong pitch into a literal void, but as “pure being” is in the void “no less than an atom” (RM 38), what is contemplated is not physical space, but its ultimate quality. The realm of essence for Santayana is not earthly darkness, but a neutral field of all possibilities. It is also unavoidable: “If you deny that realm [of essence], you acknowledge it. If you forget it, you consent that it should silently laugh at you in your sleep” (RE 167).

One might see such poetizing as a quaint exoticism; in such verbal flights, readers could detect an envy for idealists and religious thinkers who have luminous value terms as platonic essences in their systems. One could argue that Santayana was a better writer at the time of *The Life of Reason* and its more restrained naturalism, a work with fewer philosophical atavisms and re-purposed ideal terms like “essence” and “infinite field” and fluorescing paradoxes like silent laughter and indelible, invisible ink. The costs of his later terminologies may be some readerly suspicion, and there was even a long record of professional philosophical consternation with “essence” by 1940, as Paul Arthur Schilpp (a sympathetic scholar) felt obliged to include a fair amount of squinting perplexity concerning the term “essence” in the collection of essays about his career called *The Philosophy of George Santayana*. But at the cost of some obscurity, Santayana gained a clear goal: *The Realm of Essence* has more specificity about how one *might* meditate and discerns how this posture is not an aping of power, but a grounding of thinking in calm. Such wisdom is less quaint than apt, moreso than rhetorics of force, of the imperial domain of reason, or of state-based, duty-bound identities germane to the idealisms of Santayana’s era.

Essence and The Contemplation of Pure Being

Despite rarely using the term *sublime* as an aesthetic category, Santayana, increasingly, not less, speaks in sublime-inspiring dimensions of experience in *The Realms of Being*. Though Santayana’s rhetoric of sublimity percolates through all four of its books, and the total history of the ideas there could be profitably traced and analyzed, here I focus mostly on the realm of essence and the quality of pure being as significant objects of sublimity for Santayana, as they demonstrate his philosophical and moral character while extending and redefining Kant’s intermittent focus on the sublime as more contemplative reaction than raw sensation. Most of Santayana’s metaphors of height, elevation or exaltation within *The Realms of Being* thus have to do with moral knowledge, an awareness of the extent of the “field” of essences, or with imaginative intuition, not with impressions of force or danger—that is, the evocations of the sublime cohere around truth and essence, not with grand objects, vast vistas, or stylistic genius. Thinking, for instance, is “like telling one’s beads; the poor repeated mutterings of the mind compose, beyond themselves, a single litany, a path leading humbly step by step, past every mystery, up the mountain of knowledge” (RE 73).

In that alpine instance and in others in *The Realms of Being*, Santayana's metaphors of vastness or elevation, key concepts in eighteenth century landscape-based sublimity and in Kant's mathematical sublime, are translated to essence as it is "an infinite field" for selection and it is a "most real and interesting realm" of being, a substantive and qualifier that brand it as a better country to visit than the nature of our birth (RE 14); it is also called a "fairy-land," placid but hard to grasp, as it is "like the Empyrean [the Greek name for the heavens] . . . a clear and tranquil region when you once reach it but for the observer from the earth clouds may intervene or may be arrested at some nearer sphere" (RE 26). These simple metaphors of geographical transit are typically qualified and complicated. Betraying the tension in his own psyche, Santayana is occasionally ambiguous or circular in his arguments, making us ask: do we need the earth merely to validate essence's liberatory power, making essence central? Or is essence merely the set of terms we use to grasp earthly experience, which would be valuable in itself? In an instance of the first option, Santayana says we necessarily stand on the mundane "plane of scattered experience, brute fact, [and] contingent experience;" because "if we did not, essence would not liberate us from ourselves or from the incubus of accidental things" (RE 14). Thus to behold essence is to be more like a rapt viewer at the cinema than a steamship traveler who can forget home abroad for a time, as to grasp essence, we desire it, do not own it, and certainly do not dwell in it as a land. Essence is thus not an elsewhere, but a human lexicon. In an instance of the second option, Santayana directly remonstrates some metaphysicians for being impatient of the goal to lay claim to and live among essences which they consider "their appointed food." He chastens such thinkers for insisting that their "clairvoyance," or presumed translucent rapport with essences, amount to "historical or physical knowledge; but this pretension is not only easily disproved, but is unworthy of their contemplative vocation" (RE 180). The area of congruity between Santayana's claim that essence liberates us from a realm of material accidents and that we do not dwell among them is that we may (and should, according to him) observe them contemplatively in each option.

Santayana anticipated that this effort could be labeled a form of escapist aestheticism, and his argument about sublimity following (but not repeating) Kant is explicitly more moral than aesthetic, as his point is not that we are pleasantly entranced by such contemplation, but that we expand our ability to reflect on our options, and imaginatively consider our goals and limitations. Thus he blends the aesthetics of the sublime into a moral consideration. This move is part of a general trend in Santayana's work; in several places in his later work, he affirms that aesthetics are properly a portion of moral insight, and require no special department for their own operations; in his autobiographical essay in *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, he plainly phrases the confrontation with essence as more moral than aesthetic, and no priority is given to art for valuable essences: "My theory of essence and of intuition of essence has nothing to do with aestheticism. Intuition is *Anschauung* [an outlook or viewpoint] and aesthetic only in the Kantian sense, as in the transcendental *Aesthetik*. Images, judged morally, seem neutral or ugly as easily when they proceed from works of art, as when they proceed from natural objects" (PGS 530).

The very concept of “essence” may intermittently boggle the minds of even sympathetic readers of Santayana, because even if the idea snaps into focus as he defines it in its simplicity (they are “all possible terms of thought,” including signs and words [RE viii]), his basic definition of essence may still challenge reason on a sublime scale, as essences are at once, *eternal* and *non-existent* (by which he means they are indestructible in their presence to consciousness, perpetual in truth, but are not a material substance).

The idea of the *infinite*, the snowy summit of the romantic sublime,¹⁶ as the ultimate challenge to a finite observer, is often invoked by Santayana in discussing essences. In the following metaphor, Santayana checks almost every historical definition of sublimity from Longinus to Kant (i.e., having the style of an enrapturing, profound text, an infinite scale, and involving a reason-challenging contradiction) in a single sentence: “The realm of essence is comparable to an infinite Koran — or the Logos that was in the beginning — written in invisible but indelible ink, prophesying all that Being could ever be or contain.” In fact, in two places within *The Realm of Essence*, Santayana refers to the full field of terms available for naming experience as “an infinite Koran;” the first is above, the second is more rhapsodic, as the realm of essence is a Koran “sealed from all eternity in the bosom of Allah, of which the trembling Angel of life may read to us a few Surahs” (RE 166-167). As symbolic of his own concerns, this religious poetry likely means that in our lives we sift a small portion of the wealth of being (the source of all terms) that has meaning to us, as if a select text were read aloud by an angel. A skeptic may puzzle over these expressions of wonder: why would a contemplative discipline, the consideration of essence, ultimately productive of an unselfconscious calm, indulge in such an awestruck poetry? If we momentarily visualize Santayana afoot with his vision in Boston, Oxford, or Rome, such poetry of essence might arise because this contemplative discipline (amidst the compulsive bustle and imperial strife of these cultures of production, militancy, and consumption) was exotic and alien to those milieux as a Muslim call to prayer.

But if such contemplation is exotic (in a historical context like much of the Western World of the twentieth century), essence is also democratic (in its omnipresent availability and lack of hierarchy); “pure being,” the essence of essences, has an awesome universality that leads to a sublimity of calm rather than a rhetoric of force that matches nature’s. The Kantian line of the sublime (in which reason upstages nature on its own terms) can be plausibly extended to Los Alamos and the splitting of the atom, Santayana, looking in the direction *opposite* (his word, RE 47) that of natural force, prefers observance of pure being to the manipulation of raw power. While any particular essence, like “sky blue” (color) or “B-flat” (pitch) are “exclusive and definable by contrast,” pure being is “present in them all somewhat as space is in all geometrical figures” (RE 50).

¹⁶ “The sublime is, in short, generally the attempt to express the infinite, without being able to find an object in the realm of phenomenal existence such as is clearly fitted for its representation. The infinite, for the very reason that it is posited independently as invisible and formless significance in contrast to the complex manifold of objective fact” (Hegel 86).

As such, the most sublime essence, which to apprehend one must “rise altogether above the sense of existence,” is the intuition of “pure being” (RE 47). Material existence is the fact of substantial things and events; pure being is the *quality* of anything existent, not a substance. It is rather different, then, from a pantheist vision of divinity in everything or even Spinoza’s idea of a single substance, God, as they both invoke the laboring, extended substance of nature. Existence has a unique time-space locus; pure being is a universal identity and quality. Pure being is thus the “most immaterial, untameable, and inexhaustible” of essences (RE 53). Rather, in contrast to its calm, the exuberance of nature and its majestic laboring (often recast as the model of a powerful personality or fate in earlier sublimes) is “cruel” (RE 60).

Santayana’s conclusion is that the mastery of nature is not an ideal for spirit:

If the fear of power—that is, of matter—was the beginning of wisdom for the natural man, the possession of power cannot be the end of wisdom for the spirit; and the spirit will not permanently worship in God a life inferior to that which it enjoys in itself. (RE 60-61)

The challenge to reason, and the moral interpretation (which Kant had encouraged) following the daunting passage (through nature or a text), is Santayana’s recurrent affirmation that harmony, not emptiness, is the goal of contemplation. The drama of scale inherent to most theories of the sublime remains, but not one that results in a rhetoric of power. In the contemplation of pure being, “positively religious or moral feelings drop into their very small, very human places” (RE 63). The “sublimity of this insight” is not due to the sage finding “more” in pure being than pure Being itself, “but exactly because he does not find more” (RE 63). The work is a deferral of belaboring effort, and a willingness to behold, replacing enthusiasm with repose, a challenge to recurrently relax and observe any moment realizing that “humility . . . is not incompatible with freedom” (RE 65). Pure being, although “a supreme degree of detachment and concentration be requisite to conceive it adequately is, like any other essence, perfectly open to intuition; its sublimity is not obscurity” (RE 53). Santayana says of pure being as Kant does of (a reasoned reaction to) the sublime that it “requires much dialectical and spiritual training to discern it in its purity and its fullness” (RE 8). This paradoxical effort is not an aesthetic craft, but a discipline which may be a cessation of a straining after dominion, giving way to an observant acceptance.

Complicating Santayana’s balloon-like ascent away from the heft of mere earth and dutiful efforts to whip it into artistic or imperial shapes is a nostalgia for the workaday world, for the spirit and its nexus of finite affections, potentials, and forces. (In his unique redefinition of the word, “spirit” denotes the realm of “feeling, intuition, [and] intent” [RM 139]). His metaphors of transit or ascent often are followed by signs of divided affinities—between a classical materialism and a developing meditative practice, between a drama of uplift and a contentment in the ordinary. The use of sublime language of transit reflects an ambivalence related to his conventional criticism of any value dissociated from matter. This productive, ultimately fairly harmonized tension runs throughout the *Realms of Being*; though he may say, on the one hand that “I frankly cleave to the Greeks and not to the Indians

and I aspire to be a rational animal rather than a pure spirit" (RE 65), soon enough, he speaks less like an enlightened animal seeking a new lever of power and more as the advocate of unworldly meditation, as he will say that

the first thing that spirit must renounce, if it would begin to be free, is any claim to domination. Its kingdom is not of this world; and the other world, where its Will is done, is not a second cosmos, another physical environment, but this very emancipation and dominion of spirit over itself, which raises it above care even for its own existence. Suffering is not thereby abolished, either in the world or in the spirit, so long as the spirit lives in any world; but suffering is accepted and spiritually overcome by being understood, and by being preferred to the easy injustice of sharing only one craving, to be satisfied with one sweet. (RS 89)

The paradoxes of these competing vantages and valuations within *The Realms of Being* also recall the ingredients of sublime episodes in poetry, in which (as in the Wordsworth *Prelude* example above), the roots of value are physical, but its effect is spiritual; it is simultaneously material and essential; it promises or threatens power, but the power is ultimately realized as a spiritual effect, not a human imitation of natural force, but in the "dominion of spirit over itself," not unlike the better portion of Kant's advocacy for reason's self-recognition after a sublime shock.

As Wordsworth testified humbly to his own finitude in the glacial field of the Simplon Pass below Mont Blanc, Santayana avers that no human metaphysics masters reality. As spirit imaginatively aspires to dominion, Santayana notes a paradox that it does not master the earth, but in in provisional, human narratives; "spirit, the most inward of things and the most vital, should find its purest affinities in remote and abstract regions, in mathematics, in music, in truth, in the wider aspects of nature and history, and should find its greatest enemies, its worst torments, at home. The stars are more friendly to it than the mountains, the mountains than the town . . ." (RS 59). (Mathematics, for Santayana, is set of essences, not an all-inclusive image of existence.) Spirit also craves tranquility, but since spirit is "a concomitant of nature," it cannot reside but transiently in an unworldly peace. What peace we know is a "quality of life," not of emptiness, not of an hypostasized ideal, of lifeless substance, nor the privilege of an inhuman elsewhere.

Santayana's ultimate transformations of the poetry of the sublime and its metaphors of assent and reconsideration are found in his contemplation of pure being, which, like the Indian concept of Brahma, is "all things, but is none of them" (RS 114). By focusing aspiration on the quality of pure being, not the leaden facts of substance, one may define a paradoxical ascent that lifts "the deep peace of the universal psyche into a limiting instance of spirit, as if love of all good lived there without experience, and therefore without loss" (RS 114-115). The ontology of essence, and its glassy, cinematic presence to awareness, impossible to lose because it is intangible, seems sometimes confused in Santayana's philosophy with its value, perhaps because terms of value are a portion of the realm of essence. When Santayana grants essence an infinity and an attendant spiritual wonder oddly in keeping with eighteenth century sublimities of scale—apart from any registration of

value—we may feel that we return to Burke's sublime, which is awe, not a moral act. However, it is not Santayana's wont to be long "agape at words" (as he mocked Platonism's "idolatrous" fascination with dissociated excellences [LR3 80]), or worshipful of mere signs, or essences in themselves for no good reason. To be moral requires spirit's reflection on its own finitude. The Möbius twist in Santayana's sublime is that finitude is simultaneously what we escape in contemplating essence and what such contemplation encourages us to evaluate to our own benefit.

This contemplation, again, is fairly democratized spiritually, and it is no special province of art. Key words in older theories of the sublime involve transit (inclusive of the pathos of an artwork being "moving") and uplift: in his 1940 "Apologia", Santayana clarifies that essence has no special domain in art: "If art *transports*, if it liberates the mind and heart, I prize it, but nature and reflection do so more often and with greater authority" (PGS 501); and, making his departure from compartmentalized aesthetics vivid he says: "in philosophy I recognize no separable thing called aesthetics" because he recognizes no difference "between moral and aesthetic values: beauty, being a good, is a moral good" and "when actually realized and not merely pursued from afar, is a joy in the immediate, it is possessed with wonder and is in that sense aesthetic" (PGS 21). There is a similar passage relevant to the sublime in *The Realm of Essence*, as "jogging to market in a cart" the traveler is struck by an experience (called beautiful, but sounding in its re-orienting and disorienting qualities more sublime) and is "transported . . . into a state of trance" while beholding something "strange and wonderful" because he no longer looks "in order to understand, but only in order to see." One loses "preoccupation with fact" to gain contemplation of "an essence." "This experience, in modern times, is called aesthetic; but it has no exclusive connection with the arts" (RE 6-7).

An apparent willingness to contemplate the iron work of a park bench as well as a violin sonata, the trodden snow as well as the dance that made the marks, the network of branches against the sky as well as a sculpture at hand is all implicit in several of Santayana's twentieth-century affirmations that valuation and enjoyment of beauty are not a special domain of aesthetics or museums. Such receptiveness may worry us as a relativization of taste: are we urged to be as untethered to schooled preferences as a rock climber with minimal gear? Fairly plainly: yes, as Santayana says, as in *any* contemplation of an essence there is a "more or less ample manifestation of pure being" in a quiet indulgence. Santayana concedes that "the artist and the moralist" may "shudder at pure and infinite Being." This is the shock that promotes reason's new reckoning, and his advance on the idealist sublime, as the understanding maintains its earthly license to be and to pursue a good "and perhaps to realize it." The contemplation of pure being becomes a discipline prior to moral effort, not a holiday from it: a contemplation that Santayana calls "the last phase of spiritual progress."

The final irony and potential moral payoff in Santayana's sublime is that in an era featuring many models for sublimating or transmogrifying natural awe into dreadful temporal power—into a political, military or technical telos of mastery, as Kant predicts in his adherence to "stern duty"—Santayana delineated a meditative practice prior to any decision or, especially, any act that would (primarily) inflate

the ego. He does not regard the "state" as the repository of sublimated cosmic power as it was for Hegel. There is nothing of the sort in *The Realms of Being*, and the sublimity of pure being is not an evasion of politics but, potentially, the ground of their moral improvement. Santayana's contemplative sublime has the same pattern as Kant's: it is a response to observation, not merely a marvel of it. But Santayana's observant calm provides, though, a more candid reckoning of scale (the human is not grandiose). The role of pure being in Santayana's system is effectively like the persuasiveness and reassurance of the mountain's voice in Shelley's "Mont Blanc," to ground one in an awareness of undeniable truth.

Any rhetoric of force like Kant's is likely to fall in line with, or imitate, recent doctrines of reality or their technical history, as rational progress in Europe and Britain was allied with images of industrial colonization of the earth and national progress involved in war; the vocabulary of mastery will be the evolving science and technology of one's own time. The sublimity Santayana accords pure being does not in itself provide, predict, or insure technical development, political improvement, morality, or virtue. But its contemplation may lead to less compulsion, tension, and conflict of the sort that often follows sublime theories of material aspiration, or its supposedly mastering destiny, often involving competitive mandates to technical action, which in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries led to images of nationalism and occasionally to various metaphysics of total control, or a pretense of mastering reality, to being history's vanguard, or all of these at once.

Santayana's idea of essence and the ironic awe he attaches to it are not ideal values in a dissociated heaven; he invokes a humility before the terms that we have with which we define any development or create anything. Such observance, a relaxed attempt at mere observation, infinitely challenging and yet requiring no special effort, is not a form of conventional mastery; it is a meditative practice that lays bare the space for rational consideration of what we would master, control, or create, and there spirit waits; such repose is not cessation, but sublime identification with life at peace.

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Poems cited

From "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage"

All heaven and earth are still—though not in sleep,
 But breathless, as we grow when feeling most;
 And silent, as we stand in thoughts too deep: —
 All heaven and earth are still: from the high host
 Of stars, to the lulled lake and mountain-coast,
 All is centered in a life intense,
 Where not a beam, nor air, nor leaf is lost,
 But hath a part of being, and a sense
 Of that which is of all Creator and defence.

Then stirs the feeling infinite . . .
 (Byron, *Childe Harold* III.89-90)

From "Mont Blanc"

The wilderness has a mysterious tongue
 Which teaches awful doubt, or faith so mild, So solemn, so serene, that
 man may be,
 But for such faith, with Nature reconcil'd;
 Thou hast a voice, great Mountain, to repeal
 Large codes of fraud and woe; not understood
 By all, but which the wise, and great, and good
 Interpret, or make felt, or deeply feel.
 (Shelley 5)

Wordsworth at the Simplon Pass near Mont Blanc:

The immeasurable height
 Of woods decaying, never to be decayed,
 The stationary blasts of waterfalls,
 And in the narrow rent at every turn
 Winds thwarting winds, bewildered and forlorn,
 The torrents shooting from the clear blue sky,
 The rocks that muttered close upon our ears,
 Black drizzling crags that spake by the way-side
 As if a voice were in them, the sick sight
 And giddy prospect of the raving stream,
 The unfettered clouds and region of the Heavens,
 Tumult and peace, the darkness and the light—
 Were all like workings of one mind, the features
 Of the same face, blossoms upon one tree;
 Characters of the great Apocalypse,
 The types and symbols of Eternity,
 Of first, and last, and midst, and without end.
 (Wordsworth, *The Prelude* VI.624-640, 268-269)

Santayana's Hermeneutic Politics

Review of Katarzyna Krempleska, *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics*, Leiden: Brill, 2022.

From George Santayana's perspective, there is for human beings as political animals the abiding need "to unite a trustworthy conception of the conditions under which man lives with an adequate conception of his interests" (LR1 17¹).² Though deeply Aristotelian in some respects, his distinctive conception of the human psyche was not as robust an affirmation of the human organism as a ζῷον πολιτικόν³ as that found in Aristotle. Human beings are for Aristotle *by nature* political animals⁴ and, in addition, the political arena is a realm in which human flourishing of a noble form, even when it deals with the "meaner" details of human governance, can take place.

Knowing oneself is impossible apart from knowing one's place in the world of matter. Specifically, the interests of the psyche need to be adequately conceived no less than the world in which humans live and move⁵ and have their being. In Santayana's judgment, most conceptions of the universe—that is, visions of the actual conditions under which humans live—are, however, far from trustworthy, just as most conceptions of the interests of those animals are anything but adequate. One may go farther than this. Most of the historically influential ontologies and cosmologies have been, in the strict sense, fantastic, while most of the equally regnant identifications of human needs, interests, and indeed necessities are instances of self-deception, at least self-mystification.

To a remarkable degree, the human animal knows neither where nor who or what it actually is. Occasionally, Santayana appears to indulge in hyperbole. "Every actual animal is," he claims, "somewhat dull and somewhat mad. He will at times miss his signals and stare vacantly when he might well act, while at other times he will run off into convulsions and raise dust in his own brain to no purpose." Human intelligence or reason cannot be gainsaid. But the intelligent person "known to history [however] flourishes within a dullard and holds a lunatic in leash" (LR 1 44).⁶

¹ Quoted by Krempleska (11).

² I have taken my task to write a review essay, not simply a review. In the context of such an essay, I have offered a detailed review of Katarzyna Krempleska's impressive book, but I have done (or tried to do) more than this. For the sake of contributing to one of the principal aims of her book, winning a wider hearing for Santayana's social and political thought, my hope is to assist in garnering a wider appreciation and indeed understanding of his multifaceted contribution to contemporary thought.

³ Ζῷον πολιτικόν (political animal).

⁴ *Dominations and Powers* significantly adds to *Reason in Society* in detailing how the human animal is rooted in a generative order providing the resources for its social and political life. Even so, there appears to be, for its author, something in both politics and even society cutting against the grain of any individual human being. In this he is closer to the author of *Civilization and Its Discontents* than that of the *Nicomachean Ethics*.

⁵ The importance of motility for an understanding of our humanity cannot be exaggerated.

See, e.g., Santayana's "The Philosophy of Travel" in *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*.

⁶ It would have been illuminating for Krempleska to have drawn her account from *The Life of Reason* and other works antedating the publication of *Dominations and Powers*, while keeping her principal focus on this late work.

The intelligent agent dwelling within the human dullard is apparently adequately equipped to frame a trustworthy vision of the cosmos and a reliable understanding of itself (at least, its most vital interests). Deep misunderstanding and ignorance of what we are and where we abide nonetheless color much of our thinking. This has profound and, often, fatal or disastrous political consequences. The desired union seems to dispose one toward a disquieting quietism (disquieting for those who do not have the privilege of withdrawing from the world). "It is easy, almost pleasant," Santayana at any rate announces, "to give up the world, if we know what the world is; and we never die too soon, if we have found something eternal to live with" (DP 218).⁷ For any human psyche not disposed to give itself over to being a host for a purely contemplative spirit, enraptured by conceiving things for the most part *sub specie aeternitatis*, however, it is neither easy nor pleasant to abandon the temporal world, the sphere of action. Those animated, above all, by a sense of justice will conceive the rough-and-tumble world of human politics quite differently than those devoted to cultivating a disciplined sense of "spiritual" contemplation. The tension was apparent in Aristotle's *Ethics*. It is even more extreme in Santayana's understanding of politics. It is one thing to make the world safe for democracy, quite another to make it safe for contemplatives.

The union of a trustworthy conception of the universe and an adequate practical self-understanding, at the center of which is an accurate identification of one's most fundamental interests, enforces a *sense of limits*. While it might be distinctively human to struggle to transcend the limits of our condition and nature, to throw off our finitude and make a bid, in some form or other, for infinity, history is a record of the folly and, worse, the *hubris* of most of the ways in which we attempt to do so. There is, at the center of Santayana's political philosophy, a warning against the dangers of such *hubris*, while endorsing a chastened sense of contemplative transcendence. One might, as Katarzyna Krempleska at least occasionally discloses, feel that he goes too far in stressing this danger; put otherwise, he concedes too little to the legitimacy and even necessity of deliberate reform especially on a broad scale. Wittingly or not, Santayana squarely stands in the tradition of Edmund Burke for whom the horrors of the French Revolution stand as a warning against *all* utopian ventures (cf. p.13). If one considers the Haitian Revolution, the horrors of enslaved labor come dramatically into focus and it is hard, if not impossible, to find a scale of values on which to commensurate the magnitude of these horrors. This is at least true for a moral philosopher such as Santayana who is so resolutely committed to an unblinking recognition of the relativity of interests, values, and ideals.⁸

⁷ Quoted by Krempleska (121).

⁸ It is however important to note the change in Santayana's perspective, one underscored by him at the outset of *Dominations and Powers*. When he wrote *The Life of Reason*, he was "a judicial moralist, distinguishing the rational uses of institutions and deciding which were the best." When he near the end of his life turned his hand to completing *Dominations and Powers*, he was animated by "a more modest intention." He came to appreciate much more acutely that "anyone's sense of what is good and beautiful must have a somewhat narrow foundation, namely, his circumstances and his particular brand of human nature." He lived "in different moral climates" and in quite different cultural settings, finding them "all

In any event, one's orientation toward politics is markedly different if one stands in the tradition of, say, Frederick Douglass than that of Edmund Burke.

The horrors of chattel slavery do not only permit the overthrow of the conditions in which slaves are utterly stripped of their humanity. These horrors demand the overthrow of these conditions. Even the foreseeable atrocities of violent usurpation of property, authority, and liberty are insufficient to stay the hand of revolutionaries. Intolerable conditions can be so intolerable that they demand rectification. And the only effective form of rectification is the elimination or annihilation of those conditions. One irony is of course that such political theorists as Burke, Santayana, John Gray, Michael Oakeshott, and Russell Kirk have been the immense beneficiaries of past revolutions, so that their deep antipathy toward revolutionary thought is contemporary and prospective. In a sense, it is not retrospective, though it can often seem so. This is a point to which I will return. For the moment, however, it is more pressing to convey a sense of the context of this study as the author herself conceives it.

Kremplewska rightly judges there to be a gap in the scholarship on Santayana and, at least by implication, in the literature on politics insofar as he is rarely discussed by political theorists (8), despite having much to contribute to this field. She endorses John McCormick's judgment that *Dominations and Powers* "has never had the readership it deserves" (McCormick 2017, xix).¹ More generally, informed, sympathetic scholars of his writings cannot help but note an "underestimation of Santayana's political thought" (8). This underestimation may itself "be viewed in a broader context of the neglect of Santayana's legacy." The neglect of Santayana's contribution (or "legacy") stands, as Wilfred M. McClay asserts, "in stark contrast" to both his actual achievement and his indisputable stature during his own lifetime, especially in the earlier decades of the twentieth century (McClay 127).² This prompts McClay to speculate: "one is led to wonder whether part of the explanation lies in the unwelcomeness of the messages he sought to convey." (I suspect there is much truth in this: part of the explanation for this neglect can indeed be traced to just how unwelcome are some facets of Santayana's approach to politics.) Despite "a modest yet steady process of uncovering and reclaiming Santayana," despite even "the fact of a recent revival of interest in Santayana's political thought and cultural criticism" as evidenced, for example, by an anthology edited by Charles Padrón and Krzysztof P. Skowroński (*The Life of Reason in an Age of Terrorism*) – a significant gap remains.

There is, she alleges, "no single-authored monograph in English, devoted specifically to Santayana's political thought" (8). She is however quick to point out,

tolerable when seen from the inside" (vii). But does this itself betray an insufficiency of humanity insofar as many of those *within* these cultures or societies found them *intolerable*? This is a point to which I will return.

¹ Quoted by Kremplewska (24).

² Quoted by Kremplewska (8).

albeit only in a footnote, that Beth J. Singer³ published (decades ago) *The Rational Society: A Critical Study of Santayana's Social Thought* (1970). Kremplewska contends that Singer's monograph is "rather forgotten today" (8, note #26). Perhaps, but is this a reflection of the substance and focus of Singer's study or rather is it an alarming indication of the quality of contemporary scholarship? Consider this analogue. Many Peirce scholars today seem to be utterly ignorant of, say, Max Fisch and Joseph Ransdell, even when these expositors have written brilliantly on topics in which these scholars are interested. This says nothing about what Fisch and Ransdell accomplished, though it says a great deal about the failure of some contemporary scholars to do their homework thoroughly. Analogously, I take the fact of Singer's monograph being overlooked or forgotten not in the least to reflect upon her accomplishment. Kremplewska grants that "Beth Singer's book may be considered a valuable prolegomena to Santayana's social thought" (9, note #26). I however take it to be nothing less than "a single-authored monograph in English specifically devoted to Santayana's [social and] political philosophy." As I see it, then, Katarzyna Kremplewska's book picks up a broken thread. More than fifty years stretches between Singer's work and Kremplewska's. It is indeed high time to take up the ground clearing and, beyond this, constructive work so finely executed by Singer in *The Rational Society*.

A gap truly needs to be filled and Kremplewska's *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics* goes some distance toward filling it. If I am strongly disposed to suggest that Beth Singer's book, a study which grew out of her dissertation under the mentorship of Justus Buchler,⁴ remains the very best introduction to

³ It is only appropriate for me to disclose that Beth Singer was a very dear friend who assisted me greatly in my professional career. I do not feel that my assessment of her contribution to the scholarship on Santayana is distorted by my affection for her, but the reader of this review has a right to know of my friendship to her.

⁴ It might be recalled that Justus Buchler edited with Benjamin Schwartz *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews* (NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936). According to Beth Singer, Santayana referred to Buchler and Schwartz as "Jew-boys." While I have not been able to verify this claim, there is his use of an equally derogatory term: "sheenies." The traces of such anti-Semitism were hardly extraordinary for his time. Not too much perhaps should be made of it; but, then, it is hardly negligible. See LGS to George Sturgis 12 August 1936 & 29 January 1940. (*Editor's note: See also "Santayana on the Holocaust and the Nazis" and Daniel Pinkas's "Santayana, Judaism, and the Jews," both in OIS 36 [2018].*) In his Foreword to Singer's monograph, Buchler recalls encountering Santayana's *Reason in Society* in Morris R. Cohen's course in the Philosophy of Civilization. Reading Singer's study revived for him the experience of this course. "Once more it has become clear, through the medium of a penetrating study, how profitable it is philosophically to explore the immense insights and immense difficulties in Santayana's thought" (*The Rational Society*, viii). It is worth noting the extent to which Santayana has been the immense beneficiary of the painstaking labor of a significant number of Jewish-American scholars (Cohen, Buchler, Schwartz, Singer, Morris Grossman, and of course Richard Rubin, to name but a few of the more notable ones).

Santayana's social thought,⁵ this should not be taken as a slight at Krempleska's achievement. Rather, it is praise of her predecessor's singular accomplishment. Indeed, the more systematic and sharply focused account provided by Singer aids greatly in appreciating the more "diffuse" wide-ranging treatment offered by Krempleska.

In reading *George Santayana's Hermeneutic Politics*, I found myself needing to go back to Singer and, of course, also Santayana's own writings to get a better sense of what Krempleska was endeavoring to do in her study.⁶ Singer hews more closely to the words on the page and their contextual meanings than does Krempleska.⁷ While critical, she also exhibits far more clearly than does Krempleska "the structure of his own design,"⁸ both as articulated in *Dominations and Powers* and as anticipated in other writings, especially *Reason in Society*. This is to a great extent a reflection of their overlapping but ultimately divergent purposes. While both aim to offer an illuminating, accurate, and detailed exposition of Santayana's basic position in the context of his naturalistic orientation, Singer is more the focused exegete while Krempleska is more an expositor devoted to winning a wider hearing for Santayana's "political hermeneutics" among contemporary readers. Singer would not have undertaken her study were she not convinced of Santayana's relevance to rethinking basic issues in political philosophy, especially as they arose in the decade just prior to the publication of *The Rational Society* (1970), that is, the tumultuous decade of the 1960s. In turn, Krempleska would not have pursued her project were she not willing to devote considerable attention to straightforward exposition. She is, however, far more engaged than Beth Singer

⁵ In this, I appear to stand in opposition to no other than Herman Saatkamp, one of the deans of Santayana scholarship. On the back cover of *George Santayana's Hermeneutic Politics*, he provided this blurb: "By far, this is the best and most comprehensive book on Santayana's *Dominations and Powers*, and the volume stands as one of the best books written from a careful and critical understanding of Santayana's views" (as italicized on the back cover). As reluctant as I am to do so, I disagree with Herman regarding this being "the best and most comprehensive book" on this late work.

⁶ At several points, I found it necessary to go back to Krempleska's own work other than the book under review. For example, her reliance on the conception of "managing necessity" is alluded to in this study but not fully explained. Reading "Managing Necessity: Santayana on Forms of Power and the Human Condition, in the *Life of Reason in an Age of Terrorism*, however, proved illuminating.

⁷ Krempleska is correct in identifying Singer's book as "a source of useful elucidations of some of the terms – such as 'rationality' – that were central to Santayana's thinking." Consider for a moment how central a term rationality is in contemporary discussions of political life and how much Santayana might contribute to a deeper understanding of the complex entanglements of political animals with one another and with their historical inheritances. The infrequency with which it surfaces in Krempleska's discussions suggests an unfavorable contrast with her predecessor.

⁸ This is Krempleska's expression, not Singer's. I will in due course return to the issue of her aim in "preserving the structure of his own design," while trying to "curb Santayana's systematic thinking (Krempleska, 19). The rationale for endeavoring to curb him in this regard is never explicitly offered by Krempleska. I take it to be rooted in her aim of showing his "hermeneutic relevance" to contemporary thought (Krempleska, 19).

in making the case for Santayana's salience to the scene today than patiently elaborating detailed, extended expositions of relevant texts.

Both Singer and Krempleska have a deep sensitivity to the animating impulses of Santayana's intellectual life, also a wide familiarity with all of his relevant writings, and, finally, a penetrating understanding of his often elusive or at least ambiguous position on this or that issue (cf. Morris Grossman; also, Daniel Moreno). These expositors, as political theorists in their own right,⁹ are – or at least appear to me to be – committed to rival approaches to political life. Singer was unquestionably left of the political center, while Krempleska (if I am reading her correctly) is quite right of that center. That is, the former is, in my judgment, a principled progressive, whereas the latter is no less a principled “conservative” or, better, a “liberal” of some stripe.¹⁰ This makes far less a difference in Singer's case than it does in Krempleska's, for the author of *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics* is engaged in a reclamation of his political philosophy for the sake of staking a unique position in contemporary discourse, though a position closely akin to such authors as John Gray. In making this point, I am not insinuating that she is simply using Santayana for her purposes – above all, I am not suggesting that she is putting words into his mouth. Merely to insinuate this would be slanderous. Krempleska is not only a candid thinker in her own right but also an extremely responsible expositor devoted, at every turn, to textual fidelity (faithful attention to Santayana's actual words), critical attention to the relevant context(s), and a philosophical independence evident in her direct engagement with specific issues. There nonetheless ought to be no mistake: she is energetically assembling a brief for Santayana's relevance and she is doing so in the manner she judges to be most deeply attuned to the definitive crises of our historical moment (i.e., the crises defining our time). This seems to make her uncomfortable with Santayana's relativism and other facets of his thought.¹¹ As attuned as she is to the spirit of Santayana's social thought and respectful of the letter, she is a rather impatient expositor, sometimes not taking the time or care to lay out his position in the depth and detail it deserves. This raises

⁹ Singer's *Operative Rights* (1993) and *Pragmatism, Rights, and Democracy* (1999) clearly establish her as a political philosopher in her own right, as do Krempleska's writings secure for her this status.

¹⁰ She aligns herself with John Gray. It is striking that, in addition to the Abbreviations of Works by George Santayana, she provides a list of “Works by Other Authors.” There is in fact only one other author (John Gray) and only two works by him *Liberalism* (1986) and *Post-Liberalism: Studies in Social Thought* (1993). It is however hard – at least difficult for me – to ascertain what Krempleska is signaling when she explicitly aligns herself to Gray's “liberalism,” since it has been undergoing a number of transformations since the 1986 book.

¹¹ It is hard for me to comprehend her stance. On the one hand, she seems uncomfortable with Santayana's relativism (it apparently does not provide her with a sufficiently strong commitment to general, if not universal, criteria, by which to judge our political practices, policies, and decisions). On the other, she aligns herself with John Gray's orientation, but does not take note of his movement away from a liberalism committed to universal principles to a post-liberal position in which value particularity is a prominent feature of his most recent stance.

the question of audience. Just *who* is her audience? Granting a book might be written for various audiences, will Santayana scholars find her exegeses sufficiently detailed and elaborate to be illuminating or, to turn in another direction, will those coming from political philosophy to this book, with little or no familiarity with Santayana's writings, find them adequately instructive about the design and details of his approach to society and politics?

The task of writing on Santayana, especially on these topics, should be seen for what it is—difficult and delicate. “The powerful language of Santayana, his resourcefulness as a formulator and as a polemicist, make it hard for us,” as Justus Buchler notes, “to realize that he is an *elusive* philosopher.”¹² What makes him even more challenging is the extent and, indeed, the sense in which he was a systematic philosopher. On this point, Buchler is also instructive: “Santayana ... is more than systematic - or systematic not only in the sense of shaping categories with wide scope and applying them recurrently to a variety of issues.” Most obviously, the nuanced, disciplined, and intricate elaboration of categories, at various levels of discourse (from the most general to broad conceptions attuned to the specificities of a particular domain, such as the distinct domain of political life), marks him as systematic. But there is “another and quite ingenuous sense” in which he is so. “To him, nothing common or commonplace, falls outside the pale of philosophical interpretation [of his hermeneutic project].” “There is,” Buchler adds, “no subject in which he cannot find and enunciate generalized significance, a significance continuous with that of his conceptual [or categorical] framework as the latter is developed abstractly.” Very few systematic thinkers achieve “this kind of scope.” It is however not only the scope but also the *fertility* of his concepts which merit emphasis. He was manifestly “a philosopher who can breathe life and pulsation into systematic elements” (Foreword, viii). This is as evident in his treatment of politics and society as it is in his discussions of, say, rationality or poetry, religion or art in general.

What makes Santayana's achievement so impressive also makes it extremely challenging. It is very hard to master both the overall shape and the salient details of his truly monumental achievement. Krempleska displays a keen sense of both and more than this – an animating interest in showing how Santayana is relevant to contemporary thought. But her focus is, for a work devoted to *his* political thought, slightly off center. This is not a criticism; it is rather intended as a description of her project, moreover, a description hewing very close to her own avowal. “In the first half of the twentieth century a number of thinkers, including such figures as Bergson, Adorno, Cassirer, Husserl, Heidegger, Babbit, Benjamin, Dewey, Arendt, y Gasset, Berdyaev, or Zdziechowski, were grappling with the meanings and perspectives made available to humans in the modern world” (Krempleska, 1). Somewhat narrowly put, they were concerned with “the position of the individual in the West.” Though “empowered and protected by rights and liberties,” the individual became less intelligible and more precarious than this figure had been in the past. If we take the figures identified by Krempleska as representatives of our

¹² Foreword to Singer's *The Rational Society*, vii (emphasis added).

moment, the very status and constitution of human beings had to be radically rethought. At any rate, it “is among these thinkers, rather than [specifically] political philosophers *par excellence*, that I place Santayana.” She is quick to point out that he was not a champion of the dominant trends of late modernity or, less contentiously, “the first half of the twentieth century.” There was much with which he did not sympathize in these developments, but (Kremplewska alleges) he also did not dismiss them altogether. (As a naturalist, he could not engage in wholesale dismissal; as a moralist he could not issue an unqualified affirmation of even the most dominant tendencies.) Characteristically, his stance was one of ambivalence, often made even more subtle by what one very astute expositor has identified as “controlled ambiguity.”¹³ The sharply critical side of his stance toward distinctively modern developments, especially as they manifested themselves in the U.S., is quite prominent. Kremplewska however concurs with what Daniel Moreno argues in *Santayana the Philosopher: Philosophy as a Form of Life* (2015): “first, Santayana offers more than critical and deconstructive tools for understanding political life; and, second, ... he cannot be labelled as simply an anti-modern, even if one ascribes to him a certain conservative frame of mind.”¹⁴

To appreciate what Santayana offers, constructively and critically, Kremplewska refers to his “*political hermeneutics*” (1). The scope and force of this expression, however, are better brought out by bearing in mind her concern with “the *critical-hermeneutic* dimension of his political thinking” (cf. 247; emphasis added). One imagines for rhetorical or stylistic reasons she has abbreviated this simply to “political hermeneutics,” but her concern is, at least, as much with Santayana’s critiques as his interpretations, descriptions, and narrations. She explicitly links his critical-hermeneutic approach to “his cultural criticism, his vision of a human being and the world of human affairs at large, as well as his materialist ontology” (1). As such, this approach “diverges considerably from the contemporary, highly specialized and formalized discourse of political philosophy and science” (ibid.). At the same time, it displays its kinship to much older discourses. For Kremplewska, then, Santayana’s social and political thought “is heir to ancient thought” (ibid.). But it is expressed in a distinctively imaginative and indeed poetic manner. These elements combine to produce “an inspiring yet idiosyncratic kind of political reflection” (ibid.). But no one should be in the least misled or confused: many of the reflections encountered in Santayana’s writings are unmistakably political in character. As she interprets these reflections, their incentive is “to raise doubts, reveal paradoxes, interrogate and deconstruct prevailing ideals, myths, and opinions” (1). These distinctively political reflections are “intimately related to his cultural criticism” (1; cf. 245). At least as I interpret the import of the expression, Santayana’s “critical-hermeneutics politics” encompasses “his *hermeneia* of politics, his

¹³ Morris Grossman, *Art and Morality: Essays in the Spirit of George Santayana*, ed. Martin Coleman (NY: Fordham University Press, 2014), 235. Daniel Moreno writes of a “calculated ambiguity” (see his *Santayana the Philosopher*, 94). See Kremplewska, 24, footnote #3.

¹⁴ These are Kremplewska’s words, not Moreno’s. But she is closely paraphrasing his, specifically, those found in *Santayana the Philosopher*, 97.

cultural diagnosis, and the positive project" (25) of sketching, even if only in broad, bold strokes, rival forms of human polity. While he has his apparent preferences, he is engaged in a largely descriptive task, not a prescriptive one. Or so he characteristically insists.

"One of the aims of this book [i.e., her own study of Santayana] is," Krempleska informs her readers, "to reconstruct and (re-)interpret Santayana's political hermeneutics." To do so, she feels the need "to curb systematically Santayana's thinking while preserving the structure of his design" (19).¹⁵ Let me sketch the design of her book and, for the most part, allow the readers of this review to judge for themselves how much she has preserved the structure of Santayana's own design.

After making an effective case for the need to fill the gap in the scholarship on George Santayana and political thought, Krempleska tries to do so in nine chapters. Discussions of liberalism figure more prominently in her book than they do in Santayana's writings.

The book opens by providing the reader with an orientation to Santayana's approach. Chapter 1 ("Foundations and Contours") is devoted to four topics: dualities; realms and orders; powers, dominations, and virtues; and, finally, human nature, the human condition, and what she calls "negative anthropology." This anthropology "takes into account the limitations imposed on man by his condition and nature" (42). The emphasis falls decisively on finitude.

She opens Chapter 1 ("Foundations and Contours") by recalling Santayana's definition of politics. This definition is in effect a disambiguation of the term.

The word politics has a nobler and a meaner sense, and it is only in the latter that most people use it [today]. It may mean what relates to policy and polity—to the purposes of human cooperation and the constitution of society—or it may mean what relates to the *instruments* of policy only, as for instance to the form of government or to the persons who shall carry it on. (DP 164)¹⁶

Krempleska acknowledges "the boundary between the two senses is not always sharp." The two senses identify "two different traditions and attitudes toward politics" (23).

For the most part, Santayana is interested in *politics* in its nobler sense. To be sure, he is not altogether uninterested in, or indifferent to, some of the technical questions concerning *politics* in its "meaner sense," but the fundamental questions regarding the very constitution of human society and the legitimate purposes for

¹⁵ One might interject here, Ay, there's the rub. This would not be entirely unjustified, for the tendency to curb Santayana's thought in the very process of presenting it tends to make the expositor unduly intrusive, at those junctures where she is disposed to disagree with the subject of her exposition (and this means at those points where one often desires an exegete to double down in offering the most charitable interpretation possible). As I will stress elsewhere in this review, however, this is *her* book and she has an unquestionable right to conceive it in her singular manner and, then, execute it in accord with her design. But we as readers of course have the right to object or complain, expressing a desire for a less intrusive approach.

¹⁶ Quoted by Krempleska at the outset of Chapter 1 of her book (23).

instituting, reforming, or withdrawing from human polity are the ones to which he was most drawn.

As deep and interrogative as his interest in politics was, it was not “professional” or technical. In the etymological sense, it might even be described as the efforts of an *amateur* (the untutored lover), save for the extent to which he read very carefully in a number of the classics in political philosophy, especially those of ancient Greek authors, and save for the extent to which other loves were much more central. That is, one should not make too much of how untutored he was in the disciplines of political philosophy and science, nor can one make too much out of how subordinate his concern with politics was ultimately to the life of Spirit. Indeed, it is in the service of Spirit that one glimpses the animating concerns of his deepest convictions regarding political life. Krempleska discerns at least “a grain of truth” in Daniel Pinkas’s “controversial opinion”: especially in the later works, for better or worse, his [Santayana’s] primary aim is neither empirical adequacy nor conceptual clarity, but spiritual transformation” (Pinkas 182).¹⁷ From later discussions and emphases, it seems as though she finds more than a grain of truth in this position. In the interest of spiritual transformation, Santayana was not willing to sacrifice either empirical adequacy or conceptual clarity; rather he took pains to shift through the relevant experiences and forge¹⁸ contextually clear concepts as indispensable means for attaining spiritual transfiguration. “I am content to stand where honest laymen are standing, and to write as I might a friend on a country walk or in a tavern” (quoted by Krempleska, 13; Santayana, *Dominations and Powers*, 39). What allows such a discourse to be more than chitchat is that it is, after all, Santayana who on such a walk or in such a setting is doing the chatting. Ultimately the perspective of the layman is—or ought to be—decisive about how to inhabit the everyday world of human affairs, including that of political actuality.

In addition to a “duality” between politics in a nobler and a meaner sense, that is, the duality between a broadly philosophical treatment and a technical, instrumental approach to politics, Krempleska identifies several other dualities. One is “a duality of perspectives.” On the one hand, there is “the vantage point of an impartial observer, who attempts to describe the universal mechanisms or dynamics operative in the political realm” (24). On the other, there is the perspective of what I would identify as the *engaged participant* (or entangled organism). The author sees these two perspectives standing in “a problematic relation,” since the second of these is necessarily an idealistic or normative one. If by “idealistic” one means simply animated by ideals, then this is certainly true; but, in most of the senses in which Santayana himself used this word, the perspectives of the participant are not necessarily “idealistic” (indeed, they might be cynical, or disillusioned, or unblinkingly realistic). In any event, she reads Santayana as espousing a “vague pluralism and a qualified relativism” (25), neither of which precludes him from offering “general criteria of judgment pertaining to the political realm and an imaginative horizon of an ideal *politeia*.” Indeed, the specification of such criteria are,

¹⁷ Quoted by Krempleska (18)

¹⁸ As I read him, the task is not simply that of clarifying existing concepts; it encompasses creating or crafting sufficiently comprehensive and, moreover, truly fertile (or fecund) ones.

Kremplewska suggests, "the principal subject matter of the third, final part of *Dominations and Powers*," the part devoted to "rational order" (25). Of course, as a naturalist, Santayana does not think there is any possibility or necessity for offering any "universal, eternal, and transcendent normative pattern" (24). The ideals and norms rooted in natural processes and human practices (or traditions) are sufficient, and all that we need.

Kremplewska reports that a "bleak outlook ... prevails in *Dominations and Powers*." (26). She takes this to reflect "the grim circumstances of the political landscape in the first half of the 20th century", the time when this book was conceived and composed (26). She however discerns in it the "modest presence of a higher impulse" (26-27). "Insofar as psychic genius is alive and spirit ... is indestructible, there always is a chance for revival" (27). The author suggests it would be reasonable to "speculate that the growing bitterness, affected by the exceptional historical circumstances under which the final book ... was written, should have intensified the humanistic vein in him to the point that he speaks of 'sings against humanity'" (27). From the invitation to consider this possibility she turns abruptly to "Realms and Orders" (27-33).

So, in less than six pages, she presents the four realms of being (matter, essence, spirit, and truth) and the three orders delineated in *Dominations and Powers* (the *generative*, the *militant*, and the *rational* order). Those coming to Santayana for the first time, or even those coming back to him after not having read him for some time, are unlikely to find this treatment adequately instructive.

In Chapter 2 ("Liberty"), the author begins by discussing "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" and "English Liberty in America" as a way of setting the stage for *her* reflections on liberty or, kindlier and more fairly, her reflections on Santayana's reflections on liberty. As she interprets him (and this seems just right), Santayana deeply appreciated that "every conception of liberty contains a seed [better, seeds?] of servitude and no conception of freedom is impartial" (19). It includes an extended discussion of the crucial distinction between "vacant freedom" and "vital liberty." While her concern is with political liberty, as envisioned by Santayana, it is far more with "the extra-political premises" or presuppositions of his philosophy. She goes so far as to claim that freedom in a wider, or deeper, sense than the merely political "binds together his ontology, anthropology, [some of the] elements of his literary psychology, cultural criticism, and reflection on socio-political issues" (19-20). Moreover, his treatment of liberty in this sense displays the continuity of "his early and late works" (20), without denying shifts and changes in the course of his intellectual development. Despite being a critic of liberalism, he provides profound insights into human liberty, in its political and extra-political forms, and these insights might be extremely useful to those who espouse what he ultimately rejects or distances himself from. This is, at least, how I read her book, with its tendency to circle back to the question of liberty, as conceived

and defended by Isaiah Berlin,¹⁹ John Gray at certain earlier phases in his intellectual life, Russell Kirk, John Lachs et al.

Chapter 4 (75-86) is devoted to servitude, Chapter 5 is devoted to militancy. In the former, she treats “1) the state and society as sources of multifaceted servitude; 2) government as managing necessity, [and] 3) liberty as constituted amidst limitations” (20). In *Dominations and Powers*, however, Santayana treats servitude in the context of “the generative order of society.” For the reader who is unfamiliar with this book, Krempleska’s own does little, perhaps nothing to preserve the structure of Santayana’s own design (or, better, to convey an adequate sense of his subtle design). In the latter of these two chapters, the author’s focus is on “the multitude of ways in which initiative, competition, strife and war manifest themselves in the socio-political realm” (20). One might feel (I certainly did) that these two chapters are to a great extent missed opportunities. In a time not only of terrorism but also of increasing economic hardship for growing numbers of human beings, Santayana’s far-ranging and deep-cutting treatments of servitude and militancy seem especially relevant.

In the remaining five chapters, the author gathers and examines what is dispersed in his *oeuvre* (specifically, “his critique of liberalism, democracy, industrialization and communism”). She is however quick to note that Chapter 5 (“Arts as Powers and as Dominations”) looks at “the problem, raised by Santayana, of the relation between the anthropological and cultural functions of *arts*, as farmed by the ancients, and the status of work as well as liberal arts in the contemporary world”). This chapter includes a discussion of José Ortega y Gasset’s “The Dehumanization of Art” and “A Digression on Secularization” in which Charles Taylor figures prominently. (As favorably disposed to aspects of this book, I am unfavorably disposed to philosophers and other theorists writing about art when they limit their attention to theories of art, without examining or even mentioning specific art works.)

Chapter 6 is devoted to “The Fragility of Liberalism,” Chapter 7 to “Reflections on Self-Government, Democracy, and Justice,” Chapter 8 to “Santayana on Communism,” and, finally, Chapter 9 to “Conclusion and Further Reflections on Why Culture Matters.” Her discussion in Chapter 7 of justice in terms of charity and harmony is especially suggestive and provocative, her further reflections on culture is one of the places where her thought tends toward the facile and superficial. Indeed, “one of the overarching, though implicit, ideas that Santayana has conveyed in his writings on socio-political issues” very well might be “that *culture is wiser than politics*” (21). But the details alone make such a claim worthy of our attention. Alas, they are here all too few. A thick understanding of culture deserves—in truth, demands—anything but a thin conception of how culture actually works. In a footnote near the conclusion of Chapter 1, Krempleska quotes Clifford Geertz’s

¹⁹ At one point, the reader is reminded of “Josiah Berlin’s” distinction of positive and negative liberty (72). Moreover, the index to the book is barely adequate. I mention this merely to lodge a complaint against the publishers, not to level criticism at the author. If Brill is going to charge \$130.00, excluding shipping, for this book, this publisher should do better to ensure the highest quality of bookmaking.

definition of culture. Culture is, according to this influential anthropologist, "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols"(Geertz 89).²⁰ In the same place, she recalls Ernst Cassirer's memorable description of a human being as an *animal symbolicum*. She takes both Clifford's definition of culture and Cassirer's description to extend Santayana's "broad understanding" of culture, at the center of which is the "simple idea of shared practices and abilities. When she turns in Chapter 9 to her final consideration of human culture, Clifford and Cassirer are nowhere to be found."²¹

This overview should convey how vast a ground and (to some extent) how many topics are covered in a relatively short book. It should also impart a sense of the author's ambitions and aims. While there is at least occasionally a diffuseness to her treatment of topics which in Santayana's writings are more formally integrated, even when there is in his treatment an undeniable diffuseness. One of the principal threads running through *George Santayana's Hermeneutic Politics* is, as already indicated, the subject's lifelong preoccupation with human liberty in both its strictly political sense(s) and its "extra-political premises." More than anything else, this thread ties the author's treatment of a wide range of inherently important topics into a unified monograph.

A Polish scholar possibly turns to Santayana for somewhat different reasons than her American counterparts. Any thinker who has seen the horrors or simply the aftermath of tyrannical "socialism" will approach political philosophy far differently than those of us who are daily observing the ravages of capricious capitalism (or is it "capitalism"?). As Albert Camus in effect asked rhetorically decades ago, is our only choice between totalitarian socialism and anarchical capitalism? (Camus 93-94) What path, if any, can be carved between these extremes? When one reflects historically on various attempts to forge "a third way" one is brought up short. Indeed, the historical examples of national socialism or allied experiments can make the horrors of totalitarian socialism and the ravages of capacious capitalism pale greatly in comparison. What makes these horrors horrors and these ravages ravages is of course their inhumanity. However deeply Santayana was disillusioned with humanity, however much he could pose as the aloof observer of human folly, mendacity, and villainy, he was always convinced nothing will repay or reward human beings for being inhuman (244).

Since the author herself raised the question of the humanity of Santayana (27), it is appropriate to consider this important point in its historical context. In "The Logic of Fanaticism," a piece published in *The New Republic* in 1914, Santayana with his characteristic eloquence notes, "[n]othing will repay a man for becoming inhuman."²² It is telling that she does not forthrightly return to a point about which she speculated much earlier in this study (27). But she has invited us to do so seriously and honestly, so let's do just that.

²⁰ Quoted by Krempleska (21, note #68).

²¹ More precisely, there is a passing reference to Cassirer, but it is mostly in reference to totalitarianism, not culture (245).

²² Quoted by Krempleska (244).

The figure of Ezra Pound residing in Italy under Mussolini is, unquestionably, different than that of Santayana doing the same. But the personal price of enjoying English liberty appears to have been for the nomadic philosopher too high. Arguably he purchased it with his humanity (i.e., he maimed his humanity by his insensitivity or indifference to the immense suffering and unjustified degradation of ordinary human beings). Santayana's withdrawal from the world, while being critically attentive to the rough-and-tumble of historical events unfolding just beyond the walls of his residence and in distant places, never prompted an *apologia pro vita sua* taking the form of propaganda in which Mussolini was praised. But those sympathetic to him will always certainly cringe when they encounter such disclosures as this: "How much pleasanter this war, seen from Italy, than the other one, as I saw it, from England! I feel as if I were living in great days, and witnessing something important. Or is it a mere sequence with no causes and no promises?" (LGS to Ezra Pound, 19 November 1940)²³ In the abstract, the author of *Reason in Society* was quite emphatic: "the panegyrist of war places himself on the lowest level on which a moralist or patriot can stand and shows as great a want of refined feeling as of right reason. For the glories of war are all blood-stained, delirious, and infected with crime" (LR2 53). But, in the concrete, he would years later in *Dominations and Powers* (1951) write, death "as it overtakes the unwilling is ignominious; and it is ignominious even for the herded rabble, who are not spontaneously or personally soldiers, but poor conscripts with blank minds" (217). When referring to the ignominious deaths of common persons, John McCormick judges Santayana to be "philosophical, remote, and *inhuman*" (McCormick 1982, 422).

In this instance, the "madness" of the poet contrasts sharply with the reserve, to the point of inhumanity, of the philosopher. Of course, we might also recall another important political theorist who roughly at this time "resided" in prison. His *Prison Notebooks* would make an interesting foil to Santayana's mature reflections on political life, envisioned as an integral part of cultural life. The points of overlap are, in my judgment, more numerous and significant than those drawn to Santayana as a cultural critic and political theorist are likely to suspect. What might promise to do more for winning a hearing for Santayana's political and social thought than comparing *in detail* Gramsci and his writings in all their surprising overlaps and intersections, especially regarding the importance of local traditions, regional cultures, and hegemonic practices?

Karl Marx rather than Antonio Gramsci serves in *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics* as one of the foils (see especially Chapter 8). The "differences between Santayana and Marx are," in Krempleska's judgment, "unbridgeable differences," for they mark the difference between "an essentially non-utopian, pluralist worldview and a utopian project" (226). As she herself is forced to admit at several key moments, Santayana's political philosophy is certainly not devoid of utopian elements and, as any candid interpreter should acknowledge, the characterization of Marx as a utopian borders on caricature.

²³ Quoted by John McCormick (McCormick 1982, 421),

Russell Kirk wrote of Santayana: "He wrote on, nobly sane in a generation of frenzy; and surely the civilization which possesses a Santayana retains some chance for regeneration" (quoted by Krempleska, 8). Krempleska is drawn most strongly to the noble sanity of a political thinker, who was always much more than a cultural critic and political theorist, whose writings contain valuable resources for cultural regeneration, including political sobriety and balance. Her project of reclamation is bound up with this judgment regarding Santayana's writings providing resources for such regeneration. While she can be forthrightly critical of Santayana's efforts and achievements (see, e.g., p. 35), she is deeply appreciative of his aims and execution. For the most part, she is enlisting Santayana as an ally, not primarily offering an exposition of his writings on politics. In her endeavor to enlist him as an ally, Krempleska offers informative and insightful explications of Santayana's nuanced position, but one detects (at least, this reader felt) a certain impatience with extended analyses and intricate explications of either the relevant texts or even the basic positions. This is unfortunate since the author is so gifted at these tasks. But she has for the most part other fish to fry. The Introduction however makes the author's orientation very clear, so the attentive reader should not be surprised by the polemic character her own hermeneutic project (a principled polemic, but one being advanced for the sake of liberalism in its classical British sense). She makes a point of quoting James Seaton's observation, "regardless of Santayana's intentions, his 'approach has its own dangers'" (Krempleska, 7). And she is too honest a thinker or interpreter to refrain from pointing out what seem to be the most critical of those dangers. All politics is comparative, so the dangers inherent in Santayana's approach need to be realistically assessed in comparison to rival approaches. There are, in addition, the strictly hermeneutic dangers, those entailed by interpreting a project as comprehensive, subtle, and ambiguous as Santayana's in reference to, say, John Gray's (allegedly) anti-utopian liberalism or Marx's (also, allegedly) utopian socialism. Krempleska is not inappropriately guided by John Gray's astute observation regarding Santayana's political project: we observe at the heart of this project Santayana "abandoning the romantic culture of limitless *hubris* for the classical ethos of limitation and constraint" (v, 12). But there is so much more in Santayana's writings on political, social, and cultural topics than a political philosopher providing resources for "English liberty." Krempleska fully appreciates this, but her deep commitment to enlisting Santayana as an ally tends to have a distorting effect. Her expositions are not as fulsome and detailed as one reasonably would expect, while the possibility of Santayana staking a unique position in political philosophy is not considered as seriously as it warrants. While the author might be convinced that John Gray is right in claiming there is (in her words) "no serious and practically successful alternative to liberalism" (Krempleska 2018, 176), it is certainly ironic that Santayana himself might have sketched a reasonable and suggestive *alternative* to this form of liberalism, one incorporating within itself some of the fundamental insights of the liberal *ethos* of self-limitation, while offering a deep-cutting critique of classical liberalism. In the same breath as she endorses Gray's claim regarding such liberalism,²⁴ she readily acknowledges, "there is no

²⁴ This is her paraphrase of Gray's claim rather than a direct quotation.

escape from the problem of addressing inherited (and growing) economic injustices ... and [consideration of] some way of [redistributing] ... capital" (176). She correctly notes, Santayana "did not see much hope for correcting liberalism *within the scope of its influence*" (emphasis added). This inclines her to see a need for "reconsider[ing] the ideas of Santayana." But to what end? To shore up the classical liberalism position? To point to a genuine alternative? For some other reason? Gray reads Santayana as giving eloquent expression to "a comprehensive disenchantment with liberal theory" (Gray 1993, 31).²⁵ Krempleska reads Santayana as being "too disillusioned to lay a wager on the lasting endurance of the liberal order," perhaps also lacking "the spirit of activism to struggle for the preservation of liberalism" (176). She however does not read him as pronouncing the inevitable implosion of the liberal order: "his predictions were not apocalyptic" (177). Her own prediction is however vague in the extreme: we can expect "subsequent waves of change, perhaps including a dramatic upheaval, "possibly a major crisis of the Western world, or its absorption by powers beyond its civilizational scope, either of which, in turn, might pave way for some other, perhaps more harmonious, maybe even spiritually oriented arrangement in an unspecified future" (177). It does not seem to some of us that we need to await such a crisis. We are presently caught in its grip. The systemic inability of the liberal order to address effectively either rapidly escalating inequality and or an equally fast ecological crisis constitutes not only "a major crisis of the Western world": it seems to constitute a global crisis. The limits of our power to restore or heal either the natural world or our cultural worlds might be severely limited, but our power to destroy the very conditions of our own life do not seem so. The asymmetry here is as noteworthy as it is horrifying.

Hegel and Marx *began* where the forces of history demand Gray and Krempleska to return, without having much, if anything, to recommend. This tends to make the claim regarding liberalism ring hollow ("there is no serious and *practically* successful alternative to liberalism"²⁶ [emphasis added]). It may be that the poor will always be with us, but the distinctively late modern (or postmodern) forms of poverty threaten to join other forces and instrumentalities, making our time of "frenzy" far more confusing, unstable, and seemingly self-destructive than prior moments.

There might be, as Morris Grossman suggests, ambiguity and even duplicity "at the heart a smiling sadness of the entire Santayanian corpus" (quoted by Krempleska, 247). The fierce urgency of now might not provide the most appropriate setting for sad, ironic smiles or subtle, shifting ambiguities. There is disillusionment and disillusionment. To be disillusioned with a specific cultural order is one thing, to be disillusioned with the bulk humanity because of its alleged lack of intelligence is another. The extent to which Santayana's social and political philosophy is rooted in experiences of disillusionment is worthy of exploration.

At the conclusion of her study, Krempleska quotes what she identifies as a "humorous remark." "It may seem," Wilfrid M. McClay suggested in "The Unclaimed Legacy of George Santayana," "mildly self-subverting to invoke such a

²⁵ Quoted by Krempleska (176).

²⁶ Again, this is Krempleska's paraphrase of Gray's stance, not a direct quotation (176).

spirit of *Gelassenheit* [as represented by Santayana] as a form of cultural improvement; and to be sure, one does not want perversely, to turn Santayana into the new guru of moral uplift and self-help" (McClay 2007, 144).²⁷ To *let be* the flowerings of Spirit in their boundless heterogeneity and singular radiance – to invoke the very "spirit of *Gelassenheit*" as an opportunity for such outpourings of Spirit in Santayana's sense – is indeed hardly an instance of self-subversion or, simply, subversion by another (say, by an interpreter or advocate). The invocation of *Gelassenheit* here rather signals the practical import of his unabashed relativism. We would do well to appreciate "Santayana's astonishingly rich legacy" (Kremplewska, 247) "for what it is and what it could mean to us," also to "appropriate it on whatever terms make sense to us" (McClay; quoted by Kremplewska, 247). The reclamation of (to use McClay's expression) "an unclaimed legacy" is strictly speaking an impossible undertaking. No one can reclaim what has not been at some point already claimed. Moreover, the task of anyone devoted to "the critical-hermeneutical form of ... [Santayana's] reflections" might execute it by herself engaging in this very form of reflection. That is, both the subject and the method or approach might be instances of "critical-hermeneutical" reflection – in the first instance, such reflection as exemplified by Santayana himself, in the second, such reflection as it guides a study of his thought with focused interest on this specific dimension of his rich if still largely potential legacy for political philosophy.

Katarzyna Kremplewska's book is nothing less than an engagement in critical-hermeneutic reflection, focused on the critical-hermeneutic reflections of George Santayana himself, especially as they are encountered in *Dominations and Powers*. Scholars of Santayana's writings have reason to welcome this "attempt at reconstruction and interpretation of Santayana's political philosophy" (9).

While John Dewey's philosophy of religion was to a great extent peripheral to his principal preoccupations, a consideration of it might prove instructive for understanding both religion and his philosophy in general. So, too, while C. S. Peirce's scattered reflections on political topics were far removed from the center of his strictly philosophical interests, these reflections might also illuminate both aspects of politics and his philosophy more generally. Broadly social and narrowly political concerns were in fact far from peripheral to Santayana's philosophical interests, even if he addressed them in a manner apparently at odds with the prevailing forms of political philosophy. In addition to *Dominations and Powers*, one of the volumes of *The Life of Reason* was of course devoted to society. Moreover, Santayana's *Dialogues* and *Soliloquies* unquestionably address some of the most central questions in social and political philosophy. Nor have scholars altogether ignored his contribution to this field. Kremplewska concludes her study with "Further Reflections on Why Culture Matters" (Chapter 9). There are in effect centripetal and centrifugal forces at work in Santayana's social and political philosophy. On the one side, there are forces driving him to take into detailed consideration widely scattered topics and to relate these topics in a form immediately suggested by their very topicality. On the other, there are ones driving him back to the center of his

²⁷ Quoted by Kremplewska (247).

vision. As Kremplewska puts it, “Santayana’s political hermeneutics . . . is characterized, on the one hand, by syncretism and an intimidating breadth of thematic scope and, on the other, an integrity” (235). This traces the integrity of this hermeneutics to his “naturalistic commitment as well as the humanistic and individualistic orientation of the author.”

“Nothing,” Santayana insists, as we have already had occasion to note, “will repay a man for becoming inhuman” (244). But nothing is harder for any individual to discern or discover than the respects in, and depths to, which that individual is inhuman or simply complicit in regimes wherein the inhuman treatment of human beings is so pervasive, habitual, and deep that it is invisible to those enjoying power, privilege, and prestige. Here more than anywhere else is it difficult, for the human animal to frame “an adequate conception of his interests,” comprehensively considered and wisely comprehended.

“Our real enemy is,” Santayana asserts, “too large to be seen, being the universe; or too near, being ourselves” (DP 217).²⁸ Might there not be, as Hegel suggested, a form of *hubris* in knowing too confidently that the universe is too large or our own selves too near to be known? Whatever or whoever might be our real enemy, our proximate enemies are often far from anonymous or faceless. While they always include ourselves, they include countless other beings who in one way or another (for the most part) unwittingly conspire to thwart our efforts and to limit our freedom. This need not prompt us to embrace the view that “[s]ociety suffocates liberty by existing” (75). There is certainly an irony in Santayana espousing the same stance as Emerson. “Society everywhere is,” claims the sage of Concord, “in conspiracy against the manhood of every one of its members” (“Self-Reliance,” Emerson 178). Aristotle, Hegel, Marx, Dewey, and countless other political philosophers argue for the opposite position. The enabling constraints of a just society do more to secure *individual* liberty than would the conditions postulated by anarchists, libertarians, and even “liberals.” The very existence of any society might contribute to the suffocation of individuals; it might truly be in some respects “a conspiracy against the individual.” It is, however, far more a necessary condition for what Santayana himself identified as “vital freedom” (cf. Dewey’s *Freedom and Culture*; LW 13). “To view institutions as enemies of freedom,” to quickly pit society as a vast networking of interwoven institutions *against* the individual, “and all conventions as slaveries, is,” John Dewey rightly notes in *Human Nature and Conduct*, “to deny the only means by which positive [or vital] freedom can be secured” (MW 14, 115).²⁹ It is all too easy to overlook the massive extent to which social arrangements make individual liberty possible. Indeed, it is nothing less than impiety to lack appreciation for the respects in which social inheritances underwrite human liberty (see the chapter on piety in Santayana’s own *Reason in Religion*).

²⁸ Quoted by Kremplewska (120).

²⁹ Dewey is especially good at making this point in *Freedom and Culture* (LW 13). A detailed comparison between him and Santayana on conventions, institutions, and symbols is another important gap in the scholarship on “American” thought and, in particular, a gap concerning each of these thinkers in reference to their contribution to social and political thought.

Every effort to make heaven on earth might have resulted, as Karl Popper insisted, in constructing a form of hell for many denizens of those utopian experiments. But the resistance to some radical reforms has meant that countless people have remained in abject servitude for subsistence wages or less. The dangers and ravages unleashed by utopians are not necessarily greater than the misery and degradation inflicted by the actual conditions of human beings thrown into economic conditions over which they have had no choice.

For a variety of reasons, George Santayana's *Domination and Powers* deserves a wider readership than it has ever secured. Katarzyna Krempleska's book on his critical-hermeneutic approach to politics, society, and culture should assist in accomplishing this. One can imagine a different book doing more to win a wider audience for Santayana's multifaceted contribution to especially political thought. For instance, one can imagine a book which put him more fully into conversation with John Dewey, Walter Lippmann, John Rawls, Jürgen Habermas, Will Kymlicka, Michael Sandel, Axel Honneth, Nancy Fraser, and Richard Rorty rather than "Ernst Cassirer, José Ortega y Gasset, René Girard, Paul Ricoeur, Arthur Schopenhauer, and Arnold Toynbee" (21-22). Moreover, one can imagine a book in which the author endeavored both to interpret Santayana on his own terms and to thrust him, so understood, into the midst of the current debates in political philosophy. It is certainly conceivable that thrusting him into these debates might in more than a few instances require reconfiguring the terms of those controversies. But to portray George Santayana as a political philosopher, at such a distance from the defining concerns of political philosophy today, promises to do little to win him a hearing among a relevant audience.

As a literary author, Santayana's ambiguities and ambivalences are as noteworthy as are those countless instances of his crystalline clarity and of his childlike simplicity. The dualities identified by Krempleska in Chapter 1 (23-27) might be seen as tensions expressed ambiguously, in a "controlled" rather than unwitting or unintentional manner (cf. p. 247), and indeed a number of other dualities or tensions might be added to her list. The creative tensions at the heart of any project are almost always unresolvable. At times I felt as though Krempleska was too earnest. This was most often felt when she identified ambiguities only to suggest possibilities for resolving them into a more clarified, coherent position than anything found in Santayana's texts. As a result, I felt the playful, ironic, and elusive persona of this author was a risk of being rendered more respectable and unobjectionable than he would have liked. Unquestionably, Krempleska herself stresses his irony and provocations, but her philological approach and sensitivity do not seem to be completely comfortable with these facets of Santayana's authorship. Even so, the reading of Santayana offered in Chapter 4 ("Militancy") cuts against this, suggesting that in his last book, "Santayana keeps switching in-between two or more masks – that of an insightful observer and a critic, a moralist, and a detached and disillusioned poet dwelling in his unworldly [or eternal] realm" (121).³⁰

³⁰ Though this might seem to count up to four masks, I take Krempleska to mean the insightful, avowedly uncommitted observer assumes now the persona of the critic, now that of the moralist, and finally that of the disillusioned, detached poet.

If I have stressed some of the ways in which Katarzyna Krempleska might have written a better book (better designed to accomplish *her* purpose), I should not be taken to be saying she has not written a good book and, in most important respects, a very good one. There is much to be learned from reading and re-reading her creative appropriation of Santayana's "unclaimed legacy." A contemporary theorist such as John Gray is, even more so, one from whom all of us, especially those who are, like me, on the left, can learn. His influence in shaping Krempleska's engagement with Santayana's thought both distorts and illuminates her treatment of that thought. Given the dearth of literature available on this topic, however, I would have liked a fuller, deeper engagement with Santayana's writings. The strongest case for his relevance required nothing less. Given the interests, aspirations, and background of the author, however, her book is after all *her* book. In some respects, it is as idiosyncratic and unconventional—possibly even as diffuse (cf. p. 6)—as her subject. But, like him, it is also provocative and suggestive, full of sharp distinctions and, alas, truncated treatments of crucial topics. A promise only partly fulfilled can nonetheless be more than this suggests. In this instance, indeed, just the partial fulfillment of a large, complex promise turns out to be a significant accomplishment meriting high praise.

The author's aim was to fill a gap in the scholarship on Santayana in such a way as to win a wider hearing for his unjustly overlooked contribution to social and political thought. With erudition, insight, and spiritedness, she has filled this gap. As Santayana would have appreciated as deeply as anyone else, alas, the fate of her book is, also, in the hands of the fates—and these are often capricious and even cruel hands. One can hope the work of Katarzyna Krempleska, Krzysztof P. Skowroński, and other European scholars, allied to the efforts of John Lachs, Daniel Moreno, Jessica Wahman, and of course others, will exhibit the salience and vitality of George Santayana's complete *oeuvre*, including *Dominations and Powers*. One can also hope that, if such a development were to occur, that body of writings will be shown to be in some respects directly relevant to political and social thought, as it is presently configured, and, in other respects, broadly suggestive of how present discourse and indeed practice might be reconfigured. Finally, his deep ambivalence toward "British liberty" and the frequently eloquent champions of influential lineage – his deep appreciation married to his no less deep skepticism regarding the supposedly benevolent results flowing from its indefinite expansion – invites us to read this ambivalence as one of the defining tendencies of his subtle temperament. He could praise aspects of fascism without being a fascist, just as he could praise facets of liberalism without being a liberal. While there might be "liberals" or progressives who are disposed to denounce Santayana as a fascist or simply yet another silly, uninformed philosopher who cannot see, let alone interpret accurately, what is taking place before his very eyes, while there might also be liberals such as Russell Kirk, Jude Dougherty, John Gray, and others who see in him a valuable ally, it is crucial to remember that, in the end (and, moreover, at critical junctures along a circuitous path), Santayana remained the ironic observer of human folly born of seemingly irrepressible *hubris*.

It is, however, no less crucial to recall that this generally humane and unquestionably urbane interpreter and critic of the human scene could be less than human.

The flaws in his critical-hermeneutic politics are manifestly discernible in his treatment of two intimately related topics. They are nowhere more evident in his remarks about war and those about servitude. The advantages accruing to being in a position, due in no small measure to his self-discipline, of living a life of the mind, aloof from entanglements, carried certain disadvantages. It arguably allowed his inhumanity toward the various forms of servitude to go unnoticed by this characteristically most candid and astute of critics.³¹ Self-understanding is not only a difficult achievement. It is also frequently an elusive and always a partial attainment. It is nonetheless a notable and instructive one. The eloquence, depth, and subtlety with which George Santayana, despite being occasionally marred by inhumanity, articulates such understanding in a singularly significant and salient manner, as Katarzyna Krempleska makes plain.

VINCENT M. COLAPIETRO

³¹ No human is exempt, certainly not me, from inhumanity. To be human is not only to be inhuman but also (as James implied in "A Certain Blindness in Human Beings") to be mostly blind to the specific ways in which we are inhuman to others and indeed to ourselves.

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Review of *John Lachs's Practical Philosophy*

Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński (Ed.) 2018. *John Lachs's Practical Philosophy: Critical Essays on His Thought with Replies and Bibliography*. Boston: Brill. 348 pp., paperback

John Lachs's *Practical Philosophy* consists of a selection of articles dedicated to the clarification, expansion, and criticism of central aspects of Lachs's practical philosophy. Covering an impressive range of topics, the articles are typically well written, thought provoking, and along with Lachs's penetrating, punchy replies, provide a window into the distinguished Professor's thought, its interpretation, and significance.

Lachs enthusiasts, like me, will not be disappointed, since not only do the articles bring distinctive elements of his thought under new light, but one gets the pleasure of witnessing his renowned quick wit go to work after each entry, and Lachs himself gets the last word in the sobering, reflective essay "Death and Self-Importance." His succinct replies are typically only a page or two in length, but indispensable to the collection, since they tend to perform a gentle corrective or clarifying function regarding a number of objections or misunderstandings that arise.

The book begins with a preface written by the editor Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński, an informative introduction by Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. that sets the tone of the volume, and a prologue written by Lachs. The bulk of the articles are grouped thematically under four parts, though there is an addendum that contains two further essays, the first of which is by Phil Oliver; it balances a concern for the future with the enjoyment of the present from a Lachsian perspective. The second, as mentioned, is Lachs's essay. Part 1 is devoted to "The Practice of Philosophizing," and includes, for example, discussion of such topics as philosophical education's role in society and Lachs's relationship to posthumanism. Essays in Part 2 are grouped under the heading "Philosophical Relationships," and here we get, among other things, a glimpse of how Lachs's philosophy is situated in relation to the views of such figures as Santayana, Dewey, and James. Part 3 deals more exclusively with Lachs's *Stoic Pragmatism*, and in it we become better acquainted with such operative notions in his thought as "moral holiday," "human blindness," and "the good enough." Part 4 is titled: "Anthropology, Social Ethics, and Bioethics," and in this section we find, for instance, discussions of corporate agency, "mediation"—a central Lachsian notion—agency in dying, and even the folly of self-help books. The collection also contains a comprehensive bibliography of primary and secondary sources, which is particularly helpful given that Lachs is such a prolific writer.

Summarizing or critically examining each article and reply here would be a colossal undertaking. I will instead confine myself to the following three tasks: 1) Noting some of the more remarkable ways a number of the articles, together with Lachs's responses, help to clarify, identify, expand, or apply his approach; 2) Highlighting interesting points of contention between Lachs and his interlocutors; and

3) Underscoring a number of critical gaps, as I see them, in the collection's evaluation or treatment of Lachs's views.

Regarding the last task, I would like to say a few words at the outset: In my estimation, the book is successful in that it advances, to a significant extent, Lachs scholarship and practical philosophy more generally. It also serves as a "tributary portrait" of the philosopher, to borrow a phrase from Matthew Flamm's article (Flamm, 287).¹ And indeed, one of the stated objectives of the collection is to celebrate the renowned professor (Saatkamp, xx). But on more than one occasion, one wonders whether this objective tended to overwhelm the project of critical engagement. Lachs even notes in one instance that "hearing excessive praise" makes it seem as though one is "at a wake," and, humorously, that he is "not dead yet" (Lachs, 235). And in another reply, he cordially states: "[M]y only criticism of . . . [the article] is that it is not critical *enough* [my emphasis]" (Lachs, 91).

If too much eulogizing and not enough criticism are in this volume, that would be a mistake. A tribute to a philosopher should be chock-full of criticism; in my view, one properly pays homage to a philosopher precisely *through* providing a careful accounting and uncompromising critique of his or her philosophical views. Vincent Colapietro gets it right when he reports in his contribution that "the [philosophers] '[w]e respect most are those . . . we take seriously enough to criticize'" (Colapietro, 222). And note Lachs's sage observation from his pivotal book *Stoic Pragmatism*: "Severe criticism of others' views is compatible with the most cordial of human relations and a hearty appreciation of their philosophical excellence" (Lachs 2012, 103). Granted, the collection's stated approach (found in the introduction) is to not only criticize Lachs's views, but amplify, clarify, expand, and apply them (Saatkamp, xx). These are useful ends and are intrinsic to the celebration of a philosopher, no doubt. As will become evident, the collection contains an interesting balance of these elements. However, I am concerned that this collection is a little light on criticism.

Michael Hodges's excellent expansions on a central aspect of Lachs's thought—one that gets some further consideration in the collection—namely, his notion of *transcendence*, is the first out of the gate. Lachsian transcendence is a notion that derives from Santayana's doctrine of essence and aesthetic theory. Briefly, the doctrine of essence is a quasi-Platonic view according to which there is an atemporal realm of infinite universal qualities or characterizing properties, some of which are instantiated in material substrate and are responsible for the type-individuation of existent things, others of which appear in consciousness as bare or mere universals.

Transcendence is achieved according to Lachs, we are told, through disinterested contemplation of essence, which is to say, an apprehension of essences that is disengaged from practical concern (in Santayanan terminology, "pure intuition"), wherein they "are attended to for their own sake." (Hodges 4). The appreciation of beauty is paradigmatic of such disinterested contemplation (Hodges 5). As Lachs

¹ References without dates are to the book being reviewed. They give the author followed by the page number.

states, "Transcendence can be achieved only by the disinterested contemplation of beauty" (1997, 250). Since every quality or relation whatsoever is a universal form that is a possible object of disinterested contemplation, beauty is "democratized . . . to the point where anyone can be thought to have access to it at any time" (Lachs 1997, 250). Hodges offers examples from modern art to corroborate the "democratization of subject matter and so of objects offered for disinterested contemplation" (Hodges, 6)—disinterested contemplation, he thinks, *contra* Lachs, can be pried apart from the appreciation of beauty. Marcel Duchamp's famous "Fountain" is among such examples.

Precisely how such contemplation may be practically beneficial, we are told, is that it provides a respite from the daily grind of life (Hodges, 9); it performs a rejuvenating function, or, to deploy a cheeky illustration from Richard Rubin's article, it functions as a "brief vacation [that] leaves you refreshed and better able to use Excel spreadsheets" (Rubin, 126).

Hodges argues that exaggerated cases indicate that there is a deep incommensurability between the two modes of thought, transcendent (spiritual) disengagement and practical or moral concern, such that they are not coherently integrated (Hodges, 10-14). Lachs responds to Hodges's worry by appealing to the temporal distribution of moments of spirituality and practical engagement (Lachs, 15); in short, spirituality and practical engagement are no more in conflict than are brushing one's teeth and enjoying a big, sugary desert.

A legitimate concern is that there are Santayanan grounds to think that these brief respites or acts of transcendent disengagement from the drudgery of worldly affairs, where "for a moment anyway we seem to float above it all" (Hodges, 5), are open only to those who are already in rather protected and secure positions.² As Santayana notes, "The appreciation of beauty and its embodiment in the arts are activities which belong to our holiday life, when we are redeemed for the moment from the shadow of evil and the slavery to fear" (SB 25). Individuals, then, who are likely most in need of such respite will have extreme difficulty in disengaging from their moral or practical postures in order to receive it. In periods of serious or grave concern, for instance, the roses just don't smell the same, as it were, and if one has the mental space to stop and smell the roses, evidently some degree of respite has already been achieved.

Thus, Lachs's cheering affirmation that "[b]eauty lifts the oppression of need and circumstance . . . [and] at least yields temporary relief by providing something beyond the values of struggle, survival, and success" (Lachs 1997, 250) seems fairly dubious. On the contrary, disinterested contemplation presupposes, to borrow Lachs's phrase, a "liberated mind" (Lachs, 149), and therefore cannot be a foundational source of the relevant respite. Therefore, its proposed practical utility is not only limited (to relatively worry-free populations), but verges on being redundant.

² If one consults Lachs's original paper on which Hodges's article is based, i.e., "Transcendence in Philosophy in Everyday Life," one quickly understands that it is people living under "the modern sky" (1997, 251) that he is principally addressing.

It is thus uncertain that it can, as Lachs claims, “make the terror disappear” (Lachs 1997, 254).

On the other hand, another theme of the collection is that Lachs is not beholden to the idiosyncratic view, method, or framework of any particular historical figure, but nevertheless happily appropriates anything useful while dispensing with anything that is not.³ Daniel Pinkas reminds us that Lachs shares this practical eclecticism with Santayana (Pinkas, 163). When Lachs borrows from historical figures, it is quite *à la carte*.

Therefore, it is no objection to his account that it merely departs from a strictly Santayanan view. Indeed, in his reply to Rubin, he boldly declares that “[i]n reading Richard Rubin’s vigorous essay, I could not avoid asking myself what difference it would make if I got Santayana’s ideas wrong” (Lachs, 133)—quite a revelatory admission for perhaps the greatest Santayana scholar to date, one that testifies to the primacy of his practical focus.

The collection also attests to the deep devotion Lachs has to his pedagogical service; this devotion is based on the strength of his conviction in the value of philosophical education, as he understands it. Lachs’s vision is a practical one. The proper objective of philosophical education, he thinks, should not be the deliverance of hyper-specialized theoretical expertise in subject matters that have little or nothing to do with practical affairs. Rather, as Skowroński puts it, on Lachs’s view, philosophical education “should predominantly deal with the existential dimension of both social and individual life” (Skowroński, 59), and it should likewise facilitate the development of well-rounded, as Kelley Parker says, “socially engaged practical philosophers who think and act around big questions” (Parker, 36).

This approach, we learn, involves reforming the standard curriculum of philosophy such that it is made more pertinent to “the real needs of students” (Skowroński, 60) and such that it prioritizes “the provision of a broad spectrum of experiences” over the “transmitting [of] articulate knowledge and teaching [of] intellectual rigor” (Brodrick, 259). Such reforms, Michael Brodrick notes, require that students be exposed to real-world experiences in the community (Brodrick, 258). He argues that these reforms would not only be costly, difficult to arrange institutionally, but also would likely undermine a traditional and important goal of liberal education, i.e., to teach intellectual discipline or rigor (Brodrick, 259-260). In his reply, Lachs confirms that he is comfortable with this last-mentioned consequence, writing that “I don’t think that liberal education on the college level must or should remain intellectual.” (Lachs, 267) Again, quite a revelatory declaration.

Lachs’s ideal of philosophical education and philosophy’s role in society implies a return to the American tradition of philosophers as public intellectuals (Lachs 2012, 25). His vision in this regard is, he observes, represented within the programme of applied or professionalized ethics:

Philosophers can lavish exquisite critical attention on the assumptions and methods of other fields and produce a morally and politically sophisticated citizenry. They have already established indispensable roles for themselves in

³ See, e.g., Horváth on Lachs’s “eclectic approach” (Horváth, 135; see also Pinkas, 162).

hospitals, in the formulation of public policies, and in corporations. (Lachs 2012, 24)

This theme is repeated in Parker's article (Parker, 30-33).

A key product of Lachs's distinctive pedagogical approach and emphasis on practical application is illustrated in the flesh, as it were, by this collection, as some of its contributors are Lachs's former students who have gone on to become, evidently, credentialed advocates of social change.

A connected feature of Lachs's philosophy that receives attention in the collection is his value relativism and corollary opposition to absolutist principles. In his reply to Skowroński, who claims to identify a potential tension between value relativism and Lachs's staunch prioritization of the value of philosophical education, we get a needed clarification of Lachsian value relativism, which is not, we are assured, an "anything-goes" relativism regarding value (Lachs, 74), but one which is better understood as a "relationalism" (Fiala, 99) that is Aristotelian in nature (Lachs, 74), according to which the "good" is not some absolute, unconditional thing, but is rather something conditional relative to the specific, varying natures of organisms.⁴ This is a very wise view; it makes the examination of value tethered to empirical discovery. Lachs also holds on Santayanan grounds, that there is not a single human *nature*, but rather that there are multiple human *natures* (Weber, 189)—for, each individual instantiates his or her own unique essence, and it is quite improbable that precisely the same human essence should be repeated. Thus, it is theoretically possible that the definition of the human good is subject to extreme variation. However, in his reply to Skowroński (Lachs, 74), Lachs affirms that our natures, while distinct, are nevertheless sufficiently resembling. This resemblance, I take it, forms the ground for what is perhaps the closest thing to an absolute value in Lachs, namely, the value of "operational independence" or freedom, to which we shall turn momentarily.

First, there is merit in Skowroński's worry that Lachs's vision for philosophical education runs afoul of his value relationalism, but for reasons that are not made explicit. College or university education has traditionally been open to children from relatively affluent families, or if one is lucky, one might receive a scholarship, but a vast majority of students are saddled with massive debt to earn their degrees.⁵ Take the last-mentioned case: One comes out of one's program financially compromised and, especially for philosophers, probably in some degree of occupation-seeking desperation. The difficulty of securing good-paying, steady academic employment and the relative ease of becoming a portion of the under-paid majority of university faculty, the adjunct or sessional rank, weigh heavily upon the mind. If

⁴ Such a view is consistent with *humanism* as Santayana defines it—who likewise distinguishes the relevant view from the sort of subjectivist moral relativism with which it tends to be conflated (see RB 530-531).

⁵ Indeed, it has been reported that regarding the 2019-2020 academic year, "[a]mong public institutions [for instance]. . . tuition and fees increased a jaw-dropping 4.6 times their 1963 value, skyrocketing from \$2,029 to \$9,349 [both figures reflecting 2019 dollars]" (Dodge, para. 20).

scholars of philosophy are fortunate and land jobs as ethicists or policy advisors in non-academic institutions, it strikes me that, unless they are particularly courageous and uncompromising, such institutions might easily exploit them. For these scholars have been anointed “experts,” and thus authoritative with respect to ethical issues, but such expertise without courage or other rare virtues of character can be misappropriated to serve as cover for institutional malfeasance. Or, consider the case of more affluent students: Unchecked affluence tends to lead to what are colloquially called “luxury beliefs,” which is to say, beliefs, typically about ethical or policy matters, that if implemented, would be of little consequence to the individual holding them, but which would impose a high cost on many less privileged people. An apt characterization of this phenomenon would be *ivory tower* or *elite activism*.

It is, I think, in the effort to avoid such undesirable effects that Lachs stresses the importance of implementing a sort of “practicum” for liberal arts education, in which students would go out into the community and get hands-on (“lived”) experiences so that they may get a sense of how their beliefs or theories relate and likewise in order to break down the disconnect “. . . between [themselves] and those with whom [they] are socially integrated” (Padrón, 81). This is a theme that is repeated in the collection.

However, such community involvements, short, perhaps, of full-fledged Simone Weil-style immersion—into factory labour in Paris in the nineteen thirties (an excursion that “served as a direct contact with unhappiness, which, she said, killed her youth, entered her flesh and soul, and stamped on her the ‘mark of the slave’” (Panichas 1977, 53)⁶—seem to approximate “camp” for elites; and if so, they are wholly inadequate for correcting what I have termed luxury beliefs and also for addressing the abovementioned disconnect. Brodrick’s remarks on the proposed practicums of liberal education tend to amplify such suspicions.

Certainly there are elements in Lachs’s thought designed to quell these sorts of suspicions. For instance, Parker (Parker, 21-22) highlights that Lachs emphasizes face-to-face instruction and the importance of professors demonstrating virtue through providing “firsthand contact with remarkable people whose knowledge . . . and experience . . . have been integrated into the unity of a person” (Lachs 2014a, 419). Such creative engagement is crucial if Lachs is correct in his speculation that “all learning is imitation” (Lachs 2014b, 26).

Lachs himself exemplifies a powerful brand of courageous intellectualism; this is undeniable. But courage cannot be taught in a semester (it proceeds through a long process of hard habitual training and exposure to circumstances in which courage is required). And besides, Lachs frequently complains of a virtual epidemic of cowardliness in academic intellectuals (e.g., Lachs 2012, 20; 85), an infirmity that is casually noted in the collection (see, e.g., Pinkas, 154).

In short, the dissonance between Lachs’s sharp criticism of academics, i.e., that they have a duty to speak their minds and truth to power, have all of the resources and job security to do so, and yet often are cowards (Chapter 1 of *Community of*

⁶As it turns out, one detects something of Weil in Lachs insofar as she also insists that “teaching must itself become more concrete” (Weil 1977, 71).

Individuals goes so far as to begin with a passage from *The Treason of Intellectuals*) and his championing of professionalized ethics is rather jarring. It is, moreover, natural to wonder if this championing violates a properly value-relationalist approach, insofar as it does not sufficiently factor in the typical nature of contemporary academics or the context of the times. It would have been worthwhile addressing this tension explicitly in the collection, as, frankly, Parker's image of "Deploying Legions of Liberally Educated Change Agents into the World" (Parker, 33) scares me, and not merely because of its militaristic tone.

A defining feature of Lachs's practical philosophy is his anti-collectivist, anti-interventionist defense of the sovereignty of the individual as an integral source of both human happiness and social health. Lachs is weary of paternalistic encroachments—he goes so far as to write an entire book against "meddling"⁷, understood broadly to involve unsolicited intrusions into the affairs of others. This respect for individual autonomy is a very attractive aspect of his philosophy. He likewise vehemently rejects notions of corporate agency that ascribe moral properties or rational agency to institutions over and above that which is predicative of the individuals composing them. Not only are such ascriptions false, he believes—"[t]here are no magical social causes other than what individuals singly or conjointly do" (2014c, 26)—but they also tend to give rise to a dangerous illusion that individuals are blameless cogs in their institutional roles; such a mindset leads to a "morally insensitive society" where people fail to recognize that they "always have the power to cry halt" (2014c, 25).

One article in the collection, written by Jacquelyn Kegley, is devoted to this question, i.e., institutional agency, but others take up the issue as well (see the articles written by Flamm, Colapietro, and Pinkas, respectively). She argues that "[a]ccountability is both communal and individual" (Kegley, 241) and that "individual persons are actors, but so are groups, institutions, and communities. Organizations and communities are more than a sum of their parts" (Kegley, 239). Further, she writes "social groups and organizations . . . can be held morally responsible, along with their individual members" (Kegley, 239). She expresses a concern that "Lachs's view is inadequate to deal with institutional evils such as institutional racism or with sociopathic institutions" (Kegley, 239-40).

The article works to undermine the rationale for Lachs's individualism by noting the dependency of individuals on others and social forces at large: "[T]he origin of the human self is foundationally social, even at a most fundamental psychological level. Human persons can create selves that are independent and uniquely individual, but these are created and made in social interactions with others." (Kegley, 236) A similar line of reasoning arises in Matthew Flamm's article.

However, these discussions, as Lachs has an opportunity to point out, fail to consider his crucial distinction between *ontological* and *operational independence*: As he explains,

Flamm argues for the interdependence of people and against the illusion of independence. He doesn't draw the distinction I do between ontological

⁷ The book is appropriately titled *Meddling: On the Virtue of Leaving Others Alone*.

dependence and operational independence. There is no question that, as social animals, we couldn't be born, raised, protected, fed, and satisfied without our fellows. But it is equally clear that we glory in self-initiated actions and that we can do a great deal without the direct intervention of others. (Lachs, 297)

And,

Kegley returns again and again to the social origins and embeddedness of individuals . . . Selves develop and flourish in the company of others, but that doesn't mean that the collection of people does anything over and above what is accomplished by constituent individuals. (Lachs, 250)

Evidently, this sensible distinction needs to be emphasized. The only state of affairs that would undermine the legitimacy of this distinction is if the decision-making of others is actually interior to or invades an individual's ostensibly private decision-making or endorsements of the will. This infusion of one's will with the will of an other or the collective is the sort of phenomenon that is fictionalized in *Star Trek's* episodes about the Borg, and it is likewise a phenomenon perhaps approximated by ant colonies (cf. Lachs 2014c, 25), but Lachs is on solid ground to reject that that is how human beings operate—*yet*.⁸ As he elsewhere points-out, “Humans, like cats, are ornery: only they can operate their bodies, and they do largely what they want” (Lachs 2014c, 26).

Lachs's rejection of any view that applies moral properties to corporations or institutions *per se* is, I believe, sound, and likewise, he is right to think there is no legitimacy to the often-repeated defence of “just doing my job.” However, his reductionist account of institutions also seems overly simplistic—one can dissolve a corporation without annihilating its constituent members, and institutions can typically survive a replacement of their constituent parts. The hesitation of Lachs's critics to regard institutions as mere aggregations of individuals therefore surely has some basis.

Moreover, the preceding raises the question of the moral status of the refusal to perform socially destructive occupational duties. Usually, as soon as an employee of a corporation, say, performs actions that are not consistent with corporate policy, he or she is ejected and replaced by someone who will. Short of formidable internal resistance (mass non-compliance) or a lack of suitable replacements for dissenting employees—and both of these alternatives are evidently quite rare occurrences—it appears that dissenting ethical judgments of employees become rather moot and are subordinated to corporate internal decision-making and corporate policy.

The ethical value of refusing to perform destructive occupational duties is put in jeopardy by such considerations, at least on consequentialist grounds. For—and this is, unfortunately, a very common thought—my workplace refusal is of no social benefit, since I will simply be replaced by someone else who will complete the evil task (indeed, likely by an even more unscrupulous individual than I for which

⁸ For perhaps a rather bleak counterpoint, cf. Williamson on “psychological governance within education” and the emerging “psychocracy”; the picture of our socio-economic future he paints strikes me as rather Borg-like.

the question of following immoral orders won't even arise). Not only that, but such refusal is likely of negative personal utility (the fleeting feelings of guilt involved notwithstanding), since I will be deprived of the opportunity for compensation for that particular task.

This rather intractable problem, rife with a tension between individual and collective rationality, suggests that considering corporations or bureaucracies more like amoral automata that lack the propensity for moral self-correction as opposed to mere aggregations of individuals is a better approximation of facts on the ground. As John Ladd wrote within his (convincing) analysis of formal organizations, "organizations are like machines, and it would be a category mistake to expect a machine to comply with the principles of morality" (1970, 500).

This line of thought, filled out, lends some credence to the account of institutions as sociopathic emergent phenomena (more than the sum of their parts), just as Kegley proposes. But it would have been helpful if the thesis that institutions *per se* are moral agents or are moral property bearers—a view Ladd calls "corporativism" (Ladd 1991, 305)—were distinguished from the question about their irreducibility. What's worse, Kegley's proposed moral agency of institutions unnecessarily muddies the waters, since if corporations have agency, they are, it seems, also intrinsically morally considerable, which is to say, they have a moral worth apart from the worth of particular individuals working for them. In a related vein, the thesis that institutions have moral agency lands us in the dark territory of granting them the status of *personhood*—a most deleterious legal fiction if there ever was one.

The collection turns again and again to Lachs's flagship ethical doctrine of *stoic pragmatism*. Lachs, we are told, attempts to carve out a position that arbitrates between an unrestrained drive for societal betterment and moral progress on the one hand (characteristic of pragmatists like Dewey) and a resignation to all that is not within one's direct control (i.e., mental affirmations of the will and reactions of concern) associated with classical stoicism on the other (Sullivan 202; cf. Lachs 2012, 40–46). Such a view, we learn, aims to curb the imposition of infinite obligations (to eradicate evil, as Royce would have it) on finite creatures, an imposition that adds to life's miseries by ensuring feelings of personal inadequacy, frustration, and guilt (Horváth 140).⁹ The proper path forward, the one conducive to optimal human flourishing, Lachs argues, is one that includes seeking the *good enough* rather than the *perfect* (Lachs 2012, 107–115) and leaves room for taking the occasional *moral holiday*—or the hygienic, morally justified offloading of moral demands, where one "takes a day off" from "infinite battle" "to let the smoke clear and to listen to the birds" (Lachs 2012, 104). On this path, too, one may recognize that there is only so much that can be done and become ultimately comfortable throwing-in the towel, so to speak, when one's efforts become futile.

Daniel Pinkas provides a rather well-crafted discussion of stoic pragmatism, comparing features of the thought of such figures as James, Sidney Hook, Santayana, and Epicurus. In this respect, Pinkas's commentary follows a similar mode

⁹ Cf. Lachs 2012, chapter 3.

of presentation for the view as Lachs's own. In his essay, Pinkas finds a problem with the label "stoic pragmatism." He wonders if the label is informative insofar as the stoic elements of Lachs's view receive endorsement from some pragmatists—a point that Lachs himself acknowledges (Lachs 2012, 47)—and he also wonders if the label is misleading, since some of the putatively stoic elements, he argues, are either articles of Ancient Greek culture more broadly and not specific to the Stoics, closer in nature to tenets of Epicurean thought, e.g., the good enough , or not particularly Stoic at all—e.g., moral holiday (Pinkas, 159-160).

In his reply, Lachs is content to "readily concede to these limits on [his] version of stoic pragmatism,"¹⁰ going on to write that "[i]n developing it, my interest was not in historical comparisons or ideological purity, but in pursuing actions that enrich the large facts of human life and strains of reflection that illuminate them. . . . [W]e should be free to construct theories from pre-existing elements." (Lachs, 166) Again, we find evidence of Lachs's eclecticism, but likewise confirmation of his pragmatist principle of selection when surveying the smorgasbord of the history of ideas.

As I read about stoic pragmatism, I was reminded of felines. There is something more to Lachs's repeated reference to these furry creatures. I think of two cats in particular. One, Gaston, is rather inimical to being washed in the bathtub (which is necessary on occasion). He kicks, and swats, and hisses, and claws, and squirms with all his might when one lowers him into the water, but because I'm a practiced cat handler, his struggles are all in vain; he's taking that bath whether he likes it or not. It is remarkable what happens once he gets the impression that no matter what he does, he cannot break my custody: he goes completely limp and docile, and allows me to manipulate him with ease to get the job done. Such calculated submission gets to the heart of stoic pragmatism; cats get it.

On the other hand, I'm also reminded of another, rather special cat: Hoodoo (short for Houdini). This cat is crafty and tenacious. He opens cupboards and doors, turns on taps, escapes outside, outsmarts the other cats and sometimes my family members—he's aptly named. One day when he was quite young, Hoodoo escaped outdoors and went into the sprawling bushes of the prairie countryside. After 24 hours of his absence, my mother found him lying at the doorstep; his hips were mangled, his tail limp. His bladder was distended because he was unable to urinate. He was hit by a car, and had managed to drag himself from the road, through God knows how many hundreds of meters of bush, and onto the back porch, while partially paralyzed, with a broken tail, and dislocated hips. My mother, a veterinarian, took him immediately to animal emergency. It was nearly guaranteed, they thought, that he would never recover feeling. She spent months selflessly caring for him, expressing his bladder daily, and when no form of conventional treatment looked promising, she sought an unexpected alternative therapy (acupuncture).

Sure enough, after a difficult three months or so, Hoodoo regained feeling, and was back to his old antics. This success was the result of never giving-in—a pragmatist, or perhaps better, *terminator* ethic. The cat exemplified it, and so did my

¹⁰ Cf. Lachs 2012, 47.

mother. Fight until the curtains are drawn, so to speak, and at that point, the question of the futility of future actions is moot.

This resilience is a powerful article of Protestant work ethic that serves to correct entrenched predilections toward sloth and gluttony—deadly sins. The human condition tends enough toward resignation that we don't need it codified—this thought is corroborated by Horváth (Horváth, 142). One never really knows, in the cases where the possibility of action is meaningful and where the matter of one's resignation is not immaterial, whether one's efforts are in vain; improbable things do happen. Victory has been snatched from the jaws of defeat on more than one occasion. I get the impression that Lachs's stoic pragmatism departs from this common intuition. But more importantly, his call for timely resignation in the face of futility seems to involve an epistemological extravagance, namely, certainty regarding the futility of future action. It seems to me an epistemic extravagance, for instance, when Lachs writes that "at some point, combat becomes futile. Another operation and yet another round of untested chemotherapy amount to torture and gain no result." (2012, 52) Tell that to Hoodoo; "that's defeatism," I can hear my father and old-time hockey coach shout. Lachs does devote a section in *Stoic Pragmatism* to the topic of "Learning about Possibility," but the relevant issue, surprisingly, does not get discussed. Neither is it properly addressed by the collection.¹¹ Clarification on this issue within the collection would have been welcomed.

Taking instruction from Lachs's work on the ethics of suicide and death, Patrick Shade provides a particularly gripping article devoted to the topic of the social or public dimensions of dying, the preparation for death, and patient-centred care. His article illustrates a number of profound insights along these lines through a discussion of the physical decline of his mother during the last five years of her life (Shade, 269-270). Shade's article describes how the roles of cared-for and caring for quickly became reversed during his mother's decline. The article tackles the difficult subject of the importance of personal empowerment or agency in dying and "finding alternative expressions of that agency . . . that are continuous with characteristic past activities" as well as the limitations of social presence and paternalistic impulses within the process of dying (Shade, 278). It manages to work-in a number of recurrent themes in Lachs's thought, including elements of his doctrine of stoic pragmatism (Shade, 272-274). In his reply, Lachs writes: "Shade's thoughtful comments strike me as enriching developments of my ideas rather than outright critiques. They point toward a more complete typology of the declining and dying to help our friends (and ourselves) pass in peace" (Lachs, 283).

It was with great pleasure that I read Lachs's essay, "Death and Self-Importance," which closes the collection. It is a relatively short essay, but written with all the precision, eloquence, and attitude as one comes to expect from this intellectual giant. Its message is humbling and perhaps difficult to accept, but nevertheless, is one that needed to be expressed. It is a message regarding the folly of our natural state of egocentrism, which grounds our fear in death conceived as perfect

¹¹ Some passing mention of "indeterminacy" with respect to "the end" is provided by Patrick Shade (Shade, 269).

annihilation. Lachs goes on to consider a number of pernicious myths concerning human exceptionalism, which in general presuppose a definitively anti-relativistic account of our value, and likewise fail to factor-in our myriad moral failures and personal torments. His penultimate remarks have the quality of ruthless crystal clarity:

Humans are tortured souls and nothing they do justifies extending their existence much beyond its natural range. The belief that, in Santayana's words, we are too good for extinction is nearly laughable and can be the result only of our exaggerated self-importance. (Lachs, 318-219)

I could not help but think that in these remarks perhaps Lachs's uncompromising commitment to the truth forces him to overstep the bounds of the useful—since presumably egocentrism has its practical advantages, and the deconstruction of human exceptionalism seems somewhat demoralizing. But then I reminded myself that being lucid regarding the folly of self-importance can be conceived as an exercise of the “stoic” dimension of his stoic pragmatism *par excellence*, since it may be construed as a form of liberation (from irrational concern).

One way for Lachs's analysis here to be expanded or strengthened would be to explicate the distinction between “specialness” or “uniqueness” and “self-importance”. We are all, typically, unique, or one-offs, and in this respect we may regard ourselves as special. Then, from typical economic and social forces working on our minds, we might conflate uniqueness or specialness with importance, since it is practically natural for one to consider non-fungibility as equivalent to importance. But while we may be non-fungible, that non-fungibility only makes one important if the role for which *only you will do* is itself important. And that further importance, regarding one's role, is going to be saturated with human exceptionalism. It would have been good to make the relevant distinction, given that there are solid Santayanan grounds to which Lachs ascribes for thinking that we are all “special” or “unique”, namely, that there are human natures, in the plural—something that has been touched-upon in the preceding.

In conclusion, this collection is enjoyable and philosophically substantial. It occupies an interesting space, balancing the criticism and clarification of Lachs's views with their expansion and application. Co-operative and celebratory in spirit, *John Lachs's Practical Philosophy* is cause for considerable optimism. I have only had the room to consider in some detail a handful of the essays in this collection, but they are, to my mind, a representative sample. Of course, there are a number of essays that are very good in the collection that have not received treatment here. In this respect, I have left ample room to allow the reader to go and discover the work on his or her own terms. The book delivers a striking portrait of the expansive and dynamic landscape of Lachs's practical philosophy, and it should spark much scholarly interest. It is also a wonderful testament to how Lachs's pedagogical efforts have touched so many and why he is so adored by the people who have had the benefit of his educational influence on their lives.

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In Memoriam: Jerry Griswold

Jerome Joseph Phelan Griswold, whom we knew as Jerry Griswold, died in September of 2022. The cancer that killed him had been diagnosed only a few weeks before. The news of his death came as a shock to those of us who had come to know Jerry, mainly through Zoom discussions.

Jerry Griswold came to the attention of the George Santayana Society when he attended one of the first sessions of the online *Life of Reason* reading group in the early fall of 2020. During the meeting Jerry proposed an additional reading group to explore his idea that Wallace Stevens based each poem in his last book *The Rock* on one or more chapters of Santayana's *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. That additional group started soon thereafter and continued until the end of 2021.

Jerry moderated the twice-a-month Wallace Stevens sessions with a cheerfulness that made us all feel welcome, no matter how vehemently we disagreed with him. He would start each session by reading an essay he had written to show the correspondence he found between the poem and the chapter he had paired. The discussion that followed was lively and even when the disputation was intense, the spirit of the interchange was always high, thanks in part to Jerry's genial disposition. He expressed genuine pleasure at having found a group of "oddballs," as I think he put it, who shared an interest in the same rarefied material.

Jerry's openness to opposing views came to the fore when we published an essay of his in the 2021 issue of *Overheard in Seville* that explained one of his chapter-to-poem correlations. He could not agree with the editors about a number of proposed changes, so I suggested that we publish a counter-version in the same issue. He wrote back, "Exactly what I was thinking! And I hope you are the one to pen a response." (The alternative essay was co-written by me and editorial board member, now Associate Editor, Phillip Beard.) Jerry's shade hovers near me as I write this, his presence intimating that maybe I haven't told the story exactly right. If only we could have had his version.

Correspondence with Jerry was always a pleasure. We also had a number of private Zoom and phone conversations. And I looked forward to more. It is a sign of the times that, having met with Jerry twice a month for over a year, I came to know him and be familiar with how he looked, smiled, and gestured; yet I never saw him stand, have no idea how tall he was, how he moved from room to room, or what it would be like to go on a walk with him.

Jerry sent what turned out to be his last message to me on July 5, 2022. In it he wrote:

I continue work on my book on Stevens & Santayana. I recently ran into a book by my great-grandfather. I thought you might be amused to learn that I am thinking of using the epigraph from his title page (below) in my own work.

What stood out in all our discussions was not just the amiable way in which Jerry presented his ideas, but their inventive scope and the way those ideas sparked our own thoughts in response. His imaginative vivacity was very much in the spirit of both Stevens and Santayana. Several of us encouraged Jerry to emphasize his own creative output, because his enthusiasm and inspiration mattered more than whether he was right. But Jerry also wanted that and so I leave the last word to him, through his great-grandfather Eugene H Wood, a physician. The July message included a photo of the cover of the book by his great-grandfather. The cover had the following epigraph, written by Dr Wood himself:

It's me against the world and I am everlastingly right.

RICHARD MARC RUBIN

Bibliographical Checklist

Thirty-Eighth Update

The items below 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 and dissertations, the following articles and books are classified according to their years of publication. Readers with additions or corrections are invited to send these by email to bulletin@georgesantayanasociety.org, and to santedit@iupui.edu. The Santayana Edition keeps an online, searchable version of the complete checklist at <http://americanthought.iupui.edu/aib/index.php>.

As in prior years, the editors send a special thank you to Daniel Moreno for his time and effort in researching and compiling most of the entries for this year's update and to Guido Tamponi for several additional entries.

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Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

Page numbers in articles refer to the critical edition of Santayana's work, if it has been published, unless otherwise specified in the references for a particular article. For a list of the volumes of the critical edition that have been published, see the next page. Authors should refer to the critical editions, when they are available.

These abbreviations should be used for citations only. To refer a work in the text, authors should spell out its name.

AFSL	<i>Animal Faith and Spiritual Life</i> , ed. John Lachs	OiS	<i>Overheard in Seville</i>
BR	<i>Birth of Reason and Other Essays</i>	OS	<i>Obiter Scripta</i>
COUS	<i>Character and Opinion in the United States</i>	PGS	<i>The Philosophy of George Santayana</i> , ed. PA Schilpp
POEMS	<i>Complete Poems</i>	POML	<i>Physical Order and Moral Liberty</i> , ed. J and S Lachs
DL	<i>Dialogues in Limbo</i>	PP	<i>Persons and Places</i>
DNM	"Dewey's Naturalistic Metaphysics"	PP1	<i>The Background of My Life</i>
DP	<i>Dominations and Powers</i>	PP2	<i>The Middle Span</i>
EGP	<i>Egotism in German Philosophy</i>	PP3	<i>My Host the World</i>
GSA	<i>George Santayana's America</i>	PSL	<i>Platonism and the Spiritual Life</i>
GTB	<i>The Genteel Tradition at Bay</i>	RB	<i>Realms of Being</i> (one-volume edition)
ICG	<i>The Idea of Christ in the Gospels</i>	RDL	<i>Recently Discovered Letters</i>
IPR	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i>	RE	<i>The Realm of Essence</i> (RB Bk. 1)
LGS	<i>The Letters of George Santayana</i>	RM	<i>The Realm of Matter</i> (RB Bk. 2)
LP	<i>The Last Puritan</i>	RT	<i>The Realm of Truth</i> (RB Bk. 3)
LR	<i>The Life of Reason</i>	RS	<i>The Realm of Spirit</i> (RB Bk. 4)
LR1	Bk. 1, <i>Reason in Common Sense</i>	SAF	<i>Scepticism and Animal Faith</i>
LR2	Bk. 2, <i>Reason in Society</i>	SB	<i>The Sense of Beauty</i>
LR3	Bk. 3, <i>Reason in Religion</i>	SE	<i>Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies</i>
LR4	Bk. 4, <i>Reason in Art</i>	TTMP	<i>Some Turns of Thought in Modern Philosophy</i>
LR5	Bk. 5, <i>Reason in Science</i>	TPP	<i>Three Philosophical Poets</i>
MARG	<i>Marginalia</i>	WD	<i>Winds of Doctrine</i>

Bibliography of the Critical Editions of Santayana's Works

Listed in order of publication. Citations should refer to these editions.

For the *Letters* and the *Marginalia*, the volume numbers are given below to indicate date of publication, but please note that the preferred method of citation omits the volume number.

For the *Letters*, the preferred citation format is:

LGS to [recipient], [date in dd Month yyyy format]

The recipient or date is omitted if the text explicitly refers to it. In case one or the other is omitted, there is no comma.

For the *Marginalia*, the preferred citation format is:

MARG [author], [work] [page number in the author's work]

The author or work is omitted if the context makes the reference clear.

- PP [1944,1945,1953] 1986. *Persons and Places*. Eds. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Vol. 1 of *The Works of George Santayana*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- SB [1896] 1988. *The Sense of Beauty*. Eds. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Vol. 2 of *The Works of George Santayana*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- IPR [1900] 1990. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. Eds. William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Vol. 3 of *The Works of George Santayana*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
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Submission Guidelines

The editors of *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* invite submission of articles and essays about George Santayana from any discipline. Letters to the editors (not exceeding 300 words) are also welcome.

The editors often request revisions before a piece is accepted for publication. Upon acceptance, authors will be expected to approve editorial corrections.

Previously unpublished manuscripts are preferred and simultaneous submission is discouraged. Authors typically may expect notice of the status of their submission within three months of submission. Submissions are accepted all year with a March 1 deadline for inclusion in a particular year's issue.

These guidelines may be updated from time to time. To download the latest guidelines go to <http://georgesantayanasociety.org/submissionguidelines.pdf>.

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(James [1898], 175)

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(Royce 144)

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- References to classical writers should use standard page numbers, such as Stephanus numbers for Plato and Bekker numbers for Aristotle.
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- An author may use an abbreviation to refer to works by an author other than Santayana by preceding the bibliographical listing of the work with the abbreviation. For example,

AE Dewey, John. 1934. *Art as Experience*. New York: Minton, Balch and Company.

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- Wherever possible, references should be to authoritative scholarly editions, such as *The Works of George Santayana* (MIT), *The Collected Works of John Dewey* (SIU), *The Works of William James* (Harvard), *The Jane Addams Papers* (UMI), etc. **An author not in possession of a particular scholarly edition should encourage his or her institution's library to acquire it or borrow the work through interlibrary loan.** Authors should notify the editor if, after such efforts, they still do not have access to a particular authoritative edition. Note that many of the critical editions of Santayana's works are available in modified PDF formats that enable accurate page number citation. These can be found at <https://santayana.iupui.edu/text/>.
- If a quotation from a Santayana work is taken from a critical edition and only critical editions are cited, the work need not be included in the reference list, as long as you use standard abbreviations. If you cite non-critical editions or non-Santayana material, then you should include the abbreviation of the work in your reference list and simply indicate that the critical edition is the one referred to. The reference listing for the critical edition of *Reason in Common Sense* is:

LR1 *Reason in Common Sense* .Critical edition.

- List abbreviations alphabetically by the author's name and then by abbreviation. If there is only one reference with an abbreviation for an author, the author's name should be included in the listing, as in the example. In the case of multiple references with abbreviations for the same author, list the references indented under the author's name and alphabetically by the abbreviation.
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- For the possessive form of names always use 's, even if the name ends in s.
Jesus's not Jesus'
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Angus Kerr-Lawson Prize

The George Santayana Society offers the Angus Kerr-Lawson Prize in tribute to the late Professor Kerr-Lawson's outstanding contributions to Santayana scholarship both as longtime editor of *Overheard in Seville: The Bulletin of the George Santayana Society* and as the author of many articles that appeared in this *Bulletin* and in other publications. Kerr-Lawson was an early participant in the George Santayana Society.

The prize is available to a scholar not more than five years out of graduate school for an essay engaging or rooted in the thought of George Santayana. We encourage applications from graduate students, junior faculty members, and those whose graduate work has been interrupted. Authors may address any aspect of Santayana's life and thought. We welcome essays that relate his thinking to other figures in the American tradition and beyond and to contemporary social, cultural, and philosophic concerns. Relevant themes include materialism and naturalism, realism and Platonism, metaphysics and morals, and issues connected to American culture and intellectual history.

The winner will receive \$900 and be invited to present the winning paper at the Society's annual meeting in January. The winning essay will be submitted for publication in the edition of *Overheard in Seville* that follows that meeting. In 2023, the winner will be notified by November 30.. Authors should prepare submissions for blind review (no exposing references to the author within the composition) and send electronically in Word, ODT, or PDF format to: submissions@georgesantayanasociety.org. The subject line of the email should read: "Kerr-Lawson Prize Submission, [author's name]." The deadline for submissions is Monday, 16 October. We prefer applicants to send a letter of intent by 1 September 1 2023.

Contributors

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Corrections to the Print Edition

(Minor spacing changes are not included)

- P. 3 (line #5): Add accent to “Andrés.”
- P. 14 (line #28): Replace “represents” with “represent.”
- PP. 19-20: Adjust size of footnote numbers.
- P. 48: Spacing corrections.
- P. 50: Move dangling “all fields” into ¶.
- P. 53 (2nd ¶): Spacing in “really” tightened.
- P. 88 (2nd ¶): No comma after 2nd “Democritus.”
- P. 89 (2nd ¶): Delete “and” before “David Dilworth” and start new sentence.
- PP. 91-95 More lines per page to adjust to change on p. 94. Top and bottom lines don’t align with print edition.
- P. 92 (2nd ¶): No period before “(Basu.”
- P. 93 (3rd ¶): No comma after “cheerfulness.”
- P. 94 (2nd ¶): Indent quote from Ronell and add citation.
- P. 95 (3rd ¶): Add comma after “absurd.”
- P. 96 (Last ¶): Change “effect that” to “effect of”, end sentence after “tragic to comic,” and start next sentence with “*Homo risibilis* becomes active.”
- PP 97-99: Conformance to standard abbreviation form.
- P. 101 (line #2): Replace “in is particular time” with “in a particular time.”
- P. 101 (footnote #4): Remove initial spacing; change p.21 to p.120.
- P. 106 (last line): Add comma after “At the same time.”
- P. 107 (1st ¶): Change period to comma after “essences” and change colon to period after “nature.”
- P. 108 (footnote #10): Change p.21 to p.120.
- P. 109 (line #1): Spell out “emphasis”
- P. 109 (2nd ¶): Change “the later (*Realms of Being*)” to “his later work *Realms of Being*,”.
- P. 109 (footnotes): Change p.21 to p.120; LOR to LR
- P. 118 (2nd ¶): No comma after “vocabulary of mastery”
- P. 121: Change book title phrase from *Hermeneutic Politics* to *Political Hermeneutics*. Also in Table of Contents and back cover.

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