

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the
Santayana
Society*

No. 18
Fall 2000



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of the
Santayana Society**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	i	Table of Contents
	ii	Announcement of the 2000 Annual Meeting
<i>Thomas Alexander</i>	1	Beauty and the Labyrinth of Evil: Santayana and the Possibility of Naturalistic Mysticism
<i>John Lachs</i>	17	Spirituality Without Moral Concerns
	20	Time cover. February 3, 1936
	21	Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works
<i>Thomas Alexander</i>	22	Memorial Notice: Paul Grimley Kuntz
<i>Matthew Caleb Flamm</i>	24	American and German Tendencies In the Thought of Josiah Royce
<i>Simon Grote</i>	30	The Three Lives of George Santayana at Harvard
<i>Marianne S. Wokeck</i>	38	The Santayana Edition
<i>Kristine W. Frost, and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr.</i>	39	Bibliographical Checklist: Sixteenth Update

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OVERHEARD IN SEVILLE

ANNOUNCEMENT

SANTAYANA SOCIETY

2000

ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the December meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) in Boston, Massachusetts:

**"The Meaning of Self-Knowledge
in Santayana's Philosophy"**

Jessica Wahman

SUNY at Stony Brook

**"The Notion of the Tragic
in Santayana's Thought"**

Charles Padrón

Vanderbilt University

Commentary

Glenn Tiller

University of Toronto

Chair

Angus Kerr-Lawson

University of Waterloo

7:30 - 10:30 P.M. 28 December

Madison Suite

New York Hilton and Towers

Beauty and the Labyrinth of Evil: Santayana and the Possibility of Naturalistic Mysticism

Among the thinkers of this passing century that offer themselves to the future for its reflection, Santayana must stand out as a singular figure, one whose thought is dedicated to the overarching possibility of the spiritual life undertaken without religious faith or metaphysical dogma.¹ Among the throngs that fill the philosophical bestiary of the 20th Century, Santayana may be the one genuine contemplative of note.² The majority of doctrines dominant in the century have been directed either toward the goal of action (Marxism, pragmatism, existentialism) or the problem of knowledge, truth and meaning (positivism, analytic philosophy, phenomenology). Genuinely contemplative philosophies cannot be classified with either one of these categories, however much they may touch upon common themes. Given that Santayana sought to find a basis for philosophy as a contemplative life by grafting the classical doctrine of essence onto the modernist theory of matter as power, his thought engages nearly the whole of the history of the west, while ranging into the field of the systems of India as well. This may seem a puzzling bequest to the future from this century so filled with violence and wreckage. If the true historical parameter of the century is measured by events, we might find that it could be dated from 1914 to 1991, from the onset of World War I to the exhausted collapse of the Soviet Union, a period in which the world was either preparing for war or actively engaged in it. But the violence of the century must include the rapid and constant reorganization of life forced upon the globe by technologies some of whose impact is as yet hardly discerned. It is possible to view Santayana against this backdrop as a piece of intellectual nostalgia, rather like a beautiful old church in a buzzing urban center that someone forgot to bulldoze to the ground.

I think such a response would be unfortunate because the spiritual life is a perennial concern for us, one that politics and technology cannot address however successfully or intelligently managed they may be. The thought of Santayana offers then a permanent opportunity to explore the dimensions of the spiritual life without the confusions introduced by archaic physics or forgotten political aspirations. In the words of William James, "Mystical classics have ... neither birthday nor native land" and so have the opportunity to be as accessible or inaccessible as the contingent features of the world permit.³ Santayana's writings may be read from this angle, and it is this approach I will take myself. Thus the problem which I intend to explore does not try to address Santayana as a figure of the 20th century or even as an "American" or "pragmatist" of whatever stripe. Rather, I want to raise an internal issue to the prospect of the spiritual discipline or *askesis* presented especially in Santayana's later philosophy, the problem of the relation of the spiritual and the moral lives. What, if anything, does the quest for a beatific vision have to do with the "problem of evil" in a naturalistic mysticism such

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented to the Santayana Society at its annual meeting in Boston on December 28, 1999.

² Along with Thomas Merton, a theologian rather than a philosopher.

³ William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience* (Harvard, 1985), p. 332.

as Santayana's? In this essay I will explore Santayana's vision of the spiritual life as a naturalistic contemplative discipline in relation to Platonism and Neo-Platonism.⁴ In response to Santayana's conclusion that the spiritual and moral lives are somewhat at variance with each other, I offer the example of Buddhism which, though it accepts some of Santayana's fundamental premises, arrives at a different understanding of how these two lives are connected. In short I will try to show that a contemplative spirituality may acknowledge the existence of evil and develop a compassionate response to it without thereby surrendering the ideal of contemplative detachment. Santayana's ideal of the spiritual life is thus one, but not the only, possibility that is available, given the initial premises of his later system.

Santayana describes the quest of the spiritual life in terms of the radical separation of it from the natural world or "realm of matter" which forces the animal psyche to live in terms of "values" such as good and bad, which, in their extreme forms of judgment, may be described as "absolute good" and "evil." Instead, Santayana offers us an approach to the realm of essence which can be called a form of liberation insofar as spirit achieves its complete function without service to the alien needs of the psyche: intuition pure and simple. The question I wish to probe is the relation of the moral life to the spiritual, for Santayana certainly sees them not merely as divergent but in some ways as mutually inhibiting when not kept distinct. Morality, he claims, pushes spiritual life toward dogmatism, subverting it to the defense of local ideals instead of allowing spirit to roam free and see things as they are without concern for their ulterior values for life. In retrieving the classical doctrine of essence, then, Santayana had to emphasize the rejection of the moral in the spiritual, lest his view be confounded with Platonism, a doctrine whose time had come — and gone, he thought — with the revolution in modern physics. The release of spirit into its own domain, into the play of essence, leaves behind all moral concerns, including the "problem of evil." While moral judgments may

⁴ I find that my comments in this essay have unintentionally inserted themselves into a previous discussion carried on between my old teacher Paul Kuntz and Herman Saatkamp. (See *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* No. 3, 1985, and No. 10, 1992.) In his initial article, "Santayana's Neo-Platonism," Kuntz argued that Santayana's *Realms of Being* implied not only a spiritual ascent but an ontological order corresponding to it, one that was Christian as well as Neo-Platonic. While acknowledging Santayana's use of the imagery of the spiritual ascent, Saatkamp did not find this to lead to any deep commitment to anything beyond a naturalism that accepts a plurality of goods, only one of which might be the "life of spirit." Kuntz's reply, "The Ascent of Spirit: Is Santayana's System a Naturalistic Neo-Platonic Hierarchy" (1992), persisted with the original argument, focusing on a detailed exegesis of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (a key text for my essay as well). While I agree, as does Saatkamp, that Kuntz has commendably drawn attention to the Neo-Platonic (and Indian) influences in Santayana's mature philosophy, which have tended to be neglected by those stressing Santayana's naturalism, I also agree with Saatkamp that Kuntz has pushed the argument a step too far and is in danger of ignoring the explicit role of contingency and plurality as the basis for any sort of life, spiritual or otherwise. In short, Kuntz tries to move Santayana's ideal of the spiritual life from being the expression of one of the many contingent values in nature (one that Santayana himself valued) to one everyone ought to adopt because nature herself recommends it, thereby transforming Santayana's ontology into a moralistic metaphysics. This move is explicitly rejected by Santayana. For an attempt to present a much more Aristotelian idea of a spiritual life, a practical rather than contemplative ideal grounded in Santayana's *The Life of Reason*, see the recent essay by yet another former teacher of mine, James Gouinlock's "Ultimate Religion," *Overheard in Seville*, Vol. 12 (1998).

be made about the spiritual life an individual pursues, they are made from the moral angle, not the spiritual.

Santayana and Neo-Platonism

There are two interesting essays where the issue came to occupy Santayana, though they might be regarded as occasional pieces: both were responses to bungled attempts to handle the topic of "Platonism" — or, more specifically, Neo-Platonism — that was so close to Santayana's heart. One was the 1916 essay "Plotinus and the Nature of Evil" written in light of B.A.G. Fuller's *The Problem of Evil in Plotinus*. The second, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, was composed in 1926 and takes on Dean Inge's *The Platonic Tradition in English Religious Thought*.⁵ I suspect that this monograph, which saw the light of day in 1927 along with *The Realm of Essence* may also have been written in the afterglow of Santayana's reading of the Fifth *Ennead*, just published in McKenna's translation.⁶ Santayana paid the highest respect to the Plotinian system, which, unlike Plato's fundamentally political philosophy, he saw as truly oriented toward the spiritual life. In a letter from 1919, Santayana defends the philosophy of Plotinus to Robert Bridges in terms that come quite close to those of Santayana's own system:

But it seems to me a very great system, very "good philosophy," and I am glad that the mystics in Oxford are taking him up, rather than pretending to find comfort in Hegel or in the meretricious psychology of Bergson. ... Of course all those things he describes do not exist; of course he is not describing *this* world, he is describing *the other* world, that is, deciphering the good just beyond it or above it, which each actual thing suggests. Even this rendering of moral aspiration is arbitrary, because nature does not really aspire to anything, each living thing aspires to something different in divergent ways. But this arbitrary aspiration, which Plotinus reads into the world, sincerely expresses his own aspiration and that of his age. That is why I say he is a decidedly "good philosopher." It is the Byzantine architecture of the mind, just as good or better than the Gothic. It seems to me better than Christian theology in this respect, that it isn't mixed up with history, it isn't half Jewish, half worldly. It is the Greek side of Christian theology made pure; and that is the side which seems to be truly spiritual, truly sacrificial and penitentially joyful.⁷

It might help us to summarize the Plotinian analysis of the problem of evil as "nothing positive in itself, only the absence of Good," which has dominated the discussion of the topic in the west ever since St. Augustine appropriated it for use in Christian theology. The most famous place this occurs in the *Enneads* is in the Ninth Treatise of the Second Book, the essay directed against the Gnostics.⁸ The Plotinian

⁵ In fact it may have also been settling a score dating back to 1918 when Santayana had written in the margin of Inge's *The Philosophy of Plotinus* "The motley eloquence of the pulpit, the lazy [line?] of a rhetorician and moralist who wants to talk about the world without studying it." Cited in John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (Knopf, 1987), p. 268.

⁶ McKenna's beautiful, if eccentric, multi-volume translation of the *Enneads* began in 1917 with *Ennead I* (along with other extracts), and continued with a second volume in 1921 (consisting of *Enneads III* and *II* in that order), with a third in 1924 (*Ennead IV*). The final volume with the sixth *Ennead* was published in 1930. But my suspicion is as yet unverified.

⁷ Santayana to Robert Bridges of Sept. 18, 1919 in *The Letters of George Santayana*, ed. Daniel Cory (Charles Scribner's Sons: New York, 1955), p. 178. In this letter Santayana does comment on reading the first volume of McKenna's translation just then published.

⁸ Recent scholarship has actually determined that this is but the last third of a much longer treatise cut up and distributed throughout the *Enneads* by Plotinus' editor, Porphyry. The full treatise consists of *Enneads III. 8, V. 5, and II. 9*. When read together in proper sequence the work ranks, in

system, recall, finds the one true principle or *archē* of Being beyond Being itself, and so beyond Form, making it a simplicity that defies conceptual and linguistic understanding except as such understanding can turn itself toward its source and acknowledge its derivative status.⁹ From this power, the world of Being “overflows,” articulating itself into the world of Form and the Divine Nous that eternally thinks them and, in thinking them, can turn back toward their common source, understanding the Forms and itself in light of the One. But the activity of direct, contemplative insight into Form is also productive, generating another “overflow” into the mimetic order of the cosmos and the living, temporal soul that animates it. Action, time, body—all are degenerate modes of “contemplation” for Plotinus.¹⁰ Beyond the rhythmic dance of nature, everlastingly turning about the One like dancers in a chorus, is the dim and weakened quasi-nothingness of matter, a mere reception of activity that cannot produce anything further itself. It is the termination of pure generative power into absolute impotence.

This is the context in which Plotinus faced the Gnostics, who held that the physical world was evil, produced by an arrogant and rebellious god in an act of cosmic hubris (possibly, some speculated, the very figure described in the Hebrew Genesis). By a saving act of intimate, esoteric knowledge — *gnosis* — the soul could be delivered to its true home and cease to be afflicted by the body. Such a doctrine proceeds from a hard moral realism about the sorts of expectations one must face in our sojourn here in the realm of matter, from the fumbled attempts at order nature regularly produces and the daily ineptitudes of any given political or administrative system to the impressive catastrophes of the Black Death or mudslides that entomb twenty thousand people at once or similar human catastrophes: Huns, Goths, Mongols, Nazis, the Japanese Imperial Army, and so on. I dwell on this because, in a certain sense (as Anthony Woodward has noted), Santayana’s own view of nature bears at times rather close resemblance to the Gnostics’ bleak view of nature.¹¹ Plotinus’ response to this view was to say we shouldn’t judge a city by looking only at its worst neighborhoods.¹² If this order is confused, it nevertheless leads us to recognize it as the image of the higher and more intelligible good, and, as a rippling reflection in water may turn us toward its source, so nature can

my view, with one of the greatest philosophical documents from antiquity. See the discussion by A. H. Armstrong at II.9 in his edition and translation of the *Enneads* (Loeb Classical Library).

⁹ The whole philosophy of Plotinus develops the logical consequences of Plato’s sketchy and somewhat embarrassed treatment of the Good as “the Form of Forms” at *Republic* 509 c, which describes it as “transcending Being in dignity and power,” a comment that provokes laughter from Glaucon and Adeimantus. As the *archē* of Form, Plotinus observed, the One cannot *be* a Form and so is form-less and as the principle of Being cannot be said to “be” at all. Logos fails, though Plotinus is willing to describe the One as “limitless power” as well as pure simplicity. As “one” it is not at all a “numerical unity,” something both conceptual and abstract.

¹⁰ “Contemplation” is the poor English word used for the Greek *theōrein* (θεωρεῖν). This word rejects any notion discursive process or muddled drifting, which our word “contemplation” drags in. It involves the idea of rapt, penetrating comprehension in which the truth, order and beauty of something are fused together forever timelessly and made entirely lucid.

¹¹ See Anthony Woodward, *Living in the Eternal* (Vanderbilt, 1988), pp. 108-109, 111-113. What offsets his tendency toward the gnostic view of the world, of course is Santayana’s equally hard-headed rejection of magic and supernaturalism, leaving him with a more realistic and occasionally genial expression of “natural piety” toward the Realm of Matter. Nevertheless, he did find idealism of any sort insufferably tender-minded.

¹² *En.* II.9.7

direct us to go beyond itself. But the reflection is not “evil” for being a reflection, even if it is a troubled reflection. Disciplined reasoning, says Plotinus, allows us to place the goods and bads of the world in their proper place and rise above them to the genuine, higher goods.¹³ More profoundly, Plotinus says that to hate the world is to remove oneself from the immanence of the divine which is at the innermost center of our being. The genuine beauty of the world lures us to turn toward an inner and higher beauty that leaves the world and its imperfections behind. The emotion of contempt or hatred utterly fails to make this inward ascent. As Augustine would say, God is closer to us than we are to ourselves. *Pondus meum, amor meus*, he says: my love is my weight.¹⁴ I stress this point because I believe it is crucial in Santayana’s own response to “the problem of evil.” Beauty is not a “solution” to the riddle of the existence of evil, but a strategy that turns away from the problem itself. The response to evil, in other words, lies in the discovery of the spiritual life.

The Spiritual Life as Transcendent of the Problem of Evil

With this in the background, let us now turn to Santayana’s 1916 essay “Plotinus and the Nature of Evil,” ostensibly a review of Fuller’s book on the topic. Fuller saw the problem of evil on the horns of a dilemma. The alternatives are either naturalism or mysticism. If one opts for naturalism, Fuller thought, then all values must be equal, for everything is equally “natural,” the saint and the serial murderer and everyone in between. Each thing is perfect after its own unique kind. The only alternative, to Fuller at least, was mysticism in which the only good was the highest reality and anything that separated itself from that good was automatically evil. The dilemma is summed up by Santayana as “either all excellences are absolute and incomparable, or there is no excellence but one.”¹⁵

With reference to the naturalist horn, Santayana argues that to say everything is equally a phenomenon of nature does not lead to pure moral relativism. Naturalism admits that the impulses that spring from the live creature may be pre-moral, but this is not the same as saying they are all equal, much less morally equal. Some are more in harmony with their environments than others, and insofar as they are out of harmony, may generate ideals naturally. As Santayana says, “Hence each nature originally pronounces itself to be good, but imperfect as it stumbles and creaks as it goes” (OS, 72). Moral values and ideals may have a natural origin without therefore being branded equal. As living interests become organized, so goods may be organized in a hierarchy of values. In short, as a naturalist it may be valuable to have a system of ethics more

¹³ A constant criticism in *Ennead* II.9 is that the Gnostics are half-literate, irrational, pompous and histrionic (the ancient world apparently had its fundamentalists). He says, “The rest of their teachings I leave you to investigate by reading their books and to observe throughout the kind of philosophy which we pursue, besides all its other excellences, displays simplicity and straightforwardness of character along with clear thinking, and aims at dignity, not rash arrogance, and combines confident boldness with reason and much safeguarding and caution and a great deal of circumspection: you are to use philosophy of this kind as a standard of comparison for the rest.” (Armstrong)

¹⁴ *Confessions* XIII.9. The role of beauty in salvation is the key theme of *Ennead* I.6, one of the first and most influential of the *Enneads* read by Augustine. The idea of one’s love being one’s “weight” (or the natural place toward which one tends) is the guiding theme of Dante’s *Comedia*: the souls exist in the manifested world of their genuine loves, from lowest to highest.

¹⁵ *Obiter Scripta*, p. 71. Hereafter cited as OS.

functional and in touch with the world than pure relativism allows, though this certainly does not prevent the naturalist from seeing that several systems are possible or may conflict with each other. This is more true when we consider values arising from nonhuman organisms. As Santayana put it, "Had animals spoken, the Inquisition would have had pretty work on its hands" (OS, 70).

This leaves the mystical horn of Fuller's dilemma. Santayana will not admit the thesis that there is one supreme good means that everything else falls into some degree of evil, that the levels in the great chain of Being are but "so many stages of spiritual misery" (OS, 70). One overarching good does not exclude the possibility of subordinate goods. A good book may have good sentences and each sentence be composed of well-chosen words written out in perfectly formed letters. Each may be perfect after its kind and also involved in an overall order of higher and lower degrees of perfection. It is true, Santayana says, that Plotinus, believing as he did in the potency of form, reversed the true order of genesis — his mythology of the overflowing descent of creative power from beyond the Forms down through nature into the torpid murk of matter was an inversion of the truth. In nature as we saw there is a natural heterogeneity of goods. In this way, says Santayana, Plotinus "incidentally ... missed the true explanation of the origin of evil, which lies in the natural conflict of many powers and many ideals" (OS, 75-76).¹⁶ To thrive in nature we must adopt an organized economy of values so we can move in one direction at a time, but this does not mean we may not encounter someone else whose internal economy has set them at cross purposes to ours. Platonism is basically a moral view that seeks to insist that its analysis of human values achieves a final, defining insight into the order of things as such, and this is merely presumptuous, according to Santayana. For such a person, he says, "His Socratic wisdom in life will become Platonic folly in science" (OS, 76). Thus evil, for Santayana, is simply the partisan word for the inevitable clash of interests in a natural world that is inherently pluralistic in its aims and not governed by an over-arching, coordinating good that redeems and saves all things.

Fuller's more fundamental problem lies behind the sophistic dilemma; it is a failure to understand mysticism as much as naturalism. The true mystic is not kept from a "hatred of finitude" simply by a mere inconsistency any more than the naturalist is kept from proclaiming the equality of every value. Pointing out to the mystic that he adores his supreme good only because he is separate from it does not lead at all to his condemnation of himself and everything else distinguished from that good as "evil." Actual mystics — not the "classroom idols" of Fuller's paradox — have been quite consistent with their principles when they felt "the tenderness and wonder which filled them in the presence of creation" (OS, 77). Though it is true that the adoration of the mystic implies a separation from the source, this does not fill him or her with rage at the separation, but with humility and adoration. The problem, as seen by Plotinus, then, was not the existence of evil; "it was rather to rise above evil, to decipher a divine image in the worn and degraded lineaments of things and to save the soul from a temporal and

¹⁶ Compare *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* where he says, "Evil can arise only within each world when it becomes faithless to some Idea which it has begun to pursue or is crossed in it by some external enemy (if any) or by the inward contradiction and complexity of its own impulses" (p. 44). To judge the world as "evil" requires those very animal interests and concerns that are condemned in the act of judgment — "these feelings are part of the world which they condemn." Hence to turn from the moral world is to turn from such judgments altogether.

sensuous life to which evil was native" (OS, 78). It may be that when evil cannot be erased, the natural impulse is to evade it as much as possible, but the root impulse of Platonism was a love of beauty, passing from lower to higher forms of it. The problem of evil, says Santayana, is for theologians and apologists for creator deities or pantheists wishing to assert that all is somehow good. But

It does not exist for the naturalist because for him both good and evil are relative to finite interests necessarily at war in this crowded world. Nor does it exist for the Platonist, to whom it is obvious that the good is far away and that it was not the good that removed the good where it is absent. The problem of darkness does not exist for the man gazing at the stars. No doubt the darkness is there, fundamental, pervasive, and unconquerable except at the pinpoints where the stars twinkle; but the problem is not why there is such darkness, but what is the light that breaks through it so remarkably; and granting this light, why we have eyes to see it and hearts to be gladdened by it. (OS 86)

Even though Platonism is now in abeyance, being an ideal of values now out of fashion, it may be that "things come round in this world; the ruffians may be upon us some day when we least expect it and philosophy may have again to retire to the sanctuary." Santayana concludes with this enigmatic remark: "Even then we should search the books of Plotinus in vain for any solution to the artificial problem concerning the existence of evil; but if we searched them for a thread out of the natural labyrinth of evil, we might possibly find it" (OS, 86-87). Santayana indicates that there may be an important clue for us in the philosophy of Plotinus, something far different from an sophistical "solution" to the "problem of evil." Instead of a *solution*, there is an *escape*. But what is this "thread" out of the "natural labyrinth of evil"? And what is the relationship of Santayana's own later philosophy to this "escape"? Could Santayana's later philosophy be the naturalistic version of tracing the Plotinian thread out of the labyrinth, a version purged of Plotinus' moralistic metaphysics and with its myth of the descending emanation of the supernatural into nature inverted to become the ascent of spirit from the realm of matter?

Santayana's Ideal in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*

I turn now to *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, written a decade after Santayana's response to Fuller. Santayana scholars tend to neglect this monograph for some puzzling reason, since I find it one of the most lucid statements of his thought, something of an enchiridion to the *Realms of Being*.¹⁷ Coming as it did after *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and appearing simultaneously with *The Realm of Essence*, it offered at the time an important link between those opening works in Santayana's mature system and *The Realm of Spirit*, the concluding volume of the series, not destined to appear until some thirteen years later. In other words, at the time of its appearance, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* offered a crucial as well as succinct overview of the spiritual upshot of *Realms of Being*. As in the earlier essay on Plotinus, Santayana begins with a critique of a fumbled interpretation, this time by Dean Inge, who had described Platonism as "a

¹⁷ At least see John McCormick's rather dismissive remarks in his *George Santayana: A Biography*, p. 268. For *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* as an enchiridion or "handbook" of Santayana's later philosophy see my article "Santayana's Sage: The Disciplines of Aesthetic Enlightenment," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*, XXXIII, No. 2, p. 332 f. By describing the work as an enchiridion, I am not only thinking of its similarity to the "handbooks" of Epictetus, Augustine, and Erasmus, but of other short, major summaries of a philosopher's thought such as Spinoza's *Treatise on the Improvement of the Mind* or Leibniz's *Monadology*.

firm belief in absolute and eternal values as the most real things in the universe."¹⁸

As we have seen, "value" for Santayana refers to something as it stands in contingent relationship to various human desires, and so does not express at all well the eternal characters of Plato's *eidē*. Plato was willing to assert the eternal worth of the Forms for the soul because he thought the nature of the universe relatively fixed and eternal, a fact which we now know not to be true. Secondly, Plato had conceived his Forms as causes, which for Santayana was a confession of faith in magic, since their power to make other things behave derived solely from their inward character of being. The true locus of casual power he identified with matter, conceived along the lines of a dynamic flux. However much he respected matter as the only source of existence, Santayana did not find in it any reassuring endorsement of an "absolute and eternal" set of values. On the contrary, contingency and conflict, waste and annihilation abound in nature. Given that death is the one "absolute" the live creature faces, the realm of matter might well have been that "labyrinth of evil" Santayana had spoken of earlier.¹⁹ Nevertheless, natural piety insists that without matter neither animal, psyche nor the embodiment of essence could exist. Thus the problem of the spiritual life is how is it possible, given that nature is not fixed and essences are impotent. The failure of Inge's effort to reassert the contemporary value of Platonism provoked Santayana to explore the permanent possibility of the spiritual life without it. The essay had in fact begun with this challenge: "One of the great things past is Platonism, and one of the great things always possible is the spiritual life" (PSL, 1).

Actually, Santayana does not see Plato as a genuine champion of the spiritual life at all. He quite correctly describes Plato as from first to last a political thinker. "To this descendent of Solon," says Santayana, "the universe could never be anything but a crystal case to hold the jewel of a Greek city" (PSL, 27).²⁰ His metaphysics, according to Santayana, was a sublimated and poetized mythology reflecting Greek morals. On the other hand, in Plotinus, for whom the political realm was a gesture and an afterthought, one finds a perfect expression of what the spiritual life is because it made the act of contemplation, the "flight of the alone to the Alone," the central theme of its system, to which, as we have noted, Santayana paid the highest of compliments.²¹ As Santayana put it, the political world for Plotinus was a mere "barnyard" compared to the fortunes of the soul (PSL, 25).

Thus the spiritual life for Plotinus was not a "compensation" for frustrated political hopes, as it was for Plato. "Pure spiritual life cannot be something compensatory, a consolation for having missed more solid satisfactions," comments Santayana, "it should be rather the flower of all satisfactions, in which satisfaction becomes free from care, selfless, and wholly actual, and in that inward sense, eternal" (PSL, 29). The underlying drive of Platonic spirituality, *erōs*, is replaced with the condition of what Santayana calls being "truly emancipated and enlightened" (PSL, 29). The spiritual life is the

¹⁸ Quoted in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, p. 2. Hereafter cited in the text as PSL.

¹⁹ In fact in this essay he describes it as "barbarous and in indefinite flux" (PSL, 33).

²⁰ For those who insist on thinking of Plato as primarily a metaphysician, some attention should be given to the likelihood that the tetralogy beginning with *Timaeus* was broken off in mid-sentence in its second work, *Critias*, so that Plato could undertake his longest work, *Laws*.

²¹ *Ennead* VI.9.11, the famous conclusion of the *Enneads*. Santayana says, "In the unclouded, synthetic believing mind of Plotinus, this chastened mythology [i.e. Plato's] crystalized into the most beautiful of systems" (PSL, 23, italics added). This is no idle compliment.

“disintoxication” from the moral life, the world of “values,” not its sublimated fulfillment, according to Santayana. The function of pure intelligence becomes “to see such things as come its way under the form of eternity,” which is to say as essences considered apart from their existence, truth, import or history (PSL, 33). Though spirituality arises from material conditions, including such moral virtues as “concentration of thought, indifference to fortune and reputation, warmth of temperament (because spirit cannot burn clear except at high temperature),” nevertheless “when once aroused, it does not look back in that direction” (PSL, 38). In its purified state, spirit achieves “self-annihilation” (PSL, 40). The spiritual life for Santayana cannot be based on the ultimate fulfilment of the erotic desire of the good since it aims at the overcoming of all desire for liberation, that is, enlightenment.

Although Santayana wishes to speak of the life of spirit in this purely positive sense, in terms of liberation, yet he is willing to acknowledge two ways in which it can still maintain an orientation to the world of existence, one by bearing, as it were, the scars of its birth, and the other involving a selfless and somewhat icy tenderness as it looks down from its liberated heights. With regard to the first, Santayana gives a somewhat extraordinary and, I suspect, confessional description. He says:

Were any world perfect ... its spirit would view it with the same contemplative satisfaction with which it views any pure essence that spontaneously engages its attention. It would not, in respect to that perfect world, be harassed by remorse, as it must be in an imperfect world where it counts the cost of existence and considers the dreadful sufferings which plagued it like a nightmare, before something beautiful and good could appear for even a moment. I say *remorse* because such is the feeling that comes over me when I remember the travail in which, at least in man, the spirit has had to endure in bringing its better life to birth: but the spirit itself has no guilt in the matter; it was caught in a vice; and it may overlook that terrible gestation when at last it reaches the open and rewards itself with an hour of freedom and gladness. (PSL, 51)

As in the earlier essay on Plotinus, Santayana insists that the aim of spirit is not to rebuke the world for the darkness in it, but to gaze instead at the stars. The Gnostic who condemns the world as evil and who dwells upon that fact has merely transported the moral distractions of existence into the world of spirit, thereby spoiling its own natural radiance and joy with a halo of sadness and recrimination that could — and should — have been left behind.

The other response of spirit when it has achieved detachment is not blank indifference, but “joy” in anything when approached in “simplicity,” that is, without any “ulterior interest.”

... in other words, purity comes from detaching the thing seen and loved from the world that besets and threatens it and attaching it to the spirit to which it is an eternal possession. But this thing eternally possessed is not the thing as the world knows and prizes it; it is not the person, nation, or religion as it asserts and flaunts itself, in a mortal anxiety to be dominant; it is only that thing in its eternal essence, out of which the stress and doubt of existence have wholly passed. It is that thing dead, immortal, its soul restored, as Plotinus would have said, to the soul of the universe where, together with all other souls, it has always been contained in its purity and perfection. But the truth of it *there* is not the fact of it *here*: and therefore the world, though the spirit loves it far more truly and tenderly than it loves itself, is chilled and rebuked by that look of divine love, which, if it were heeded, would transmute its whole life and change it from what it so passionately and cruelly is, in time, into that which the spirit sees it to be in eternity. (PSL, 53-54)²²

²² Santayana’s stress of the words “here” and “there” is an echo of Plotinian language, “here” being the world of nature and “there” (εκεῖ) being the divine world of Nous contemplating the Forms. Compare PSL, p. 64 and refer to the full text of the letter to Robert Bridges cited above.

Thus the joy and tenderness with which spirit sees the world are due to spirit's ability to see the things of the world purely, as essences, and not as the mortal, suffering beings they are, caught up in the turbid flood of existence. Spirit apprehends things in the light of its own actuality: "awareness, intelligence, reconciliation" (PSL, 56). It welcomes the essences that come its way without hunger or desire or with the sense that better views are to be had elsewhere. As Dante's Picardia says in her eternal place in the lowly lunar heaven, "There is no envy in these spheres" (PSL, 75).²³

Thus Santayana offers us a naturalistic mysticism, a "way out of the labyrinth of evil" that releases spirit to its free home, the infinite wilderness of essence where things may be selflessly possessed in their eternity and immediacy. Mysticism, Santayana observes, means silence because it involves "the negation of every human wish and idea" (PSL, 77). Names still carry "animal faith" with them, and so any discourse about "essence" may permit it to be overheard as a "temporal fact"; "Silence is therefore imperative, if the mystic has any conscience" (PSL, 78). The only danger is that the mystic confuses his ecstasy for a higher reality or makes ecstasy itself his object. The first is a mistake in truth and the second in substitution of essence for the will, which must be renounced to be transcended. In renouncing words, Santayana says, we know them as symbols only; the straight but difficult way, in the words of San Juan de la Cruz is "Nothing, Nothing, Nothing" (PSL, 81). Spirit is nothing and empties itself into nothing.

The discipline of the spiritual life is "disillusion," a term Santayana had used from the very beginning of his philosophical development.²⁴ Positively, this means that we experience the world as much as possible with the sense of "the ultimate in the immediate" (PSL, 83). Anxiety must be effectively banished, initially by all pragmatic means to achieve a temporary island of relative stability in the flux of existence, and ultimately by the concentration of spirit apart from the urgencies and anguishes of the animal host. Thus morality actually presents a serious danger to Santayana insofar as it may interject its "distractions" into the spiritual life — the heaven of Christianity, did it exist, might effectively *choke* the life of spirit with its perfect and pervasive moral industriousness. In other words, in a world where the Good and the Beautiful perfectly combine everywhere, it is far more likely that the Beautiful will be eclipsed by the Good and remain unseen for what it is. Romantic pantheism presents a similar problem, infected as it is with a subliminal need to moralize beauty. Wordsworth, for example, could not effectively free his spirit, struggling as it did "to wash the world white and clean, adopt it and set it up for a respectable person" (PSL, 85). But, says Santayana, "The world is not respectable; it is mortal, tormented, confused, deluded for ever; but it is shot through with beauty, with love, with glints of courage and laughter; and in these the spirit blooms timidly and struggles to the light among the thorns" (PSL, 85). Wordsworth's problem was that he could not banish the world and "Nothing is able to banish the world except contempt for the world, and this was not in him" (PSL, 85).

This then is Santayana's challenge: the condition of the spiritual life is to leave

²³ *Paradiso* III. This is the sphere of those who, though dedicated to a life of worship, have had to break their vows and return to worldly life, hence the significance of the mottled discoloration of the moon reflects their lives of "blended virtues." After speaking, Picardia recedes singing, "vanishing like a heavy thing downward in deep water" (123).

²⁴ See "A Religion of Disillusion" in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* and the much later, crucial essay "Ultimate Religion" in *Obiter Scripta*.

moral concerns behind; if the world is held in the light, it is the in cold light of the emptiness of essence under the sky of eternity. But Santayana's discipline of liberation, like its Plotinian model, is a discipline of ascent. The irony, of course, is that Santayana has utterly rejected any Platonic metaphysics that would make this ascent one toward reality. His "ascent" is a flight that takes off from terra firma (or rather, given his view of matter, terra infirma) and must return to it. Indeed, it never really leaves the ground. It is more of a shift of attention away from the path before us toward the stars above. Like that of Plotinus, Santayana's *askesis* requires perfection of inward concentration that ends in ecstatic union where simplicity of vision coincides perfectly with the simplicity of its object. But that is where Santayana's discussions leave us, both in the breviary of *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* and the conclusion of *The Realm of Spirit*.

The Descent of Spirit and Santayana's Dilemma

The trouble with the mystic ascent, however, is that the ladder is never really pulled up. There is the descent, the reawakening. This troubled Plotinus deeply. "Many times it has happened," he says, "lifted out of the body into myself, becoming external to all other things and self-centered, beholding a marvelous beauty ... yet there comes the moment of descent ... I ask myself how it happens that I can now be descending..."²⁵ For Santayana this is no more than the trough of the wave which we ride through until the next crest, and our moral concerns are those of keeping afloat and navigating the waters as best we may. The moral life is not abandoned at all, merely temporarily bracketed in precious moments of illumination. And it may be any kind of moral life, though Santayana recommends one that lives with piety toward the real natural harmonies that can exist between the rhythms of nature and our own bodies. Still, in the end, the moral life and the spiritual life have little to say to each other: the spiritual life offers itself to the moral life as a potentially welcome distraction; the moral life threatens to disturb the spiritual life, even while making it possible in the first place. The more the two are brought into harmony, it seems, the greater the danger that the spiritual life will become confused with the moral life — with "Platonism" being the unhappy result.

Is this a necessary conclusion? Or has Santayana presented us with something akin to Fuller's dilemma, that is, a false dilemma based upon extremes that are artificial abstractions? First, Santayana does not claim that the spiritual life has an absolute demand upon all of us. There are a plurality of values for living beings and what he has to say about the spiritual life only has bearing upon those for whom this has a positive value in the first place. Others may be perfectly happy wandering the "labyrinth" without concern for an escape. While his moral and political writings may speak to those individuals, Santayana recognizes that his ulterior philosophy of the spiritual life is not addressed to them at all. He is a contemplative speaking to contemplatives. In this dialogue, however, there may be a response that diverges from Santayana's own conclusions without violating the premises.

Second, there is some difficulty with the opposition between these two lives Santayana presents. There is something unsettling in the attempt to deal with the *reality* of evil (not the conceptual "problem of evil") by relegating it to the inherent plurality of values the natural world spawns and offering an aesthetic alternative that, from its own perspective, is value-neutral. Must an aesthetic attitude toward the world be forced to

²⁵ *Ennead* IV.8.1. McKenna translation.

choose between the view that art's sole function is to serve morality or be limited to focus on pure form regardless of content? To use an example, Goya's *Third of May, 1808*, which shows Spanish patriots being executed by a French firing squad, or Picasso's *Guernica*, also a protest against the horrors of war, can both be viewed in the gallery in terms of their "pure form," that is, in terms of their rhythm, balance, color, use of space and so on. And one school of aesthetics would say this is really what constitutes them as "art," whatever their content may refer to. But a richer aesthetics would say that these works evoke through their aesthetic form the clarified *meaning* of the evils they portray, a clarification that may not have been lucidly present even to those who suffered the events directly. If one beheld a Greek tragedy while remaining oblivious to the moral content of the play, one would miss the meaning of the aesthetic experience.²⁶ The evocation of these meanings enables us to engage in a *contemplative response* to the world in all its aspects, including the moral. In other words, the aesthetic attitude can contemplate an "essence" as a *meaning* that has been purified or clarified via catharsis. And this may result in our ability to exist in the world itself with an enhanced understanding and vision of things. In other words, one of the aims of contemplative liberation may be to teach us a way of wisdom, an enlightened way of life, that is thoroughly integrated, not tangential to, daily moral practice. The question that needs to be posed to Santayana is: Given the presuppositions of his ontology, can there be a method of liberation that offers a more inclusive response to the moral life and the nature of the existence of the natural world than the one Santayana himself offered? Can the spiritual life be directed toward a compassionate, mindful awareness of the world without thereby developing a moralism antithetical to the spiritual life?

The Buddhist Ideal of Compassionate Insight

The Buddhist tradition may offer an important example for Santayana's philosophy, sharing as it does a similar view of the physical world as a turbid flux of "dependent co-arising" or "inter-being" (*pratitya-samutpada*) which is fundamentally "empty" (*śūnya*) and so pervaded with transitory instability, anxiety, and suffering (*dukkha*).²⁷ Buddhism does not take a Gnostic view of the world as inherently "evil," though at times it can dramatize its negative aspects rather excessively.²⁸ Nevertheless, the proper pragmatic Buddhist response is: If the world is like this, then what can we do about it? Like Santayana, Buddhist philosophy sees an intelligent or "awakened" (*bodhi*) response to the nature of existence which aims at liberation by clarity of insight (*prajña*) into the

²⁶ The idea that art allows us to look at the "clarified meaning" of events that otherwise may remain dark is what I take to be the best understanding of the term *katharsis*, whatever Aristotle himself may have intended. Art, like tragedy, gives us emotional as well as intellectual clarification of meaning and value. The contrast between Santayana's formalist aesthetics and Dewey's aesthetics that integrates form and content is the theme of my essay, "Santayana's Unbearable Lightness of Being," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* 11 (1993).

²⁷ Though *dukkha* can often carry the primary sense of "suffering," it can also mean "instability" and "impermanence." Thus the experience of happiness or joy, though certainly not "sorrowful" or painful at the time is nevertheless *dukkha* when understood clearly.

²⁸ The Buddha's famous "Fire Sermon" being one noted example of this tendency.

fundamentals (or *dharma*s) and their behavior.²⁹ A great deal of attention is paid in Buddhist practice to training the mind to see beyond the apparent substantiality of ordinary experience and recognizing how objects and “self” arise functionally as products of change, desire, and inherited causal dispositions (*karma*).³⁰ With enough skill, this can effect the dissipation of desire born of illusion, the frantic “thirst” or “grasping” after things (*tanha*) that gives rise to the existential “problem of evil,” the reality of suffering. Not only does this dispel any false notion of the substantial self-identity of “objects,” which are ways of designating events (even the elements or *dharma*s of the world are “empty,” *śunya*, said Nagarjuna), but the self-identity of “essences,” even of the non-existential sort like Santayana’s, suffers the same fate.³¹ In other words, the critique of a Buddhist philosopher like Nagarjuna would be that to assert the non-existential identity of essences is still due to a degree of “attachment” or grasping, and when this is given up the essence is neither identical nor non-identical and can be penetrated with an act of liberating insight (*prajñā*). When all things can be seen in their emptiness, their clear but momentary “suchness” (*tathata*), then nirvana and samsara coincide.³² Liberation is not a rejection of the world for the sake of some transcendent “there.” Nirvana is not a “place” (as if fire went “somewhere” when it was put out) but a “way”; not a “what” but a “how.” *How* does one behold the world and respond to it when one has “passed through” the empty nature of desire?

“Form is emptiness, emptiness is form,” says the *Heart Sutra*, but this insight does not terminate in pessimism, fatalism, scepticism or nihilism.³³ Rather, it leads to “tranquility” or the extinction of *dukkha* (i.e., “nirvana”) which is also positively described at times as “bliss” (*ananda*), a condition that also involves the response of compassion (*karuna*) for all sentient beings, at least in the later Mahayana traditions

²⁹ *Dharma* has a wide range of meanings (comparable to those of the Greek term *logos*): its core meaning is “that which upholds,” and so is extended to “laws” or moral customs which uphold society, the laws of the universe, the basic elements of the universe, the elements of self, the expression of those laws in teachings, and specifically the teachings of the Buddha.

³⁰ This part of Buddhist teaching is called “Abidharma.”

³¹ Nagarjuna (ca. 150 CE) was one of the main philosophical exponents of the Mahayana school known as “the Middle Way” or Madhyamika. By insisting on the emptiness of the *dharma*s (taken in whatever sense), Nagarjuna moved Buddhist philosophy from the dogmatic factionalism into which it had lapsed back to its original therapeutic mission. See Frederick Streng’s fine study, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning*.

³² Samsara is the “wheel” of existence of ordinary life lived in ignorance, and so subject to the demands of causality and grasping — the “Realm of Matter” in Santayana’s terminology as experienced by biological organisms. Santayana puts all morality into this sphere. By showing that nirvana, the realm of liberated insight (Santayana’s Realm of Spirit) is “empty” and so nowhere, it is nothing else than the world, but experienced in terms of its emptiness and so freed of its existential power. Indeed, the liberating nature of insight (*prajñā*) is that the world stands out far more clearly than before.

³³ The *Heart Sutra* is a short but central Mahayana text containing a synopsis of the *prajñāparamita* teaching. “Form” (*rupa*) is actually more what we would call “substance” or even “body.” See *Buddhist Texts Through the Ages*, ed. Edward Conze (Philosophical Library, 1954), pp. 152-53 and Conze’s commentary in *Buddhist Wisdom Texts*.

stemming from the *Prajñaparamita* literature.³⁴ Buddhism does not seek to turn away from this world to another, better one. Rather, it is concerned with a careful way of “handling” this world without getting burned by it. In this approach contemplative insight and practical action are not opposed by mutually sustaining. The Buddha himself presented the Eightfold Path precisely as a “skilful way” of passing through this world, a moral discipline that was fundamentally connected with the spiritual life. The eight parts of the path are classified in three main groups. One consists of three virtues of right conduct: kindness and moderation in (1) speech, (2) actions and (3) livelihood. Another includes three virtues of right mental discipline: (4) building habits of endeavor, (5) clarity of awareness, and (6) meditative concentration. The last has two virtues of right wisdom: (7) intelligent understanding and (8) “right thought.” All work together, as the eight spokes of a wheel, to keep it moving smoothly.³⁵ But it is this last, “right thought,” that I will briefly describe because it offers, I believe, a significant alternative to the severe antimoralism of Santayana’s conception of the spiritual life while still accepting most of his analysis of the nature of existence. It shows us a “contemplative ethics of compassion” that does not fall into Santayana’s conception of the moral life as a “distraction” to the spiritual life.

Right thought (*sammā sankappa*) is included with right understanding (*sammā ditthi*) as a necessary aspect of the nature of wisdom. “Right understanding” involves deep insight into the true nature of the world, especially with respect to the problem of suffering — the “labyrinth of evil,” as Santayana would say. It is a strictly cognitive ability. “Right *thought*,” however, is a discipline that works on meditative beholding suffering beings with compassion. It is not easy to say that this is a moral or aesthetic or emotional ability more than a “cognitive” one, since it also involves insight into the true nature of things. But it focuses upon those aspects of the world that help us attain compassionate awareness. It is an integral part of the nature of wisdom to cultivate benevolent selfless love (*metta*) with respect to all beings and compassion (*karuna*) for all that are suffering. Buddhism believes that our daily actions, including those that are called “moral,” spring from the sorts of beliefs we have which in turn generate desires which create the “objects” to which we become attached (including the “object” of the self). Attention to our basic beliefs and a clear understanding of how they constitute the objects of our world — and so of our lives — is a central concern for Buddhism. As Walpola Ruhala says, “All thoughts of selfish desire, ill-will, hatred, and violence are the result of lack of wisdom — in all spheres of life, whether individual, social or political.”³⁶ The way to overcome *dukkha* is to develop insights and daily habits that generate actions that do not lead to grasping, violence, and so to more suffering. All eight parts of the Eightfold Path cooperate and mutually sustain each other. Contemplation and practice work together to generate a life that is “liberated.” And this may be contrasted to Santayana’s philosophy which tends to keep the spiritual and moral lives disjointed or, at best, irrelevant to each other.

³⁴ These texts were the product of various thinkers in India between 200 BCE and 400CE. They are critical of the earlier ideal of the enlightened sage (*arhat*) who simply rejects the world for his own salvation and put forward the new ideal of the “awakened being of compassion,” the *bodhisattva*, who turns toward the suffering beings of the world with enlightened understanding.

³⁵ For a discussion of the Eightfold Path, here summarized, see Walpola Ruhala, *What the Buddha Taught*, 2nd edition (Grove Press, 1974), Ch. V.

³⁶ *What the Buddha Taught*, p. 49.

The Buddhist discipline of right thought in particular might reveal a more functional connection between these two ends and so exhibit an alternative to Santayana's response to "the labyrinth of evil." Right understanding involves daily attentiveness to features of the world that might awaken the negative passions of grasping or hatred and beholding them instead with gentle but egoless benevolence attended by penetratingly clear understanding into their fundamental nature. It involves daily meditation practices that develop methods of beholding other beings so that feelings of benevolence and compassion are at the forefront of consciousness.³⁷ By contemplating others compassionately, one is not only more disposed to act in a compassionate manner toward them but in a way that evokes the ability of others to seek compassionate, liberated wisdom. For example, a great deal of obscurity of perception can arise from conscious or unconscious fears we may have toward things. Beholding those things as "essences" not only allows us to see them more clearly but to transcend our fear of them. Compassion or *metta* means seeing things as they truly are; this can only be done when the spirit is at peace. Another example is the meditation practice that seeks to cultivate enduring states of benevolent compassion by developing habits that focus on remembering acts of benevolence one has done or which have been done to one, gradually extending these thoughts outward toward recollection of acts of benevolence others have done to others and so on. By so doing, one comes to focus one's conscious thoughts regularly on being well-disposed to others in the world.³⁸ As the Mahayana sages say, all beings are potentially the Buddha.³⁹ The path towards that goal of compassionate freedom lies in cultivating habits of "paying attention."⁴⁰

To put these ideas into more Santayanan terms, the Realm of Essence may be constituted of an infinite number of essences, any of which may offer themselves to spirit as an object of contemplation. But some of those essences may be conducive toward leading a life of compassionate benevolence while others may be conducive toward quite the opposite sort of actions. That is, there are a number of essences relating to aspects of compassion, and by disciplining ourselves to focus on these as they might be instantiated in the realm of existence, we can develop a mode of conduct that is at once "ethical" without involving "distraction" from the spiritual life. Indeed, by concentrating on such essences one might develop a mode of life that was even more highly conducive to the spiritual life than the one offered by Santayana himself, which suffers from a fluctuation between acting in the existential, moral life and intermittently escaping into the realm of spirit for its "hour of gladness." The sorts of essences spirit contemplates do not have equally neutral consequences for our existential psychic life, and the concern which essences might be contemplated is not merely a question for the animal psyche, but for spirit as well. In particular, a life that is in harmony with spirit's ideal of

³⁷ *Metta* or benevolence is the first of the four "brahma-viharas" or "sacred houses" of *karuna* (compassion), *mudita* (sympathetic joy), and *upekha* (equanimity), these latter growing out of the cultivation of the first.

³⁸ Compare Dante's purification before entering the Garden of Eden at the end of *Purgatorio*: he bathes in the river of Lethe to forget his sins and then in the river of Eunoë to remember all the good deeds he did and which were done to him. (*Purgatorio* XXVIII, XXXI).

³⁹ To explore how this is carried out in practice, see Sharon Salzberg's *Loving-Kindness* (Shambala Publications, 1995). Salzberg is an acclaimed American Buddhist teacher specializing in this particular form of meditation practice.

⁴⁰ Sharon Salzberg, *Lovingkindness*, p.192.

liberation and persistently conducive to it, should be preferred by both the psyche and spirit over those lives in which the two do not sustain each other or, worse, in which spirit and psyche inhibit each other and are at best disconnected. In this sense, the Buddhist life of contemplative compassion offers a significant alternative to Santayana's conception of the spiritual life without fundamentally altering the premises from which Santayana's later philosophy sets out.⁴¹

I offer this as an example only — that we may see that there is more connection between the spiritual and the moral life than Santayana was willing to grant. Santayana thought of the moral life in western terms, as a struggle of will, and so an effort reaching toward an end, rather than as a shadow that follows us because we have turned toward the light. In concluding, I will reaffirm that I think what Santayana has offered the future is an exemplary conception of philosophy in service to the spiritual life. His own rendition of this philosophy bears understandably the scars of its birth in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which saw the shattering of so many ideals and comforting illusions. No doubt it also bears the scars of its "terrible gestation" in Santayana's own life, which he only obliquely acknowledges. But I do not think that we need to dismiss the moral life from the spiritual or to condemn its presence in spirit as regrettable "remorse" tainting the otherwise happy intuition of essence. Compassion and benevolence are part of the wisdom of spirit, if handled properly. As the Japanese poet Issa said on the death of his child,

This world of dew is a world of dew, and yet, and yet

THOMAS ALEXANDER

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

⁴¹ In this sense, James Gouinlock's attempt to present a conception of the spiritual life based on the more Aristotelian views of Santayana's *Life of Reason* — and those of Aristotle himself — does not present the strong counter-example to Santayana's later philosophy that Buddhism does, in my view, because it introduces a sense of naturalistic teleology that the later Santayana clearly abjures.

Spirituality Without Moral Concerns

Commenting on Thomas Alexander's searching and sensitive essay is both a challenge and a pleasure. He is a thoughtful and sympathetic reader of Santayana. He is a serious philosopher, seeking to relate great texts and towering conceptions to his own experience of the world. He is also a learned man, capable of detecting fruitful connections between divergent traditions and apparently dissimilar ideas. The pleasure of commenting comes from seeing how much he makes of Santayana's idea of spirituality. The challenge is in finding something to say that carries the argument further in the spirit of open inquiry he embraces.¹

Alexander thinks getting straight about spirituality is humanly and not only philosophically important. His central concern is how to keep the moral life of compassion and the spiritual life of detachment from becoming "disjointed" or "irrelevant to each other." He thinks that though Santayana sees animal life as the ground of both action and vision, the two seem nevertheless to be inadequately integrated and hence to pull in opposite directions in his philosophy. Santayana appears to him to offer a spirituality of "icy tenderness," which is an insufficiently inclusive approach to existence in the natural world. Alexander turns, instead, to Buddhist thought for guidance in developing a compassionate spirituality or a life of "contemplative compassion."

I understand the impulse that motivates Alexander to believe that spirituality must overcome its contemplative distance and embrace concern and compassion. The world is in desperate straits and life is awful for hundreds of millions of people. Under such circumstances, detached enjoyment of the passing scene is self-indulgent, if not morally depraved. We should expend the energies of the world in making it a better place and, when that is impossible, we must at least view the struggles of the suffering with *Mitgefühl* or sympathetic sadness.

This is the impulse that leads Alexander to seek the sources of the spiritual life in "the problem of evil" and to refer to spirituality as an "escape" from the miseries of life. God need not be a player in one's conceptual scheme to see evil as a problem. Our everyday sense of justice revolts at the sight of undeserved suffering, of children dying painful deaths and nasty children disposing of their aging parents. Such injustice and suffering weigh heavily on Alexander: they take up the center of his vision. They loom so large that he finds it difficult to peer around them at the calm landscape of spirituality. As a result, he sees even the spiritual life through the heat of action and the indignities that beset this world.

Such vision, Santayana never tires of pointing out, provides the surest way to miss the essence of spirituality. Pure intuition enables us to see the world under the form of eternity or as "chronicles of ancient wars." This form of consciousness does not call on us to act or even to feel much, for it is not knowledge of living and suffering things but vision of essences. As play of light, it reveals nothing we must set right or pity. It does not distinguish truth from fiction, what is from what might or ought to be. Its objects are not the loved or hated things that surround us; its relation to them is, accordingly, not one framed in desire and in pain.

¹ An earlier version of this paper was read to the annual meeting of the Santayana Society in Boston on December 28, 1999, in response to the above paper by Thomas Alexander.

Moral concern destroys the magic of such free consciousness. It burdens the mind with bothersome allegiances and focuses it on the plight of what exists. Santayana's realms introduce a marvelous clarity into this matter. So long as we make existence or the world of matter the center of our attention, consciousness suffers the vicissitudes of the body. If we devote ourselves to the truth about animate life, exploring endless reaches of disappointment and suffering, the sensitive among us die a thousand deaths. Only exclusive attention to essences enables us to open the door to carefree joy and the sort of transcendence that glories in the beauty of form everywhere. Substance-directed and truth-directed consciousness never quite break through to the level of unburdened spirituality.

Alexander thinks that by "disciplining ourselves to focus on" essences that are "conducive toward leading a life of compassionate benevolence" we can develop a spirituality that is more inclusive and more ethical than Santayana's "icy" version. Yet there is a problem here: whatever emerges from this focus will be moral and may even be inclusive, but it will not be spiritual. It will show the same struggles, the same worries and the same neuroses that the moral life always generates. It will require sustained concentration of mind — a difficult task — and actions in accordance with the precepts of compassion and benevolence. How can our spirits be calm when faced with demands of this magnitude?

Compassion calls for effort; failure creates disquiet or guilt. Can we be at peace so long as the desire to make the world better roils our hearts? The injunction to do the best we can and worry no further sounds disingenuous. It may help us get off the hook: no one can do much, so do what little you can and go home feeling good about feeling bad about the ways of the world. This is taking a moral holiday without counting it as vacation time. By comparison with it, Royce's demands for unceasing efforts on behalf of the good seem, even if overwrought, serious and commendable.

If spirituality has a special relation to inner peace, this is not a way we will ever find it. Santayana's spiritual life, by contrast, is always ready at hand, providing restful delight for all who travail and are heavy laden. The pure intuitions of which it consists are universally available: they occur in sensory consciousness and in dreams, in play and in the search for answers, in moments of intense emotion and sometimes even when we are in pain. This is a spirituality emphatically not for contemplatives, but for all who get absorbed in what they think and do and feel or attend to what is immediately present to them for its own sake.

When Santayana says that the flux touches the eternal at the top of every wave, he means that moments of pure intuition are scattered in our lives like pieces of fruit are spread about in Christmas cake. We may not realize the nature of these morsels of light and delight: just as we may not know that we are eating pineapples or even fruit, we may be ignorant that the passing joy is transcendent or spiritual. Yet, since pure intuition is the natural condition of consciousness, incidents of transcendence dot the landscape of the mind. The fact that Santayana referred to consciousness as "the lyric cry in the midst of business" even in the days of *The Life of Reason* suggests that he recognized the transcendent nature of mind early. He never forgot it.

The moment we think of spirituality in these terms, puzzlements about the spiritual life disappear. It is unfortunate, of course, that Santayana speaks of a spiritual *life*. Calling the pure intuitions of a person collectively a "life" imputes the wrong sort of unity to them. They display no purposiveness, no continuity and no development. They may have a unity of theme, but without the intent that makes for

memory, this must remain unrecognized. They are all acts of intuition, but acts are never contents of consciousness, so they must go unexperienced. They are simply a collection of events, similar in nature when viewed from the outside.

“Spiritual life” is a particularly unhappy phrase because it invites comparison with “the life of reason.” Apples and oranges are more appropriately compared than these two “lives”; at least both of them are fruits. By contrast, the life of reason is an extended pattern of existence embodying purposes and principles, and the spiritual “life” is a discontinuous set of self-enclosed acts of vision. They have nothing in common except that they may both characterize the career, or portions of the career, of the same animal. But they don’t vie for the person’s loyalty. The enemy of the life of reason is a life of impulse or excess; no one is tempted to, or can, string together decades of pure intuitions to lead a life.

So do the moral and the spiritual life pull in opposite directions? About as much as the heart and the kidneys do. Each is what it is and does what it does. When the heart functions properly, it does not reject the value of what the kidneys make. And the kidneys do not propose to substitute their vital fluid for heart-pumped blood. Similarly, a life of reason leaves ample room for moments of transcendent delight. And pure intuitions are blissfully indifferent to the virtues of moderation and to long-term plans.

Nevertheless, might people given to spirituality not be impractical and those drowned in the affairs of life unspiritual? Of course they might. But we should not hastily affirm a causal connection. Impractical people might find it less frustrating to enjoy their intuitions than to compete with the burly sinners of the world. And business people may be too busy to spend long on the features of the immediate. In any case, there is nothing about moments of joyous consciousness that renders us unfit for the rough and tumble of daily life, nor about attention to survival that chokes off feelings and images. Enjoying transcendent moments is not coping with the contingencies of life, but there is nothing to prevent us from doing both.

In fact, the psyche has to deal with the influences of the world even while the spirit enjoys the show of essences. The eyes have to be focused, posture maintained, vital body functions continued at operational levels and the organism kept on the alert to take defensive action should any threatening change occur. Pure intuitions are impossible without all the struggles of animal life. They crown organic achievements with moments of unmixed joy, transmuting them for a short time into vision and light.

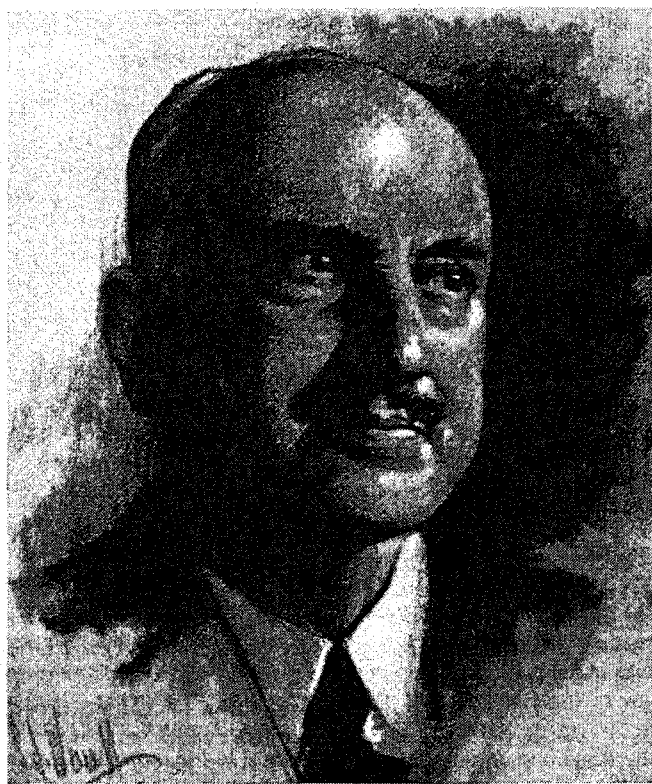
This way of viewing what Santayana has in mind, and what all of us experience, makes it clear why spirituality is neither an escape nor a liberation. A spiritual view might see the world as an incubus, and contemplation a way of ridding ourselves of it. The existence of such a transcendental perch, however, is a misleading fiction; consciousness is not a bird that can occupy it but a function. The only world is the mundane one of space and time in which animals fight to survive. Nothing permits us to escape this reality; even death, often thought a liberation, is just obliteration.

To understand pure intuition, we must place it in the context of this natural life. It serves as the gift, the crowning glory of animal existence. As the ideal completion of the movement of matter, it enables us to savor the eternal. To call it an escape or a liberation is to discredit the life that sustains it. But that life is good, at least in part because it opens windows on the infinite reaches of the realm of essence.

One could respond to this by claiming that the view of us as animals in a dangerous world is simply the perspective of the psyche, just as the transcendental

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Volume XXVII

GEORGE SANTAYANA

Puritanism has nothing to do with parity.
(See Books)

Number 5

Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

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

Overheard in Seville

Edited for the Santayana Society by Angus Kerr-Lawson. Correspondence concerning manuscripts and publication should be sent to him at the Department of Pure Mathematics, University of Waterloo, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada N2L 3G1. E-mail address: <kerrlaws@math.uwaterloo.ca>.

Matters concerning subscriptions, the Santayana Society, and the Bibliographic Update should be sent to the co-editor, Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., Dean, School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5140, USA. E-mail address <hsaatkam@iupui.edu>.

The web page for *Overheard in Seville* is:

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Articles from 1993 to the present are posted there (in unpolished form).

Opposite: Santayana's novel *The Last Puritan*, a Book of the Month Club selection, was reviewed in *Time* magazine on February 3, 1936.

stance is the natural viewpoint of spirit. Reduced to perspectives, the two cancel each other out: neither is more legitimate than the other. This would leave the idea that spirituality is an escape at least a viable option, on a par with the notion that it is the completion or perfection of natural lives.

But the response overlooks Santayana's commitment to a realm of truth. We are *in fact* animals living in a precarious environment. The transcendental perspective that dreams of escape and liberation does not properly represent the alignment of forces in the world. There is no escape from these forces. Liberation is both impossible and unnecessary, for spirit without psyche cannot survive, and the body is the spirit's soil and home, not its enemy. More, when spirit speaks in its own voice, we hear nothing of escape or liberation: pure intuition is unchained without having had to escape, at liberty without the need to be set free. It sees only essences and knows nothing of the travail of the universe.

Disregarding the spirituality Santayana calls to our attention is a grave philosophical and personal mistake. Moments of carefree consciousness fill life with laughter and increase the buoyancy of our burdened days. Without them, daily life becomes torpid and even success loses its exhilaration. It may seem odd, though it involves no contradiction, that the experiences we need to make life good are those in which we forget about the good. Such temporary forgetfulness takes nothing away from the moral life: pure intuitions occur as readily when we help people as when we harm them. Helping them is a better strategy, but it adds nothing to spirituality.

JOHN LACHS

Vanderbilt University

Memorial Notice: Paul Grimley Kuntz (1915-2000)

The Santayana Society sadly notices the passing of Paul Kuntz, who died from complications of pneumonia last January in Atlanta at the age of 84. In addition to being a scholar of Santayana's thought, he was a longtime member of the Society and one of its demiurges. Paul Kuntz was born in Philadelphia, the son of a Lutheran minister; he died in the Catholic faith. He held both bachelor's and master's degrees in theology from Harvard, where he also earned his doctorate in philosophy in 1946. From Smith College, he went to Grinnell. His final appointment began in 1966 at Emory University, where he taught for nineteen years. In retirement, he continued the scholar's life in serene but steady research, sharing it with his wife, Marion, herself a scholar of renaissance thought. Together they enjoyed summers in Venice, where, last June, Paul suffered a heart attack.

Paul was an open-hearted philosopher who embraced pluralism as an expression of the bounty of divine order. One of his earliest books, an introductory study co-authored with Niel Klausner, is significantly titled *Philosophy: the Study of Different Beliefs*. Not the desert landscapes of logical analysis, but the teeming, multilevel rainforest of the Great Chain of Being and its principle of plenitude was his philosophical home. His concern with the metaphysics of order led to a study of Whitehead's thought and to *The Concept of Order* (1968) and *Jacob's Ladder and the Tree of Life* (1987), coedited with Marion. His major contribution to Santayana studies is, of course, the critical edition of Santayana's dissertation, *Lotze's System of*

Philosophy. Beyond these books, Paul Kuntz authored several dozen of articles, whose breadth of subject matter runs from Plotinus to Thomas Jefferson to Anais Nin. True, his love of finding hidden order often led to unconventional views — even of Santayana. But these views were put forth with gentleness, humor, and endless, even relentless, good will.

John Lachs says: “As to Paul Kuntz, my contacts with him showed him as one of the most lovable of humans. In the 60s when I first got to know him, he was in charge of perhaps a dozen societies, organizing meetings with indefatigable energy. He seemed to have supernatural faith that professional meetings would solve problems, advance research, make for greater collegiality, etc. I will always remember him for the quiet voice of reason he represented in the APA and everywhere else he went.” Besides his scholarship and support, he is fondly remembered by our Society for his gracious hospitality whenever we met in Atlanta, banqueting us in his magnificent home not far from the Emory campus.

I will add a graduate student’s memories. I recall attending seminars in Paul’s dining room — the long, dark table, ornate chairs and heavy lead-crystal chandelier above us. Paul served us homemade yogurt laced with honey. He sat at the head, grizzled bush of hair above his expressive eyebrows, horn-rimmed glasses and indefatigable smile, not just teaching, but hosting us, combining philosophy and scholarship into ceremony. (It was for one of the seminars he conducted that I wrote the first paper I gave to the SAAP.) At my doctoral defense, Paul came bearing a stack of books bristling with slips of paper, concerned over a harsh remark I made about Stephen Pepper, whom he admired. Afterwards, he invited me to his house. There, as the terrible darkness of an Atlanta thunderstorm gathered and exploded, he quietly continued his friendly defense of Pepper over a glass of sherry, the weak desk lamp offering the only bubble of light in the black gloom of the great house and the lashing rain outside. Subsequently, I heard from Paul irregularly — but inevitably: an article here, a letter there.

Once, from Venice, he sent a badly xeroxed copy of the little prayer of St. Francis. I have it taped above my desk still. I think it would be appropriate to remember our gentle friend Paul Kuntz by including Santayana’s translation of it below from a letter to Mrs. C. H. Toy in Cory’s *The Letters of George Santayana*.

THOMAS ALEXANDER

Southern Illinois University

Simple Prayer

Oh Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace:

Where there is hatred, may I bring love,
 Where there is offence, may I bring forgiveness,
 Where there is discord, may I bring union,
 Where there is doubt, may I bring the faith,
 Where there is error, may I bring the truth,
 Where there is despair, may I bring hope,
 Where there is sadness, may I bring joy,
 Where there is darkness, may I bring light.

Grant, oh Master, that I may seek not so much
 to be comforted as to comfort,
 to be understood, as to understand,
 to be loved, as to love.
 For it is thus: In giving we receive,
 in forgiving, we are forgiven,

American and German Tendencies in the Thought of Josiah Royce

*What calm could there be in the double assurance that it was really right that things should be wrong, but that it was really wrong not to strive to right them?*¹

In *Character and Opinion in the United States* [1921], George Santayana gives a trenchant philosophical assessment of his former teacher and dissertation advisor at Harvard, Josiah Royce. The assessment is crucial for those seeking to understand the evident tensions between German and American thought in Royce. In Royce's philosophy Santayana traces two fundamental tensions: one in his moral philosophy between Calvinism and voluntarism, and the other between his theories of universal mind and of social realism. Santayana attributes each of these tensions to a conflict between Royce's transcendental metaphysics, and a certain latent naturalism. In what follows, I shall first examine Santayana's understanding of this latter metaphysical conflict, before turning later to the tensions in Royce's moralism and theory of mind.

Santayana distinguishes a naturalistic strain in Royce's thought; a strain which if developed, might have helped him overcome the moral struggles characteristic of the mature stages of his philosophy. Santayana describes this potential naturalism as follows:

Sometimes a philosopher ... becomes so devoted a naturalist that he is ashamed to remain a moralist ... and where all is one vast cataract of events, he feels it would be impertinent of him to divide them censoriously into things that ought to be and things that ought not to be. He may even go one step farther. Awestruck and humbled before the universe, he may insensibly transform his understanding and admiration of it into the assertion that the existence of evil is no evil at all, but that the order of the universe is in every detail necessary and perfect ... (COUS 110)

The "moralist" practice of evaluating the world may become philosophically odious to a thoroughgoing naturalist. Having criticized the world into a "vast cataract of events," the naturalistic philosopher no longer sees the necessity of applying to it the proverbial "ought" or "ought-not." Things simply are in their natural event-fulness; that is, in a naturally conceived order. When carried a step further, a certain rational pantheism may develop which relativizes good and evil to a necessarily perfect order within which such designations have a natural place.²

¹ Santayana, George, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1921), p. 126. All Santayana quotations taken from this edition will be cited parenthetically as COUS, followed by a page number.

² Readers of Santayana will recognize this as the moral view he consistently attributes to Spinoza, and which he himself modifies (I feel successfully) to fit his own thinking. See especially *Persons and Places: Fragments of Autobiography*, edited by William B. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986) 233-5. There, Santayana gives one of the most revealing tributes to Spinoza and his influence on him. Interestingly it is with respect to Royce's (mis)treatment of Spinoza that Santayana seems to have appropriated his own moral naturalism. He writes: "Royce himself seemed to suffer less from the plague of idealistic criticism" [obliquely referring once again to his latent naturalism] ... for instance, about the saying of Spinoza's that the mind of God resembled the mind of man as the Dog Star resembles the barking animal. Royce said only that this was too materialistic, without caring or daring to broach the question as to the diffusion or concentration of that cosmic "mind."

Santayana thus claims that a certain naturalistic impulse was never fully realized in Royce's thought. Furthermore, he goes on to say that this impulse, if "rationally conceived," (as in the system of Spinoza) might have developed into a pantheism which views morality as a function of "relations which things bear to the living beings which they affect" (COUS 110). Santayana praises this rational, pantheistic morality as "an ancient, shrewd, and inexpugnable position" (COUS 111). Unfortunately, Royce fails to meet the demands of this naturalistic impulse. The problem, Santayana affirms, is that Royce's ostensible pantheism is "expressed ... with a false afflatus," that being, namely, his "transcendental theory of knowledge" (COUS 112).

The following passage reflects Santayana's understanding of Royce's transcendental epistemology:

This theory regards all objects, including the universe, as merely terms posited by the will of the thinker, according to a definite grammar of thought native to his mind. In order that his thoughts may be addressed to any particular object, he must first choose and create it of his own accord; otherwise his opinions, not being directed upon any object in particular within his ken, cannot be either true or false, whatever picture they may frame. Whatever anything external may happen to be, when we do not mean to speak of it, is irrelevant to our discourse (COUS 112).

It is not surprising that, from Santayana's materialistic perspective, Royce's transcendental epistemology does not simply have implications for our knowledge of the world, but (however intentionally or unintentionally) for our knowledge of the being of the external world as well. Knowledge of the external, material world is something Royce clearly rejects:

If the external world, said to be material, is ... above all causal, and is such as to explain the particular facts which are found in our experience, then, that world is above all a real embodiment of the very purpose which, in us, appears as our purpose of explanation Properly examined, then, the view here in question becomes only a form of Idealism³

For Royce the external material world is "above all" constituted as our purpose of explanation. Thus Royce's transcendental epistemology leads to the reduction of (ontologically existent) external objects to internal discourse. Presumably, the above passage from Santayana regarding Royce's transcendental epistemology is further referring to Royce's employment of William James's notion of attention. Royce writes,

... the process whereby our present knowledge alters to meet our purposes, and is known as thus altering, is the process of attention ... [t]his attention is our choice to narrow the field of our own consciousness in a particular way at a particular moment ("The Moral Order" 356).

Royce's adoption of this Jamesian notion of attention is meant to underscore his general claim that being and purpose are one and the same thing; to be, according to Royce, is to "fulfil a purpose" ("The Moral Order" 335). The upshot of this last view is that for Royce, knowledge, to a significant degree, depends upon the extent to which certain conscious choices involving our total field of awareness come to serve our particular purposes.

We therefore discover from Santayana's observations that Royce's latent naturalism conflicts with his transcendental criticism of knowledge (implicitly metaphysical in its purging of matter). What could have become a laudable

³ Royce, Josiah, "Physical and Social Reality," in *The World and the Individual*, Second Series (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1904) p. 164. Royce citations taken from this edition of *World* are parenthetically cited as chapter title followed by page number.

pantheism is instead undermined and reduced to an "intellectualism, such as William James [understood] by it: a mass of human propensities to abstraction, construction, belief, or inference, by which imaginary things and truths are posited in the service of life" (COUS 113–14). This metaphysical conflict between transcendental metaphysics and naturalism in Royce's thought yields two key tensions which Santayana further identifies: one involving Royce's moral philosophy, and the other his theory of mind.

Santayana observes that Royce "was heir to the Calvinistic tradition" (COUS 100):

... piety, to his mind, consisted in trusting divine providence and justice, while emphasising the most terrifying truths about one's own depravity and the sinister holiness of God (COUS 100).

With this observation, Santayana not only provides an interesting commentary on Calvinism, he further hints at the presence of a fundamental tension in Royce's moral stance. The tension Santayana hints at is that between subduing one's will to the divine will, and acknowledging the real presence of evil in the world. Piously trusting in the unfolding of divine providence is one thing; acknowledging one's depravity in the face of God is another. Such a tension is problematic in that what consists in subduing one's will to the divine will is, as Royce repeatedly stresses, an attempt to conform the Self "to an order which is not of its own momentary creation"; or, still more strongly, a striving of the Self to "know the world as its own, and its own life as in harmony with the world ... " ("The Moral Order" 348). This lofty demand of subduing one's will to the world, and thus achieving a positive, harmonious affirmation thereof, is at best perilously linked to recognizing the presence of evil therein.

Here, Santayana's critique of Royce's moral philosophy coincides with his general critique of German idealism. Having shirked the "incubus of an external reality or truth," transcendental criticism — like that of certain German romantics, wins for itself an initially exhilarating freedom. Unfortunately, Santayana suggests, such a freedom can only be short-lived. What to transcendental criticism appeared as a burdensome and unnecessary allegiance (the allegiance to external reality), appears from its newly achieved idealistic standpoint to be not so foreign an allegiance after all. Santayana continues:

... the terrible Absolute had been simply transplanted into the self. You were your own master, and omnipotent; but you were no less dark, hostile, and inexorable to yourself than the gods of Calvin or of Spinoza had been before ... you were stifled, even more than formerly, in the arms of nature, in the toils of your own unaccountable character, which made your destiny (COUS 114).

Having won for itself 'freedom' from external reality, transcendental criticism simply transfers loyalties from that reality to its own internal natural character. Furthermore, the determined nature of the self, when conceived in relation to external natural reality, has been paradoxically reinforced by transcendental criticism, since the character of the reconceived reality is "hostile," "inexorable," and not accounted for except in relation to the "toils of [the transcendental critics'] own unaccountable character." Here, Santayana further suggests that morality becomes justifiable only in so far as it simply reiterates the idiosyncrasies of one's "own unaccountable character." In effect morality is made by transcendental criticism innocuous, and as a result it becomes incapable of achieving the value-directed allegiance it calls for in the first place.

This gloss on transcendental criticism as it is found in nineteenth century German Idealism is intended by Santayana to illuminate a key characteristic of

Royce's moral philosophy. In this regard Santayana is particularly provoking, recalling an anecdote of Royce's about the moral status of a suffering mouse:

... he used to say that a mouse, when tormented and torn to pieces by a cat, was realising his own deepest will, since he had sub-consciously chosen to be a mouse in a world that should have cats in it. The mouse really, in his deeper self, wanted to be terrified, clawed, and devoured. (COUS 115)

Presuming Royce's anecdote is not misrepresented by Santayana, we have reason to attribute to Royce a personal need to account for ostensibly evil phenomena in terms of internal desire, rather than external limitation or personal depravity. This suggests a kind of moral voluntarism.⁴ However, Santayana goes on to observe that such voluntarism conflicts with another side of Royce.

Early on in Royce's thought, Santayana detects a strong affinity with "moralism," by which he means "the opinion of the Stoics and of Kant that virtue is the only good" (COUS 115). A dilemma arises: how is Royce to reconcile this affinity towards virtue ethics with his evidently voluntaristic moralism? After all, the Stoic and Kantian position, placing as it does the onus upon individual reason as the arbiter of virtue, is surely in conflict with the prioritization of internal, or unconscious desire reflected in Royce's anecdote above. As Santayana puts it, how should virtue ethics, "that frowns on this wicked world, be reconciled with pantheism and optimism, that hug it to their bosom"? (COUS 116).

Without going into its intricacies, we can with fruitful result observe Hegel's own solution to this dilemma. After all, it was Royce's affinity with Hegel which led him, at least in part, to moral voluntarism. When challenged with the charybdis of moral voluntarism, and the scylla of virtue ethics, how does Hegel's system respond? Santayana answers: by developing a romantic attachment to the life of the tragic.

Hegel and his followers seem to be fond of imagining that they are moving in a tragedy. ... The life of tragic heroes is not good; it is misguided, unnecessary, and absurd. Yet that is what romantic philosophy would condemn us to; we must all strut and roar. We must lend ourselves to the partisan earnestness of persons and nations calling their rivals villains and themselves heroes; but this earnestness will be of the histrionic German sort, made to order and transferable at short notice from one object to another, since what truly matters is not that we should achieve our ostensible aim (which Hegel contemptuously called ideal) but that we should carry on perpetually, if possible with a crescendo, the strenuous experience of living in a gloriously bad world, and always working to reform it ... (COUS 117)

Hegel, Santayana observes, simply *accepts* the sentence of moral voluntarism. Glorifying the life of the tragic hero, he counsels that we surrender ourselves to the "partisan earnestness" of the socio-cultural context we happen to find ourselves in, without a thought for the goal or ideal end such a surrender might be directed toward. This critique of Hegel, whether or not it is justified, cuts to the heart of important considerations in assessing the philosophy of Royce, as well as of the absolute idealism particular to early nineteenth century German philosophy.⁵

⁴ John Dewey provides an interesting discussion of Royce's philosophy that interprets it as containing an all-pervasive "voluntaristic element." See "Voluntarism in the Roycean Philosophy," Dewey, *John The Essential Dewey Volume 2*, edited by Larry A. Hickman and Thomas Alexander (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998) 387-92.

⁵ It is important to note that we have the testimony of Royce himself as to the worthiness of Santayana's insight into idealism. In the recently republished *Metaphysics* Royce is recorded by one of his former students as stating the following regarding Santayana's essay "Some Meanings of the Word 'Is'," which was published the same year as his critique of German idealism in *Egotism in German Philosophy* [1915]: "At almost every point there is opportunity to bring into the field of vision matters which are very crucial for the understanding of the idealistic position" (Josiah Royce,

The romanticization of the life of the tragic, inevitable a solution as it was within Hegel's philosophy, was something Royce rebelled against; so much so, in fact, that his initial tendency towards moral voluntarism was reversed. Santayana explains this rebellion in the following:

The deepest thing in [Royce] personally was conscience, firm recognition of duty, and the democratic and American spirit of service. He could not adopt a moral bias histrionically, after the manner of Hegel or Nietzsche. To those hardened professionals any rôle was acceptable, the more commanding the better; but the good Royce was like a sensitive villain In contempt of his own speculative insight, or in an obedience to it which forgot it for the time being, he lost himself in his part, and felt that it was infinitely important to be cast only for the most virtuous of characters (COUS 124).

An act symbolic of this good-natured American conscience was, Santayana observes, Royce's public condemnation of the sinking of the *Lusitania* towards the end of his life.⁶ In Santayana's eyes this act signaled that "[Royce's] conscience spoiled the pantheistic serenity of his system." (COUS 126). This last assertion of Santayana's is properly understood to mean: Royce's American conscience spoiled (in his morality) the potentially tenable pantheistic serenity of his system. We therefore find that for Santayana, Royce reverses his initial affinities with (German) moral voluntarism by means of his Calvinistic, American conscience.

As to the second tension in Royce's thought, that pertaining to his theory of mind, it is here too that Santayana feels Royce's American affinities betray what should have been a loyalty to his transcendental "instincts." A conspicuous metaphysical doctrine which Santayana singles out in the philosophy of Royce is Royce's "... chief and most puzzling contention, that all minds are parts of one mind" (COUS 129). More specifically, "[Royce] wanted all minds to be one in some way which should be logically and morally necessary" (COUS 130). The place to look for this characteristic of Royce is in his continual struggle both for the unity of individual minds in Absolute Consciousness, and at the same time for maintaining the "uniqueness" of those individual minds apart from such unity (two stances which, judging from the amount of criticism leveled at Hegel for the same supposed claim, appear to many critics to be contradictory). An instance of this struggle of Royce's is found in the following passage from *The World and the Individual*:

In order to be possessed of the eternal knowledge of the attainment of the goal, the Absolute insight will actually include all that we experience when to-day we seek the goal in vain. For the Absolute insight then, as for our own, the seeking of the goal to-day will not be successful. Just this ill-success of the temporal instant will be the very condition of the success of the eternally expressed Will Therefore the larger consciousness does not lose the conscious incompleteness of the lesser, but gives that, just as it is, its place in the completed whole ("The Place of the Self in Being," 299-300, italics original).

Metaphysics, edited by William Ernest Hocking, Richard Hocking, and Frank Oppenheim, SUNY Press 1998, pp. 96-7)

⁶ See Royce, Josiah *Letters*, ed. John Clendenning (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1970), "To Lawrence Pearsall Jacks," N.D. [June 1915?] 627-31. This letter was printed in the *Hibbert Journal* 14 (1915), 37-42 as "An American Thinker on the War." Amongst other comments on the sinking of the *Lusitania*, Royce remarked: "...the sinking of the *Lusitania* has the advantage of being a deed which not only cannot be denied, but which has been proudly proclaimed as expressing the appeal that Germany now makes to all humanity. About that appeal I am not neutral. I know that that appeal expresses utter contempt for everything which makes the common life of humanity tolerable or possible" (p. 630).

This passage reflects a Herculean attempt on the part of Royce to somehow unify individual minds in the "Absolute insight" without thereby denying a place for their finite insight(s) in that absolute whole.

To whatever degree Royce is successful in achieving this aim, it is clear that by the beginning of "The Moral Order," the chapter following this passage, Royce believes he has done so: "We have maintained the unity of Nature and of Mind ... [w]e have vindicated the uniqueness of every human self" (338). In clear disagreement, (dis)crediting German idealism as the source of Royce's view here, Santayana charges: "The straight-jacket which German idealism has provided is certainly far too narrow even for the varieties of human imagination" (COUS 130). Santayana recognizes that Royce is led to his claim for the unity of individual minds in the Absolute Mind by the "technical method" of "pure transcendentalism."

Royce's method of "pure transcendentalism" is described by Santayana in the following:

Its [the transcendental method's] Absolute is thinking "as such." ... Actual thinking is therefore never part of the Absolute, but always the Absolute itself. ... Any system of existences, any truth or matter of fact waiting to be recognised, contradicts the transcendental insight and stultifies it. (COUS 131)

Pure transcendentalism is therefore understood as the philosophical method which holds thinking-as-such to be the Absolute perspective, entirely distinct from particular existences or distinct individuals of any kind. However, Santayana goes on to say: "while often reasoning on this principle, [Royce] was incapable of not going beyond it ... " (*ibid*). Here Santayana suggests that while Royce was capable of reasonably maintaining various "sceptical" and "mystical instincts" of transcendental, critical insight, such as might hold all that is not solipsistic thought (i.e. reality) in abeyance, he could not help getting carried away; he could not help pushing this criticism to the point where external reality became not only considered as irrelevant to thought, but dependent (if at that point it could be said to be "real" at all) for its existence upon thought itself. This last position is what Santayana understands to be Royce's self-professed "absolute idealism." Once again, however, Santayana detects an incompatibility between this absolute idealism, and another American affinity Royce had — one for believing that "there are many collateral human minds, in temporal existential relations to one another, any of which may influence another, but never supplant it nor materially include it" (COUS 132). This last view is what Santayana calls Royce's "social realism."

Santayana acknowledges in Royce an attraction to the view that there is an irreducible element to individual human minds, one which lends individual thinking a certain influential power it does not have according to Absolute Idealism. Such social realism is best illustrated in Royce's discussion of "finite consciousness." Royce writes:

I hold that all finite consciousness, *just as it is in us*, — ignorance, striving, defeat, error, temporality, narrowness, — *is all present from the Absolute point of view* [thus affirming the theory of Absolute Mind], *but is also seen in unity with the solution of problems, the attainment of goals, the overcoming of defeats, the correction of errors, the final wholeness of temporal processes, the supplementing of all narrowness.* ("The Place of Self in Being" 302, underlining mine, italics original).

As can be seen in this passage, even as Royce affirms the theory of Absolute Mind, and thus relativizes human minds to the Absolute, he hastens to add the socially determinate criteria which allow for the distinctively influential character of them. Unfortunately, as Santayana points out, for Absolute Idealists "[p]articular minds and

the whole process of time are ideas only" (COUS 134). More specifically, Santayana describes the "very essence and pride" of Absolute Idealism as being:

... that knowledge is not knowledge of the world but is the world itself, and that the units of discourse, which are interwoven and crossed units, are the only individuals in being (COUS 135).

Santayana thus affirms that Royce's Idealism leads to the dispersion of unique individual minds into units of discourse. Santayana acknowledges (significantly) that this last view is questionably coordinated with the social realist view expressed by Royce above. Indeed, Santayana further observes, though Royce was led to his view of Absolute Mind in *The World and the Individual* by his employment of the transcendental method, he "wished not" to have been so led. This last is clear from Royce's constant struggle to reconcile the unique individual to the all-absorbing absolute. In the final analysis Santayana asks of Royce: "Why not admit solipsism and be true to the transcendental method?" (COUS 137) Santayana's answer: Because of the importance, for Royce, of preserving a unique place for the individual within the absolute. This last characteristic of Royce was in direct tension with the transcendental method he employed to express his sceptical and mystical instincts.

Throughout Santayana's prismatic analysis of Royce's thought we find a common theme, namely an evident tension and at times an outright conflict between certain German and American strands. For Santayana, Royce's struggles with moralism and his theory of mind are each traceable to a more fundamental conflict in his metaphysics. Could Royce have fully worked out his instinctive attraction to transcendental criticism as found in nineteenth-century German philosophy, the monumental, and seemingly insoluble problem of reconciling unique individual minds to the Absolute Mind might never have arisen. On the other hand, had Royce developed a certain, latent naturalism he seemed impulsively inclined towards, he might have avoided the moral struggles which preoccupied his later thought.

MATTHEW CALEB FLAMM

Southern Illinois University

The Three Lives of George Santayana at Harvard

A myth has grown up around George Santayana's teaching career at Harvard University, a myth that Santayana himself nurtured and that the people who knew him have tried to dispel.¹ The myth is that from the beginning of his career in 1889 to the end of his career in 1912, George Santayana considered the life of the professor and the life of the teacher at Harvard to be incompatible with the life of the philosophical man. This is certainly the impression given by Santayana's later writings on Harvard, education, and his own life, which he published after resigning his professorship in 1912. In these writings, we learn that professional demands at Harvard stifled his intellectual pursuits and that the prevailing educational philosophy

¹ This paper was originally submitted on January 18, 2000, for credit in History 98a, a seminar at Harvard College, taught by Professor James Hankins and Tutor Matthew Maguire.

frustrated good teaching. We learn that Santayana could never abide these irritations, that he never enjoyed teaching, and that he left Harvard as soon as he could afford to leave. In an effort to palliate Santayana's criticisms and dispel this myth, a number of friends, students, and scholars of Santayana have pointed out that he could not have been as discontented with Harvard as he later claimed, for he certainly seemed to enjoy teaching there at the time. It certainly seems like a contradiction, in the words of Professor John Lachs, that Santayana should have "taught with the energy and enthusiasm that make for classroom success" and yet "never found his lectures fulfilling."² And yet, if we believe Santayana's baldest statements, it is true.

It is in fact, however, a misleading half-truth. The key to distinguishing the truth from the invention is this: being a Harvard professor and being a teacher were not the same thing. That Santayana disliked being a Harvard professor from the very beginning of his career did not imply that he also disliked teaching from the very beginning of his career. It is true that it did not take long for Santayana to observe that the ideal Harvard professor and the ideal teacher were quite different, and that he quite preferred to be a teacher. That the teacher and the philosophical man were also quite different, and that he quite preferred to be a philosophical man, was a conclusion that took Santayana more time to draw.

If there was anything about being a professor at Harvard University that Santayana could not abide, it was the constraints it imposed upon his intellectual freedom. In his autobiography, Santayana wrote that leaving Harvard after resigning his professorship in 1912 gave him what he had long desired: "emancipation from official control and philosophical pretensions."³

By "emancipation from official control," Santayana meant emancipation from the will of Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard for the duration of Santayana's Harvard career. Eliot had begun a famous project, the transformation of Harvard into a research university on the German model, over a decade before Santayana arrived as an instructor in 1889.⁴ The aim of the "university idea of education," according to Henry James, son of William, was essentially the teaching of many and diverse subjects at the most advanced level to undergraduates and graduates, for the purpose of promoting original research and — to use the common phrase — adding to the stock of knowledge in the world.⁵ This, indeed, was Eliot's plan for Harvard. Under his direction a Graduate Department was formed in 1872, courses primarily for graduate students were introduced in 1875, and courses of advanced individual instruction were introduced in 1885.⁶ The college and graduate faculties became one in 1890, and academic departments with the prerogative for supplying courses to the course catalogue were officially delineated in 1891 (MORISON xxxiv-xxxv). By the 1892-93 school year, the number of graduate students reached 216, an increase of 119 since 1887-88 (MORISON 455), and the number of faculty reached 194 in 1908-09, an increase of 104 since 1888-89 (FLEMING 77).

² John Lachs, *George Santayana* (Boston: Twayne, 1988), 3.

³ George Santayana, *Persons and Places* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1986), 414. To be cited as FP.

⁴ Donald Fleming, "Harvard's Golden Age," *Glimpses of the Harvard Past*, ed. Bernard Bailyn, Donald Fleming, Oscar Handlin, Stephan Thernstrom, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1986), 77. To be cited as FLEMING.

⁵ Henry James, *Charles Eliot* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1930), 3-4. To be cited as JAMES.

⁶ *The Development of Harvard University Since the Inauguration of President Eliot, 1869-1929*, ed. Samuel Eliot Morison, (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1930), 454-5. To be cited as MORISON.

To Santayana, Eliot's institution of "the university idea" at Harvard was always a source of irritation and frustration. The model university professor was for a number of reasons not what Santayana himself wished to be. Here is Santayana's caricature of the model professor, from an 1892 essay:

The ordinary German professor is, with the possible exception of the German parson, the most contented dweller in Philistia Felix. Full of reverence for the state of which he is the organ, and for the lexicons and monographs which he devours and brings forth with physiological regularity, he rejoices in the consciousness of being a normal and well-regulated cell in the organism of modern society and modern science. If you asked him what he or any other cell gained thereby, he would look upon you with astonishment, and reply: My living! How should it be an expense of spirit in a waste of shame to write dull and unnecessary books, when these enlarge the "literature" of science and are placed upon the shelves of libraries?⁷

The ordinary German professor in this passage bears an uncanny resemblance to the young, German-schooled professors that Santayana saw arriving at Harvard. They gladly submitted to the demand for original research, they all had special fields of study outside which they scarcely dared or cared to inquire, and they confined their energies to the production of knowledge, the refinement of their systems, and the narrowing and deepening of their own erudition. They were all, in Santayana's biting words, "excellent examples of that unquestioning subordination of mind to matter and of ends to means which is the essence of Philistinism" (PHILISTINE 93).

To Santayana's profound dismay, however, he could not escape this "unquestioning subordination of mind to matter." The world of professing philosophy at Harvard was just what he wished it was not: a world of "practical business reality," in which a philosopher's reputation depended upon his production and the proof of his authority in a special field.⁸ In his autobiography, Santayana wrote:

.. I was living among sects, or among individuals eager to found sects; and I should have seemed to them vague and useless if I had been merely a historian or critic in philosophy. I was expected and almost compelled to be "constructive" or "creative", or to pretend to be so. Or as they put it, I must take up some special subject A man must have his specialty. (PP 393)

The unassailable proof that one had a specialty was of course that one had written a book about the specialty. For this reason, Santayana recalled, he gave a course in aesthetics — really a "sham" course, because he only gave it for the purpose of preparing his book *The Sense of Beauty*, which he suspected to be the reason he continued to be appointed year after year (PP 392).

His suspicions were probably correct. Santayana's antipathy toward the professional demands on Harvard professors was no secret. It was at least clear to Eliot and Santayana's colleagues in the Philosophy Department that Santayana did not match the archetype of Eliot's ideal university professor. When Santayana had been proposed for an assistant professorship in 1897, Eliot had written to Professor Hugo Münsterberg,

I suppose the fact to be that I have doubts and fears about a man so abnormal as Dr. Santayana. The withdrawn, contemplative man who takes no part in the everyday work of the institution, or of the world, seems to me to be a person of very uncertain future value. He does not dig ditches,

⁷ George Santayana, "What is a Philistine?" *Harvard Monthly* 14.3 (May 1892): 92. To be cited as PHILISTINE.

⁸ *The Letters of George Santayana*, ed. Daniel Cory, (New York: Scribner's, 1955), 2. To be cited as CORY.

or lay bricks, or write school-books; his product is not of the ordinary useful, though humble kind.⁹

Here is another incarnation of the demand that Santayana criticized — the demand that a professor produce something useful. It appears here in Eliot's insistence that contemplation is inferior to "the everyday work of ... the world." Münsterberg seems to have anticipated Eliot's opinion of Santayana when he wrote to Eliot earlier in the same year:

[T]he promotion is not only necessary as an appreciation of Santayana's personal merits, it is secondly desirable in the interests of the whole Philosophical Department. It would help emphasize in an impressive way before the academic public those ideas of specialized university work and productive scholarship for which we contend. We appear to deny these principles if we seem to ignore the difference between an average philosophy teacher and an original scholar like the author of "The Sense of Beauty". If the department clearly shows that we acknowledge and appreciate such a type of scholarly productive activity, we shall give by that a strong and suggestive impulse to many advanced students in that direction in which we try to go forward.¹⁰

Münsterberg must have known that extolling Santayana's personal merits would not have been persuasive enough to Eliot. He needed to emphasize the institutional benefits of Santayana's promotion. It would publicly emphasize the ideas of *specialized university work* and *productive scholarship*. Santayana was an *original scholar*. In other words, Münsterberg made all Eliot's preferences seem desirable, and he made all Santayana's seem secondary. Public merits appear superior to personal merits, and specialized and productive work appear superior to broader philosophical and literary interests. Of course, Münsterberg made a point of mentioning that Santayana had already published an excellent book — and would shortly finish another, should Eliot have thought that one alone was insufficient to recommend the appointment of a Harvard professor.

To see that the professional demands on a Harvard professor impeded the philosophical life took Santayana very little time. It took him a somewhat longer time to see that philosophical demands upon the Harvard professor impeded the philosophical life as well. Toward the beginning of his career, he could write in the Harvard Monthly with optimism, "Harvard has freedom and a single eye for the truth, and these are enough to secure for her, if the world goes well, an incomparable future."¹¹ This was precisely the sentiment among the members of the Harvard Philosophy Department during Santayana's career. According to George Herbert Palmer, a member of the department until 1913, "truth was sacred, and criticism, the surest way of approaching it, was a friendly not a hostile process."¹² Palmer recalled:

We avoided "breeding in" and directly aimed at diversity in our staff. When a new member was proposed, we at once asked whether he had not the same mental attitude as someone we had already. If so, we did not want him. (PALMER 33)

In 1892 and 1893, it would seem that Santayana approved of such a policy. He certainly would not have volunteered to praise it in print if he had not approved.

⁹ Qtd. in John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1987), 97. (Letter from Eliot to Münsterberg, January 25, 1898.)

¹⁰ Qtd. in Margaret Münsterberg, "Santayana at Cambridge," *The American Mercury* 1.1 (Jan. 1924): 70. To be cited as MUNSTERBERG.

¹¹ George Santayana, "A Glimpse of Yale," *The Harvard Monthly* 15.3 (Dec. 1892): 96-7. To be cited as YALE.

¹² George Herbert Palmer, "Introduction," *Contemporary American Philosophy*, vol. 1, ed. George P. Adams (New York: Macmillan, 1930), 33. To be cited as PALMER.

It eventually became clear to Santayana, however, that the enshrinement of truth and the desire for unlimited intellectual freedom and unlimited diversity of opinion among the faculty were somewhat fraudulent. Underneath the rhetoric of limitless toleration was a stipulation: whatever a professor believed, he must believe it in a way that benefited his students and his colleagues. In Santayana's words:

You might think what you liked, but you must consecrate your belief or your unbelief to the common task of encouraging everybody and helping everything on. You might almost be an atheist, if you were troubled enough about it.¹³

Santayana's own poor reputation with President Eliot and others, he claimed, had its roots in, among other things, "writing pessimistic old-fashioned verses," "being indiscernibly a Catholic or an atheist," and "attacking Robert Browning, prophet of the half-educated and half-believing" (pp 395). All of these things were alien to the optimistic efforts demanded of every professor. The kind of thought that might lead one to "write pessimistic, old-fashioned verses" — or, as Santayana discovered as a graduate student, to write a dissertation on Schopenhauer — was quietly proscribed (pp 389).

Santayana had a greater affinity for the life of a teacher than for the life of a Harvard professor.¹⁴ To Santayana, the ideal teacher taught his students how to live the kind of life that Santayana himself particularly wished to live — a life free from the imposition of other people's morals and other people's ideas.¹⁵ Rather than passing on to students "a stuffy diet of useful knowledge, or ... some single dogmatic system to which life-slavery is attached," the ideal teacher kept the young mind "play[ing] innocently with its own phosphorescence."¹⁶

Santayana knew from the beginning of his career that a model Harvard professor could hardly be an ideal teacher, for most of the reasons that a Harvard professor could hardly be a genuinely philosophical man. The university idea of education was largely to blame. For one thing, it encouraged professors to ignore their students. Santayana described this with scorn in 1894:

Some teachers of the old school naturally remain — teachers in whom the moral and personal relation to their pupils is still predominant, but the main concern of our typical young professor is not his pupils at all. It is his science. His vocation is to follow and promote the development of his branch of learning by reading the new books and magazine articles on his subject and contributing himself to its "literature."¹⁷

By the end of his career, however, it was not the mere rewards for specialization that Santayana found most inimical to good teaching; it was Eliot's interest in only useful things, things which worked for the good of the world. In other words, it seemed to Santayana that the same interest which he saw corrupting Eliot's conception of good scholarship was also corrupting his conception of good teaching.

President Eliot's philosophy of teaching contradicted Santayana's from the day Eliot publicly introduced it. In his 1869 Inaugural Address, Eliot declared:

¹³ George Santayana, *Character and Opinion in the United States* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 59. To be cited as COUS.

¹⁴ Hugo Münsterberg's daughter Margaret recalled in a 1924 essay that Santayana would never write "university professor" on his customs declaration forms, but always preferred to write "teacher." See page 70 of MUNSTERBERG.

¹⁵ Irving Singer, Telephone Interview, December 11, 1999.

¹⁶ George Santayana, "Dons," *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies* (Constable: London, 1922), 44-45.

¹⁷ George Santayana, "The Spirit and Ideals of Harvard University," *The Educational Review* 7 (Apr. 1894), 315.

The very word education is a standing protest against dogmatic teaching The worthy fruit of academic culture is an open mind, trained to careful thinking, instructed in the methods of philosophic investigation, acquainted in a general way with the accumulated thought of past generations, and penetrated with humility.

This sounds generally like Santayana, but what followed it certainly does not. Eliot added, "It is thus that the University in our day serves Christ and the Church."¹⁸ Later in the address, Eliot made another declaration that Santayana probably would have decried. "This University," Eliot said, "aspires to serve the nation by training men to intellectual honesty and independence of mind."¹⁹ The idea that a patriotic or religious animus should justify a university's promotion of professors' intellectual freedom, students' independence of mind, and the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake, was abhorrent to Santayana, as we have seen; but apparently it had a deep hold over Eliot for the duration of his presidency. Henry James, son of William, characterized this idea in his biography of Eliot as if it subsisted in Eliot's temperament. He wrote,

Eliot's zeal was for the promotion of human welfare. Knowledge for the sake of knowledge or art for art's sake made him impatient; knowledge applicable to life excited his enthusiasm. When he considered what researches should be encouraged at Harvard, his thought turned to the investigation that might produce useful results — if helpful socially, as by improving sanitation, rather than in a merely commercial way, so much the better: if they might be applied promptly and widely, best of all. (JAMES 17)

If Santayana read this characterization — and he may have — he must have agreed with it wholeheartedly, he may even have found it a bit reserved. President Eliot, Santayana recalled in his autobiography, was an "anti-humanist." He believed that what professors taught, students should be able to use in some material way. "[W]e should teach the facts," said Eliot, "not merely convey ideas" (PP 392). Santayana elaborated:

College, and all that occupied the time and mind of the College, and seemed to the College an end in itself, seemed to President Eliot only a means. The end was service in a world of business. (PP 396)

Teaching with such an end in mind, Santayana believed, necessitated the misrepresentation of philosophy. As he explained in a 1952 interview, it was not in the nature of philosophy to be useful, or to solve problems. "I won't say that I have found the truths, for in philosophy there are no facts."²⁰ The teacher of philosophy who spoke of facts was not helping others think about things, but telling them what to think.

Though Santayana recognized this conflict between the expectations of a Harvard professor and the ideal teacher, it took him more time to conclude that teaching at Harvard was inimical in its own ways to a philosophical life, and that he preferred the philosophical life. The question that he lingered over and struggled with was the question of how intellectually satisfying the company of students, inside or outside the classroom, could be.

At the beginning of his career at Harvard, Santayana found little difficulty in overlooking students' intellectual shortcomings. In 1892, therefore, he complimented students for precisely the paucity of intellectual interests that he continually criticized in their elders. The character enshrined among students at Yale, he wrote,

¹⁸ Charles Eliot, *A Turning Point in Higher Education* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1969), 6.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 24.

²⁰ Lawrence Dame, "Santayana's Last Interview," *Harvard Alumni Bulletin* 59 (Nov. 10, 1956): 146.

is a boyish type of character, earnest and quick in things practical, hasty and frivolous in things intellectual. But the boyish ideal is a healthy one, and in a young man, as in a young nation, it is perfection to have only the faults of youth. (YALE 94)

By 1915, however, the intellectual frivolity of students no longer charmed Santayana at all. He complained to a close friend:

I can't take the teaching of philosophy seriously in itself, either as a means of being a philosopher or of teaching the young anything solid: they merely flirt with that for a year or two instead of flirting with something else. (CORY 148)

Now, one can hardly doubt that Santayana's opinion of undergraduates changed in response to changes at Harvard. The introduction of the elective system into the College was largely complete in 1884, only five years before Santayana took his post as an instructor, and the flaws of the system were becoming more and more apparent during Santayana's first decade on the faculty. Under the elective system, students had the "liberty" — the animating principle of the elective system, according to Santayana and his contemporaries — to choose any class they wished, with few exceptions, and they could take classes as advanced as their own knowledge allowed.²¹ In 1902, however, a faculty "Committee on Improving Instruction" suggested that students were not making the best use of their academic freedom, and that the elective system did not sufficiently discourage dilettantism and encourage academic seriousness.²² John Jay Chapman, Santayana's elder by one year and also a student at Harvard in the 1890's, concluded something quite similar. Academic freedom, he recalled in 1915, was wasted on the great majority of college students, who arrived at the college too ignorant to engage in good scholarship.²³

Changes in education at Harvard, however, do not fully explain why Santayana came to the conclusion that he did not sufficiently enjoy the company of students to take satisfaction in both the life of a teacher and the life of the philosophical man. A more compelling explanation for Santayana's conclusion — and for the time it took Santayana to come to his conclusion — is the personal crisis that overtook Santayana in 1893, several years after he began teaching at Harvard. This crisis, the metanoia that Santayana describes in his autobiography (pp 423), appears quite as vividly in his letters. The young graduate student who had starred in Hasty Pudding plays and drawn cartoons for the *Lampoon*, and who expected to find great stimulation conversing with his peers in the classroom, had told William James in a letter of 1888:

[T]he good authors, the sharp and radical thinkers, are still my delight and even my chief amusement, and I can imagine no more congenial task than to talk them over with other students. (pp 33)

The middle-aged professor, on the other hand, who in 1896 had taken his sabbatical at Cambridge rather than Oxford in order to avoid "becoming an undergraduate again," gushed to William James in 1905 about the delights of delivering public lectures at the Sorbonne, where "[y]ou needn't remember that you are in Cambridge, or are addressing the youth entrusted to your personal charge (CORY 45, 80). Hence the well known passage from *Character and Opinion in the United States*:

Teaching is a delightful paternal art, and especially teaching intelligent and warm-hearted youngsters, as most American collegians are; but it is an art like acting, where the performance,

²¹ Samuel Eliot Morison, *Three Centuries of Harvard* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1936), 346.

²² *Ibid.*, 385-7.

²³ John Jay Chapman, *Selected Writings*, ed. Jacques Barzun (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Cudahy, 1957), 212-13.

often rehearsed, must be adapted to an audience hearing it only once. The speaker must make concessions to their impatience, their taste, their capacity, their prejudices, their ultimate good; he must neither bore nor perplex nor demoralize them. His thoughts must be such as can flow daily, and be set down in notes; they must come when the bell rings and stop appropriately when the bell rings a second time. The best that is in him, as Mephistopheles says in Faust, he dare not tell them; and as the substance of this possession is spiritual, to withhold is often to lose it. For it is not merely a matter of fearing not to be understood, or giving offense; in the presence of a hundred youthful upturned faces a man cannot, without diffidence, speak in his own person, of his own thoughts; he needs support, in order to exert influence with a good conscience; unless he feels that he is the vehicle of a massive tradition, he will become bitter, or flippant, or aggressive; if he is to teach with good grace and modesty and authority, it must not be he that speaks, but science or humanity that is speaking in him. (COUS 42-3)

By the time Santayana resigned his professorship, he was regularly claiming that he could not say in the classroom what he wished to say — as if he had been suffering under philosophical and moral impositions not only in his capacity as a professor in the Harvard Philosophy Department, but in his capacity as a teacher of young people. The fruits of his boundless intellect, he realized, would wither if he were to teach with authority.

And so ultimately Santayana chose the philosophical life over the life of a professor and the life of a teacher. In a letter dated 1914, Santayana alluded to this choice as he recalled his situation at Harvard:

The wonder is that I endured and was endured so long. The only Harvard that in any measure held my affections and with which I could have almost identified myself was that of the “nineties” — or rather, of 1890-1895; but the awful cloud of Eliot then overhung it, and made life impossible. Before and after that, Harvard was only an accident and a temporary necessity in my life; and especially since I became a professor I did nothing but save money so as to get out of it *quam celerime*. (CORY 136)

Let us not be misled by this passage. Rhetorically, Santayana has done precisely what we might expect someone in his position to have done. He has subtly passed off his later attitude toward Harvard as an unchanging attitude. Even as he admits his affection for Harvard of the 1890's, he extenuates the affection, as it were, by invoking the “awful cloud of Eliot” and omitting any mention of interests other than saving money and getting out, particularly specific interests or attachments he may have had before becoming an assistant professor in 1898. It is almost enough to make us forget that the cloud of Eliot was the cloud of professional demands, philosophical restraints, and the frustration of good teaching, not the cloud of middle age, portending intellectual separation from young people and dissatisfaction with teaching itself. Santayana may have been from the beginning of his career a “professor of philosophy in spite of himself,” to borrow Robert Flynn's phrase, but he was not always a teacher in spite of himself.²⁴ The philosophical life was not always his choice, but became it.

SIMON GROTE

Harvard College

²⁴ Robert Emmet Flynn, *Santayana in America: the Harvard Phase*, (A.B. Dissertation, Harvard University, 1960), 69b. The phrase is the title of Chapter 4.

The Santayana Edition

It has been almost a year since the offices of the Santayana Edition moved from Texas A&M to Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis [IUPUI], following the General Editor, Herman J. Saatkamp Jr, who became Dean of the School of Liberal Arts in 1998. Kristine W. Frost, the long-time Associate Editor of the project, oversaw the move and deserves high praise for organizing the packing and unpacking of the many boxes with files, books, hardware, and software. The project's suite in Cavanaugh Hall which includes the editorial offices and library was fully furnished, staffed, and operational by the time the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy [SAAP] held its annual meeting in Indianapolis in March 2000. The Santayana Edition was one of the sponsoring Indianapolis Editions, together with the Peirce Edition Project and the Frederick Douglass Papers, and hosted an open house for the conference participants. The meeting afforded an excellent opportunity to showcase the Santayana Edition and it seemed rather fitting that Herman J. Saatkamp Jr began his tenure as president of the SAAP at that time.

With generous support from the School and the University, the project was able to set up operations in newly renovated, spacious quarters and also to upgrade its computers so that work on *Volume V, The Letters of George Santayana*, could progress significantly despite the disruption caused by the move. At this time the first of eight books of *Volume V* is about to be sent to MIT Press. We are awaiting the inspection report of the Committee on Scholarly Editions before final adjustments are made to the electronic proofs sent to the publisher for typesetting. Publication of the first book of *Letters* is scheduled for Spring 2001. The staff of the project, and especially its newest full-time member, Joshua B. Garrison, have labored hard to make the desktop publishing program work for the critical edition of the letters. Since William Holzberger first started on the collection and transcription of Santayana's letters, many more have been found and added to the edition. In all, more than 3,000 letters have been gathered for the edition, which meant that the projected number of four books in *Volume V* had to be expanded to eight, a much more massive undertaking than originally planned.

The excitement and satisfaction about the progress with the Letters volume has been tempered, however, by the lack of support from the National Endowment for the Humanities. The project did not receive funding and it is questionable whether the NEH will continue to support any of the long-term editorial projects. The Association for Documentary Editing, the SAAP, and other professional associations are working hard to educate those who make decisions about the kinds of projects worthy of government support that drastic changes in funding policy would affect scholarly editions very negatively. We call on all of you to be of help in this fight. Please get in touch with us with any ideas you may have for persuading the NEH to continue with its well-established funding policy and also with any other suggestions for support that may help the project to continue with its mission to publish all the works of George Santayana in a critical edition.

MARIANNE S. WOKECK

Editor, Santayana Edition Project

Indiana University-Purdue University, Indianapolis

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST

SIXTEENTH UPDATE

The items below will supplement the references given in *George Santayana: A Bibliographical Checklist, 1880-1980* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1982) prepared by Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., and John Jones. These references are divided into primary and secondary sources. Except for the book reviews, the following articles and books are classified according to their years of publication. Readers with additions or corrections are invited to send these to Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., Santayana Edition, School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI, Indianapolis IN 46202-5140.

PRIMARY SOURCES IN LIBRARY/ARCHIVE COLLECTIONS

Boston Public Library

8 letters to Hugo Münsterberg, Saturday [1893], 16 September 1897, [Spring 1899], 6 February 1903, 2 May 1904, 11 April 1906, 10 May 1906, and 16 May 1906

Letter to George Herbert Palmer, Paris, 13 December 1905

The University Club Library, New York City

25 letters to Lawrence Smith Butler, 1901–1952

2 letters to George Rauh, Rome, 12 October 1950 and 21 October 1951 (photocopies of originals)

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1999

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Kristine W. Frost
Herman J. Saatkamp Jr.

Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis