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## **Matter and Spirit in Santayana's Realms of Being**

Anton Lissy

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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of The University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Philosophy

Matter and Spirit in Santayana's Realms of Being

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MATTER AND SPIRIT  
IN SANTAYANA'S REALMS OF BEING

BY  
ANTON LISSY  
B.A., University of Maine, 1968

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts in Philosophy  
in the Graduate School of  
The University of New Mexico  
Albuquerque, New Mexico  
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MATTER AND SPIRIT  
IN SANTAYANA'S REALMS OF BEING

BY  
Anton Lissy

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the  
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MATTER AND SPIRIT  
IN SANTAYANA'S REALMS OF BEING

ABSTRACT OF THESIS

In Scepticism and Animal Faith, the introductory volume of George Santayana's Realms of Being, Santayana claimed that his system of philosophy would place the common sense of ordinary life into a "more accurate and circumspect form" by distinguishing realms or categories of being which he personally found "conspicuously different and worth distinguishing." He also declared that the "chief issue" of philosophy was to investigate "the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe."

Paul Schilpp, in an article on the final volume of the Realms of Being, concluded that Santayana was "groping" in print. Schilpp added, however, that Santayana's treatment of The Realm of Spirit nonetheless conveyed the impression to him that Santayana was "groping after something highly important and significant."

But was Santayana only "groping" in print? Had he written over a thousand pages on aspects of a system which he had not yet discovered? Had he designed his literary style to overwhelm a reader with its surface beauty while it cloaked a philosophical vacuity? Had he been unable to state or convey his own views on what he himself had designated as the "chief

issue" of philosophy?

The primary aim of this thesis is to clear Santayana of the charge of "groping" in print by providing evidence which indicates that the Realms of Being presents a coherent and consistent system of thought which gives an adequate account of man's position in the world. Although I will try to show that the "doctrine" of his system is far from being either novel or extraordinary, I will contend that the significance of Santayana's contribution to philosophy lies in his method of "indoctrination" rather than in its commonplace tenets. For Santayana's prose is designed to display a philosophical attitude rather than merely state a philosophical doctrine.

To support my claims, I will take the reader on a guided tour of the Realms of Being. I will describe the sceptical foundation of Santayana's system, the realm of essence, and the realms of matter and spirit which provide several perspectives from which the "chief issue" can be examined. Accounts of evolution, epiphenomenalism, behaviorism, and introspection will contribute to the case against Schilpp and Santayana will be cleared when his notion of spirit or consciousness as liberated is related to these other crucial aspects of his philosophy.

MATTER AND SPIRIT  
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MATTER AND SPIRIT  
IN SANTAYANA'S REALMS OF BEING

ABBREVIATIONS

<u>SAF</u>	<u>Scepticism and Animal Faith</u>
<u>RE</u>	<u>The Realm of Essence</u>
<u>RM</u>	<u>The Realm of Matter</u>
<u>RT</u>	<u>The Realm of Truth</u>
<u>RS</u>	<u>The Realm of Spirit</u>
<u>RGR</u>	<u>The Realms of Being: General Review</u>

## PREFACE

My philosophy is like that of the  
ancients a discipline of the mind  
and heart, a lay religion (RGR 827).

In the fall semester of 1968, while other legally sane Americans were turning to astrology for answers to questions about their individual destinies, I became bewitched, ensnared, and confused by the "lay religion" of George Santayana. It was my first semester as a graduate student as well as my first semester in philosophy and I was quite uneasy in my new area of specialization. I knew that my thinking as an undergraduate had been undisciplined and I sincerely wanted to improve my mind through a severe regimen of logic. But I was afraid that one required more intelligence than I possessed in order to achieve a desirable state of logical discipline. And whenever I encountered difficulties in understanding a passage of a philosophical work, I would lose all hope of ever understanding philosophy and I would begin to long for the sunny pasture of quasi-disciplined thinking where I had grazed for several years--English literature.

But late in the semester, I had an encounter which initially transformed my uneasiness and feeling of despair into a new hope of attaining some success in my new field. As a special project for a class, I began to read Santayana's Scepticism and Animal Faith--the introductory volume of his

Realms of Being. The preface alone electrified me. In a lyrical style of great beauty, he made the humble claim that his philosophy was merely common sense expressed in a "more accurate and circumspect form" (SAF v). And when he claimed that his system could be verified "by the facts before every man's eyes" (SAF x), I thought that I had found a doctrine which could be officially adopted by the Teamsters Union. I thought I had found a kindred spirit who would guide me through the dark forest of philosophy and dispel my ignorance on land more familiar and less threatening than the "desert landscapes" preferred by Quine and his associates. In short, I believed that I had found a philosophy which I could understand.

I read the remainder of the book with great enthusiasm as well as great expectations, but I failed to understand many passages. I read the book a second time. I memorized definitions of the terms which Santayana used frequently, but I still could not understand many of the passages in which these terms appeared.

After struggling through the text for several weeks without making any progress, my attitude toward Santayana changed considerably. Finding myself entangled by or tripping over the luxuriant vegetation of his prose, I began to long for some pure sand. For although I was able to grasp many of the insights which he expressed through personifications, metaphors, and similes, I was unable to grasp the

system of common sense which was supposed to connect these varied insights. I found myself abandoned in the dark forest once again. For I had not found a philosophy which I could understand.

My confusion and disappointment eventually ripened into an immature hostility which I expressed in a term paper quite critical of Santayana. Since, after a sincere attempt, I was unable to discover or understand the system which was supposed to represent common sense, I decided that Santayana did not represent common sense and did not really present a coherent system of philosophy. I argued that the definitions which he gave for the crucial concepts of his non-existent system--essence, matter, truth, and spirit--were hopelessly unclear or ambiguous. I concluded that Santayana's philosophy could not be understood.

The paper received a mixed reaction. Some sympathy was shown for my analysis of the ambiguities contained in specific passages, but no sympathy was shown for my use of an amateurish "ordinary language" method of criticism which I had devised. The principle of my method was to isolate words unfamiliar to me like 'essence' and 'eternal' and then to declare them vague because I had never heard a Teamster use them in a conversation. My critic pointed out that this sophisticated tactic was not only ill-founded and unfair but actually criminal in the case of a paper written on Santayana. For I was dealing with an "extraordinary language" philosopher who neither could be

understood nor justly criticized by literal interpretations of his figurative expressions. Although granting that some of my criticisms were fair, I was advised, in the end, to read the entire Realms of Being where, presumably, some, if not all, of the points about his system which confused me would be clarified in the lengthier exposition.

At the time, this advice was not exactly welcomed by me. Assuming that I had been granted a spare, I scheduled a reading of the Realms of Being for sometime late in my next life.

During the next semester, however, I began to suspect that I had in fact been unfair to Santayana. While studying Greek philosophy--the pre-Socratics, Plato, and Aristotle--I began to understand some of the concepts which I had dismissed as vague in my term paper. 'Essence' and 'eternal' became familiar terms to me. I realized that these terms had had long histories before they first appeared to me in Santayana's writing. And this realization forced me to admit that I could no longer hold Santayana completely responsible for my inability to understand his philosophy. For my own ignorance had apparently contributed to my confusion.

By the end of the spring semester, I was convinced that I had been unfair to Santayana. In a dramatic ceremony marked by guilt and repentance, I destroyed my term paper and committed myself to writing a thesis on the Realms of Being. This time I would be fair to Santayana. I would persuade his dead spirit to forgive me.

This commitment has taken form as an investigation into what Santayana called "the chief issue, the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe" (SAF viii). From one perspective, the problem involved in this relation has been traditionally called the "mind-body" problem. From a different viewpoint, it can be construed as a relation of God, man, and the universe. In Santayana's philosophy, the relation connects two of his four select realms--matter and spirit.

Oddly enough, the specific questions which I will try to answer by concentrating on matter and spirit were suggested by an article which resembled my term paper in some ways. Paul Schilpp, a mature philosopher, begins a paper on The Realm of Spirit with an attack on Santayana's style of writing. He criticizes Santayana for writing in a manner which--"despite its beautiful literary expression--appears to the average philosophically trained mind not merely as meaningless, but as definitely confusing, not to say misleading."<sup>1</sup> Schilpp transcends frustration and confusion, however, and reaches a conclusion which seems to dismiss Santayana's claim to have presented a coherent system of philosophy. For Schilpp concludes that Santayana was "groping" in print in the final volume of the Realms of Being, although he hastens to add that Santayana was nonetheless "groping after something highly important and significant."<sup>2</sup>

But was Santayana only "groping" in print? Had he written

over a thousand pages on aspects of a system which he had not yet discovered? Had he designed his literary style to overwhelm a reader with its surface beauty while it cloaked a philosophical vacuity? Had he been unable to state or convey his own views on what he himself had designated as the chief issue of philosophy?

These are some of the questions I will try to answer by showing that Santayana's account of matter and spirit does present a consistent and systematic description of man's relation to the universe. And although I will try to show that the "doctrine" of his system is far from being either novel or extraordinary, I will contend that the significance of Santayana's contribution to philosophy lies in his method of "indoctrination" rather than in its commonplace tenets. For Santayana's prose is designed to display a philosophical attitude rather than merely state a philosophical doctrine. And it is not designed to confuse a reader. It is designed to make him see the world as Santayana sees it.

The primary aim of this thesis, then, is to clear Santayana of the charge brought against him by Schilpp. Santayana is not "groping" in print. He displays a coherent system which gives an adequate account of man's position in the world.

To support my thesis, I will take the reader on a guided tour of the Realms of Being. The ideal method of showing that the "groping" charge is unfounded would be to write a section by section commentary on all five volumes of

Santayana's system of philosophy. But since this method is out of the question, I will concentrate on the features of his system which pertain to the chief issue and which disclose the systematic aspect of Santayana's thought. And in order to explain why both an immature philosophy student and a mature philosopher mistakenly believed that Santayana did not know what he was doing, I will try to illustrate the general aspects of his style of writing which can be confusing and also identify the specific shifts of perspective which can confuse someone trying to understand what Santayana has said about spirit living in a material universe.

If my treatment of Santayana's philosophy is successful, I will have cleared him of the charge of groping and established the existence of his system as a fact. And if I have been fair to Santayana this time, I will have gained his forgiveness, if only in my own imagination.

References:

1. Paul Arthur Schilpp, "Santayana on the Realm of Spirit," in The Philosophy of George Santayana, ed. by Paul A. Schilpp, (Menasha, 1940), p. 380.
2. Ibid., p. 387.



## PHILOSOPHY AND THE REALMS

No language or logic is right in the sense of being identical with the facts it is used to express, but each may be right by being faithful to these facts, as a translation may be faithful (SAF vi).

Santayana is not a nine-to-five philosopher. His philosophy dictates his behavior and interprets the phenomena he encounters in his everyday life. He does not want to escape into a fictional world created to substitute for a real world which either cannot be discovered or cannot be appreciated. He wants to understand what he sees around him in order to place speculation and imagination in a proper perspective.

He characterizes his activity as a philosopher in a way which brings to mind the contemplative Socrates.

My criticism is criticism of myself; I am talking of what I believe in my active moments, as a living animal, when I am really believing something.... My criticism is not essentially a learned pursuit, though habit may sometimes make my language scholastic:...it is the discipline of my daily thoughts and the account I actually give to myself from moment to moment of my own being and of the world around me (SAF 305).

If Santayana is groping, then, he is groping around in the world as well as in print.

This discipline of his daily thoughts, however, has an extraordinary feature which is absent in the works of

many other philosophers. Santayana's philosophy reflects a "distrust for all high guesses" (SAF v). He is interested neither in speculating about the origin of the universe nor about the destiny of man. As a humble philosopher of the masses, his goal is simply to place the "shrewd orthodoxy" of common sense in a "more accurate and circumspect form"-- a form which will challenge both organized religion and academic philosophy (SAF v).

The "more accurate and circumspect form" is reached by distinguishing what Santayana calls "realms." In order to avoid the accusation that these realms constitute the very "high guesses" which he had derided, Santayana is quick to point out that his divisions of being into essence, matter, truth, and spirit are only "kinds or categories of things which I find conspicuously different and worth distinguishing, at least in my own thoughts" (SAF vi). They are "summary categories of logic meant to describe a single natural dynamic process, and to dismiss from organized reflection all unnecessary objects of faith" (RGR 831). In short, the four realms serve as a heuristic device in Santayana's analysis of reality-- as a prism designed to reveal a spectrum where common sunlight is ordinarily found.

The prism is also designed to sort out the artificial light which shines from "all unnecessary objects of faith." By coincidence, this excess faith is usually employed to illuminate the dark past and future of the universe with the

"neon guesses" popularly called revelation and metaphysics. And both revelation and metaphysics have been excommunicated from Santayana's lay religion for sins against common sense. Revelation is only a poetic attempt to answer the questions of metaphysics and metaphysics is "dialectical physics, or an attempt to determine matters of fact by means of logical or moral or rhetorical constructions" (SAF vii). And these constructions, according to Santayana, cannot be "faithful translations" of facts because the original edition was either never written or has long since been lost.

Santayana thus claims that his philosophy differs from metaphysics because it is "justified by the facts before every man's eyes" (SAF x). There is a book to translate-- one whose story "everybody knows" already simply by living. The realms are merely lenses designed to help the nearsighted layman read the fine print. And these lenses are ground to filter out the rays of superstition and sophistry in order to allow the reader to understand the natural beauty of man's true place in the universe.

## SCEPTICISM, ESSENCE, AND FAITH

Scepticism is the chastity of the intellect, and it is shameful to surrender it too soon or to the first comer (SAF 60).

In order to justify his distrust of "high guesses," Santayana takes his readers on a long journey into darkness. His lay religion stipulates that a candidate for initiation must be cleansed before the sacred mysteries of the realms can be revealed. The cleansing is performed through a sceptic's ritual of baptism--the candidate is immersed in doubt. Compelled to descend into uncharted depths, the candidate has been assured of only two things: all previous catechisms will be washed away and all traces of human nature will be dissolved. For he must plunge far below the cogito reached by Descartes and can only rest when he has landed in a quicksand of mute ignorance.

In tracing this descent into scepticism which Santayana employed as an introduction to his philosophy of common sense, I wish to focus on Santayana's technique of forcing the reader to see the world in his terms as well as the terms themselves. Consequently, I will not merely state his use of terms such as 'essence' and 'animal faith', but I will attempt to show how Santayana presents the key terms of his system as factors of dramatic action. But whereas Santayana displays his philosophy through personifications, metaphors, and similes scattered

around in five different books, I will try to present a summary version of some of the crucial aspects of his system in only several pages. In order to achieve a clear summary, however, I will use a modern "electric" technique suggested by Santayana instead of the figurative language which flows through his works. For by likening consciousness to a movie "screen" (RM 279) and intuitions or "instances of consciousness" (SAF 47) to still photographs (RM 307), he has suggested a cinematic technique which will allow me to "edit" or "cut" a great deal from his five volume presentation without distorting his viewpoint, his direction, or his script.

In portraying Santayana's account of the descent into scepticism and the subsequent discovery of the realms of essence and matter, then, I will use examples based on a split-screen technique frequently employed in contemporary cinema. I will call one side of the screen the "screen of consciousness" and use it to represent the visual field or "mental field" of an actor playing the part of the sceptic. The other side of the screen will concentrate on the position of the actor's body from the point of view of a skilled observer--an animal psychologist. I will call this side of the screen the "screen of behaviorism." Finally, in order to provide some witnesses with common sense, I have filled the theater with an audience selected from a Teamsters local.

With the scene set in a park on a sunny day, the action can begin. The sceptic, with eyes open, is following an old man

who appears to be both frowning at and following an attractive young woman wearing a bathing suit. The screen of behaviorism shows this parade from one perspective, and the screen of consciousness shows the old man and the young woman from a different angle. Soon the other humans are gone from the screen of consciousness, and the sceptic is shown seated on a bench on the screen of behaviorism.

As the first step of the descent begins, the audio broadcasts the sceptic's voice. His inner monologue is based on an adaptation of Descartes' Meditations written by the Marquis de Sade. While the narrator mentions the fixed point of Archimedes, the screen of consciousness shows the trees and clouds illuminated by the bright sun. These traces of the outside world abruptly disappear, however, when the sceptic closes his eyes. The screen of consciousness is now a dim, pulsating ground where vague suggestions of trees and clouds can be detected by those in the audience who are not already snoring. Contact between the sceptic's senses and the outside world has been severed and the scene depicted on the screen of consciousness has been shifted to some dark, indeterminable place inside the sceptic where his consciousness "resides."

While continuing his narration, the sceptic may say that he no longer has a body but the audience will be unable to suspend their disbelief because they will still see him sitting on the bench. They may laugh at the sceptic's

strange imagination. But without a body, the sceptic's consciousness can dispense with the luxuries of the world from which he has escaped. And since language is either manifestly superfluous or an instrument which can be dismissed by doubt as the senses had been dismissed, this phase of the descent terminates when the sceptic abandons his role as narrator. His final line, however, is "I must be silent to be pure" instead of "I think, therefore, I am."

The animal psychologist will now take over as narrator. Utilizing his hyper-sensitive powers of observation, he will interpret the changes which appear on the screen of consciousness.

Upon detecting a noticeable dimming and an apparent loss of focus, the new narrator informs the audience that the sceptic has now lost his personal identity as well as his body. Further changes in the ever darkening screen are interpreted as a complete loss of memory. And the final scene of this phase of the descent shows a series of minute sparks tracing erratic paths across a seemingly endless abyss of darkness.

But even this barren scene is an inadequate representation of the ultimate scepticism which Santayana wishes to present. For the moving sparks suggest time and the perimeter of the screen of consciousness suggests finitude. And in order for the candidate to be saved, Santayana demands that he must become lost in a "solipsism of the present moment"--

the only form of scepticism which is not "logically contemptible" (SAF 14). He must shrink "to a point without extension" as Wittgenstein suggested,<sup>1</sup> or spread his remains evenly throughout a limitless universe (SAF 18). Cinematically, this demand can only be approximated by shutting off the projector and allowing the last spark of light to remain suspended in a still photograph located neither in space nor in time.

The screen of consciousness may now represent the mute ignorance of an ultimate transcendental scepticism, but the actor on the bench is showing visible signs of strain. The veins by his temples seem about to burst and his face is flushed. Being a method actor, he has thrown his heart and soul into Santayana's script and is currently portaying the solipsist whose "heroic efforts are concentrated on not asserting and not implying anything, but simply noticing what he finds" (SAF 16). And "simply noticing" is the only salvation offered by Santayana's lay religion, as I will show in a later section.

At the present stage, however, Santayana is not about to abandon the candidate for salvation. For by courageously allowing himself to have been disintegrated, he has gained Santayana's respect and will be resurrected after all the implications of his intellectual suicide have been discussed. And Santayana will show the audience traces of animal life at the bottom of the abyss, and these traces, when properly



understood, will lead back to the social and visual world. The way back up, however, is not illuminated by either the logic presupposed by Descartes or by supernatural revelation but by a thin secular flame--irrational faith.

Prior to the ascent, then, the stationary spark on the screen must be thoroughly examined. At a distance, the spark appears to be rather featureless, but a close-up reveals that it has a complex form like a snowflake. And when the projector is turned on again, the audience can detect sparks appearing and disappearing, each of which has an unique form. The solipsist, however, is not troubled by the differences which the audience can detect. For if his memory disintegrated on schedule during the descent and has not been restored by a miraculous act of George, he has no organ which can detain an appearance long enough to allow him to compare it with either a preceding or subsequent appearance. And the sole appearance, stripped of all external relations, is an essence (RE 2). Ultimate scepticism, then, has discovered the realm of essence (SAF 74).

When memory is reinstated, this discovery can be appreciated. For the differences between successive essences can now be noted by the solipsist. And variety can relieve the monotony of a single snowflake by offering centaurs and stag-films to the bored sceptic. But the appearances, disappearances, and the specific shapes of the essences which may perform before him do not carry existence with them for Santayana

has stripped the realm of essence away from the existing world. And existence, to Santayana, refers to a system of external relations independent of consciousness which is beyond the access of the screen of consciousness (RM 186). And the essences given to the sceptic are unique by virtue of internal relations which possess no force.

Memory and discrimination, then, are not justified in drawing any inferences about existence from the essences which appear. And a solipsist who cannot act anyway would be foolish to prefer one essence over another. He can merely rest assured that "if there is any existence at all, presence to consciousness is neither necessary nor sufficient to render it an existence" (SAF 45). So the solipsist is still alone regardless of whether the screen of consciousness shows snowflakes or amateur actresses.

Since the dim traces of the stag film have probably made the audience restless, the time has come to add some action to this otherwise dull film. On the screen of behaviorism, let the gruff old man who was following the young girl be seen approaching the actor on the bench. He greets the sceptic: "Pleasant day, isn't it?" He does not receive a reply. He then repeats his greeting while scrutinizing the lecherous expression on the sceptic's face. After receiving no reply a second time, the old man begins to kick the actor in full rage. And as the first kick makes contact with the actor's body, the busy girls disappear from the screen of

consciousness in a sudden shock. The screen then lights up and a close-up of the old man assaulting the actor is gradually brought into focus from the painful perspective of the awakened sceptic.

The fight which may now occur on both screens may be left to develop in order to entertain the audience, but for the purposes of this thesis , an instant replay is required. For Santayana has made an important point at the expense of one method actor, because the shock the sceptic received when the impact of the kick penetrated into the dark abode where consciousness is housed was a powerful warning from another realm of being. And whereas Santayana characterizes the realm of essence as a "perfect democracy, where everything that is or might be has a right of citizenship" (SAF 80), something quite tyrannical is involved in the essence of this shock. For the sceptic had remained seated on the bench while contemplating other essences prior to this one, and he did not even behave in any unusual way when he was concentrating on the stag film. His reaction to the essence of shock, then, differs from his previous encounters with essences in so far as it treats the shock as though it is a sign or index of something existing beyond consciousness (SAF 16).

An irrational reaction to shock, then, forms the basis for distinguishing between essence and existence in the philosophy of Santayana. And the sceptic, who had vanished into a dimensionless point, is restored to the everyday world

of routine human interaction. But this restoration needed a miracle no less astonishing than the miracle which transforms points into lines. For some mysterious power not present to consciousness was able to discriminate between essences which are purely fictional and essences which signify aspects of a realm independent of consciousness. This mysterious power which cannot even be ignored by ultimate scepticism, however, does not spring from heaven but instead flows spontaneously from the animal nature of the sceptic. This power is called "animal faith" and is an irrational force which can pierce through the barrier of essences present to consciousness when the survival of the animal is at stake or when the animal chooses to play in the realm of forces (SAF 214).

Since the sceptic has been restored to the world by an irrational faith which is the heart and soul of Santayana's lay religion, the audience can be dismissed and allowed to bemoan the unhappy ending. For paradise had to be lost before the Hell of existence could be regained. And the actor, after a taxing performance, is probably thirsty, hungry, and tired. He may even be bruised by his initiation into scepticism. And the memory of some of the essences encountered in the ceremony may have awakened another expression of the animal nature he regained in the end--he may seek out one of the actresses who appeared on the screen of consciousness.

In this section, then, I hope I have been able to give

a useful introduction to Santayana's philosophy which will contribute to my contention that he is innocent of the charge leveled against him by Schilpp. For the important features of his philosophy--its foundation in scepticism, the importance of the essences which are the sole inhabitants of consciousness, and the irrational force which transmits a shock from the outside--have made their debut along with some secondary features such as introspection and behaviorism. And these features, when related explicitly to matter and spirit, will fit into a coherent system of philosophy.

My primary purpose in constructing this section in terms of the cinema, however, was to show how a writing style can be deliberately designed to make a reader see the situations in which concepts like solipsism, essence, and animal faith are brought out into the spotlight and distinguished from one another. And throughout the Realms of Being, Santayana has chosen to convey his insights by using the essences of language to exemplify figuratively rather than define formally. Unlike the one modern philosopher he claimed to respect--Spinoza--, Santayana does not place definitions or logic on a pedestal. He is an irrationalist, not a rationalist, and is content to use language which can be understood by poets if not by Teamsters or logicians.

If my account of the sceptical journey was amusing or boring, confusing or enlightening, then I have illustrated a significant point about Santayana's manner of writing.

And if my manner of writing about Santayana seemed rather "unphilosophical," then I have managed to simulate Santayana's manner of writing philosophy. And if I seem to have been groping, Schilpp's charge against Santayana can be understood.

References:

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus, (New York, 1969), p. 117.

## MATTER

I wait for men of science to tell me what matter is, in so far as they can discover it, and am not at all surprised or troubled at the abstractness and vagueness of their ultimate conceptions: how should our notions of things so remote from the scale and scope of our senses be anything but schematic? But whatever matter may be, I call it matter boldly, as I call my acquaintances Smith and Jones without knowing their secrets (SAF viii).

Any child who has read Rumpelstiltskin knows that magic powers sometimes reside in proper names. And matter, in Santayana's system, should be written with a capital M to show that he holds this personification of all power, motion, and energy on the same plane that Christians hold their God. For in designating 'matter' as the name for all existence, as the substance of the universe, and as the source of all inorganic structures and organic species discernible in the universe, he has absorbed the creative power of the supernatural into a category or realm which he regards as purely natural and wholly irrational.

Having completed the "sceptical phase" of his system, Santayana concentrates on an "assertive phase" characterized by a boldness which was not possible for the humble sceptic lost in the depths of solipsism (RM 200). And having exiled himself from the "perfect democracy" of the realm of essence, Santayana can stipulate ex cathedra as the pope of his own lay religion.

One of the contrasts which Santayana stresses over and over is the contrast between essence and existence which was introduced in the last section. Essence, as I pointed out, is the realm of all idiosyncrasies or distinguishable characteristics. And since this realm is separate from the space-time matrix of the existing universe, Santayana describes all essences as "eternal" or "contemporary with all times" (SAF 271). It is also infinite in breadth and has plenty of room for all of the "unactualized possibles and impossibles" which are unwelcome in Quine's desert retreat.<sup>1</sup> Even the "round square" has found a home in this cluttered realm as "an essence of comic discourse" (SAF 121).

As the ground of all complementary characters, Santayana has dignified the realm of essence with ontological priority. For since both power and impotence are among the terms which reside in this eternal flophouse, the realm of matter is foreshadowed here. But unlike the realm of essence, the realm of matter is in a constant flux which traverses physical space and time by generating and transforming an infinite supply of energy (RM 202). And although essence issues out the specific characteristics which may arise in the flux at a given time and place, only irrational matter has the right to select from the infinite possibilities. Matter reaches into the realm of essence while blind-folded and points randomly at essences which will be granted a secular honor. And it is thus fully responsible for producing the zoological species



which have emerged on earth.

All origins of features existing in the universe, then, lie in the realm of matter. And the shock which awakened the sceptic from the realm of essence established what Santayana calls the "postulate of substance--the assumption that there are things and events prior to the discovery of them and independent of this discovery" (RM 186).

Given this postulate, the relation between the essences given in consciousness and things independent of consciousness which are symbolized by these essences can be clarified. During the movie projected in the last section, the audience watching the split-screen had privileged access to some information which was denied to the meditating sceptic. When the sceptic was kicked, then, the audience could easily grasp the connection between the activities represented on the respective screens. Prior to the kick, however, the audience could not perceive any correspondence between the content presented on the two screens because there was no apparent relation. For sunny days in a park do not automatically elicit stag films in one's imagination through a physiological reflex similar to the knee jerk. But only a very naive or inebriated observer would mistake the stimulus for the response in the kicking scene and confuse the leg moving through space and time on the screen of behaviorism with the shock depicted on the screen of consciousness. And if a Teamster can understand representative realism by knowing the difference between going to bed

with Elizabeth Taylor and going to bed with "Elizabeth Taylor" written on a three by five card, he can easily distinguish between the essence perceived and the thing in the realm of matter which it represents in consciousness. And thus the essences present to consciousness serve as signs or partial descriptions of existing things without being either "incorporations" or "reproductions" of the things located in the realm of matter (SAF 179).

Santayana sums up the relation between the essences instantiated in matter and the essences in consciousness which differ from yet represent the features distributed in the flux by making a statement which suggests both evolution and modern behaviorism:

The environment determines the occasions on which intuitions arise, the psyche-- the inherited organisation of the animal-- determines their form, and ancient conditions of life on earth no doubt determined which psyches should arise and prosper (SAF 88)

And since evolution, psyche, and spirit will be considered in the next section, I will merely note here that the emergence of spirit which interests me in this thesis will be treated by Santayana as just another chance selection from the realm of essence made by dumb matter--a selection no more or less astonishing or important than the emergence of insects.

In his treatment of the realm of matter, then, Santayana has identified it as the field of action, power, and creation

and has gallantly given science the task of providing more specific information about it. And in keeping with his prejudice against high guesses, he has abstained from speculating about the origin of the flux. And by allowing matter to select the essences which it materializes while refusing to attribute rationality to this blind force, Santayana has moved the Christian God and his power to create ex nihilo from heaven to a place in the realm of essence adjacent to the saloon where the round square works as a comedian.

References:

1. Willard Van Orman Quine, "On What There Is," in From A Logical Point Of View, (New York, 1953), p. 3.

## PSYCHE AND SPIRIT

...like an ignorant girl, the psyche has become a mother without counting the cost either to herself or to her miraculous child; and the spirit has come undesired into the working world that wanted only another slave and is utterly incapable of understanding or respecting the divine changeling that has been brought to it (RS 617).

Where our language suggests a body and there is none; there, we should like to say, is a spirit.

Wittgenstein

Schilpp's accusations against Santayana--that he is confusing and merely groping--are based on passages similar in form and apparent obscurity to the "ignorant girl" example quoted above. In fact the substance of Schilpp's article is composed of a multitude of sample quotations selected to show how unclear Santayana is when he talks about spirit. The literary expression Santayana uses is beautiful, the similes usually are drawn from everyday life, yet no clear concept of spirit seems to emerge from the text. After a while, the army of personified nouns fighting for recognition or survival on the battlefield of the Realms of Being seem to raise so much dust in their struggle that an observer at a distance is no longer able to identify the specific factors involved in the interaction.

Since I once wrote a term paper which bemoaned Santayana's power to both dazzle and bedazzle with his prose, I feel that

I can understand Schilpp's frustration and his impatience with Santayana. For it is true that Santayana scatters his figurative comments on a given subject throughout five volumes and rarely offers an argument to support a point which he is assured of as being obvious to all. And sometimes, if the context is not carefully noted, the activities performed by a given persona may seem to be contradictory. So when psyche is distinguished from consciousness in one passage (RM 337) and credited as the author of books in another passage (RM 335), several questions may puzzle a reader: "Can one write a book without being aware of it?"--"Could the psyche of an artichoke write a book if it were given appropriate writing materials?"--"Did George Santayana know that he was being blamed for the strange things his psyche had written and published?"

I will attempt to clear up some of the confusion generated by Santayana's personifications of matter and spirit by distinguishing four aspects of the relation between body and consciousness which surface from time to time in his works. In this section, I will concentrate on the psyche-spirit relation from the perspectives of evolution and epiphenomenalism. And in the next section, I will discuss the relation from the perspectives of behaviorism and introspection. For I believe that when these perspectives are distinguished and interpreted, Santayana will be cleared of the groping charge made by Schilpp.

Using another cinematic technique, the realm of matter can be shown evolving. But not from a single virgin atom which has been impregnated by some mysterious external force. The explosive field of colors which appears on the screen must be interpreted as a chaos in progress long before its existence was noted by human science and art. For the lay religion of Santayana refuses to tread on the places where footprints of theologians, and metaphysicians can be detected.

The violence of this chaotic scene can be lessened gradually until recognizable "concretions" (RM 187) such as clouds, trees, rocks, and the sea are brought into focus. And using an adaptation of the time-lapse technique of photography utilized by modern science, one celled animals--the original solipsists--can be shown appearing from the dark ocean floor and forming colonies which eventually become distinct species of fish. Amphibians can be shown landing and being transformed by the demands imposed on them by the new environment which they have discovered.

Unlike the traditional Hollywood epic, however, the flora and fauna will not be paraded through Eden. No flashes of lightning and powerful blasts of wind will mold some clay or dust into the blond, muscular father of the human race. And no authoritarian voice with a New York accent will shatter the silence with commandments. For in the Santayana epic, material forces are not the instruments of a rational designer. And a given species of organisms is the

result of a confluence of "irrational and wild" forces and "long friction and forced adjustments" (RS 560).

In the case of the organism called man as well as in all living creatures, the gross physical concretion of his body can be distinguished from the organization displayed by this body when it is in action somewhere in the realm of matter. And the psyche, the name given to the total organization of a creature by Santayana, must not be mistaken for a part of the body. For the psyche is a concept in a category which differs from the category of gross bodies distributed in space and time. The psyche cannot be removed from a man as an eye can by surgery. The psyche is manifest in the realm of matter as the principle of life, but it is not located in the realm of matter. It is the seat of instincts directed toward preserving the form of an individual and preserving the species. It is "the self-maintaining and reproducing pattern or structure of an organism conceived as a power" (RS 569). It is an avatar of blind matter in the world of the living.

Given the threatening reality of an environment which is constantly changing and the irrational animal desire for survival, the psyche from which Americans have evolved can be portrayed at different stages of development. My cinematic technique would show the pertinent changes of psyche by showing new capacities expressed in behavior as well as the apparent changes of bodily organs open to visual inspection. Santayana,

however, conveys evolution by personifying the psyche and treating this irrational channel of matter as though it were a creative genius. A paradigm example of Santayana's use of the psyche as an evolutionary force can be seen in this quotation:

The psyche needs to prepare for all things that may chance in its life: it needs to be universally vigilant, universally retentive. In satisfying this need, it forms the spirit, which therefore initially tends to look, to remember, to understand (RS 567).

If "spirit" is translated as "consciousness" in this passage, it is obvious that nothing extraordinary is being said. Santayana is merely pointing out that at some stage of evolution between the one-celled solipsists who have survived and the contemporary American who may become extinct, some creature developed organs of vision and memory which came to supplement its previous instincts and capacities. And these new organs were received as gifts from the insane realm of matter, perhaps at a moment of crisis when they were needed for survival. But if matter can be applauded for its generosity to some species, it must be condemned for the callous way it ignored the cries of other species which have left only their own bones as epitaphs for their brief stay in the existing world. But who can condemn the handicapped? One merely can appreciate whatever small contributions to the beauty of the world matter has made and forgive it for its blind and brutal sense of justice.



By recognizing Santayana's technique of expressing evolution in terms of rational personifications of an irrational force, one need not be detained by some of the seemingly strange statements he makes. Let me illustrate a problem of interpretation with a quotation: "Evidently for the preservation and welfare of an organism fit reactions suffice; a sense of those reactions or their occasions is superfluous" (RS 617). Given this statement and a definition of spirit as "an awareness natural to animals, revealing the world and themselves in it" (RS 572), one might reach the puzzling conclusion that consciousness plays no part in the fit reactions required for survival. And this conclusion brings to mind the question of how the unconscious psyche can be the author of books which was posed earlier. But Santayana, observing the changing universe from his vantage point at eternity, is merely trying to say that the irrational forces of the material universe could have asserted the same standard of survival in a world of organisms possessing sensitivities which differ from animal consciousness. And who knows what kind of essences have been forced to exist on different planets? A creature as complex as a human yet wiser could emerge and maintain itself through a psyche adjusted to a solipsism of the present moment.

These eccentricities of Santayana's way of presenting his notions of evolution having been noted, the precise relation between an individual's body or psyche and his mind or spirit

can be considered. But since Santayana scatters statements relevant to the mind-body problem throughout his works without ever offering a sustained and coherent argument to support his view in any one place in the text, I believe that it will be useful to begin with a clear statement of the matter-spirit relation which he is trying to show. And by now it should be apparent that in order to present such a clear statement, I must borrow one from another philosopher.

In a passage where Santayana calls the spirit the "witness of the cosmic dance," he characterizes the witness's relation to the body as "transcendental and epiphenomenal" (RS 562). Broad has given a clear four-point description of epiphenomenalism which I will use as a paradigm for comparative purposes.

- (1) Certain bodily events cause certain mental events.
  - (2) No mental event plays any part in the causation of any bodily event.
  - (3) No mental event plays any part in the causation of any other mental event.
- Consequently,
- (4) all mental events are caused by bodily events and by them alone.<sup>2</sup>

Since Santayana is convinced of the tenets of his lay religion, he is more interested in showing the reader what he sees through the stained glass windows of his secular temple than in zealously trying to convert a reader with arguments. When it comes to a question of logic, Santayana is a pacifist who will tolerate abuse without fighting back with the same weapon. So instead of arguments for his view

of the mind-body problem, Santayana offers the usual parade of metaphors and similes. "It issues from the psyche like the genie from Sinbad's bottle" (RS 560) is a typical example of the way he expresses the matter-spirit relation. And it is also a typical example of how imprecise and confusing his figurative style can be. For if according to the doctrine of epiphenomenalism mind cannot act on matter, than the genie is nothing but a fictional eunuch who can be of no help to Sinbad.

But even if insufficient analogies are the rule rather than the exception in the case of matter and spirit, they at least partially convey the two points which Santayana is trying to make about consciousness--that its source lies in the realm of matter and that it cannot directly influence the realm of matter since it is immaterial and thus as impotent as the geldings in the realm of essence and the realm of truth. But if one wanders around the Realms of Being long enough, one can find some exceptionally clear statements which seem to correspond to the four-point description of epiphenomenalism given by Broad.

- (1) ...sensations and ideas always follow upon organic reactions and express their quality; and intuition merely supplies a mental term for the animal reaction already at work unconsciously (RM 349).
- (2) ...spirit...cannot originate the animal powers and passions which it comes to express (RM 355).
- (3) Not the previous thought, but the contemporary flux in the psyche and in all nature determines what the next thought

shall be (RS 605).

One moment of spirit--one intuition--  
can no more generate or control another  
moment than the light actually shed  
from one candle can generate or extin-  
guish the light actually shed from  
another (RS 635).

- (4) the sole basis of appearances.../is/...  
some event in the brain in no way  
resembling them (SAF 56).

At first glance, a position which treats conscious-  
ness as "neither a drain nor an influence" on the body in  
which it is stationed seems to flatly contradict what  
every man is directly aware of in everyday life (RS 618).  
And any Teamster who has been patient enough to follow  
Santayana's account of common sense this far may now feel  
it is time to find a different spokesman--either Eric Hoffer  
or Hugh Hefner. For one certainly behaves differently when  
one is aware of something: if a Teamster sees a car headed  
at him he can try to avoid the collision by driving his truck  
off the road; but if some management scab throws a beer bottle  
at the Teamster watching the floor show, the Teamster will not  
duck because he will not be aware of anything but the girls.

Santayana, however, is not attempting to make his  
distinction between matter and spirit on the basis of vulgar  
opinions or ordinary language. Homely examples of mind over  
matter and first-person utterances suggesting free will  
cannot establish consciousness as a force because Santayana  
insists that all forces are material and stipulates that the  
consciousness proper to an animal psyche is in no sense material

but purely immaterial and impotent. So the "conscious will" conveyed in the statement "I am now going to lift my arm because I want to lift it and only because I want to lift it" is not itself a force but is a "symptom" of forces at work in the unconscious psyche (RM 313).

In order to understand Santayana's epiphenomenalism and not prematurely dismiss it as a complete absurdity, the consciousness of a man living in society must be thoroughly examined in terms of the necessary and sufficient conditions which sustain his life. From the evolutionary standpoint already considered, the modification which a previously unconscious psyche receives prior to the emergence of consciousness is a necessary condition for this emergence. "The fruition of an organ...cannot arise until that organ has matured. A first sensation is therefore, physiologically, a last event" (RS 650). A mature and healthy organ, however, is not sufficient to assure that its specific function will actually be performed in a given situation.<sup>3</sup> A man with normal vision will simply not be able to see in a dark room. Nor will he see anything on a sunny day in the park if he is sleeping or playing at scepticism. And an eye removed from a dead man will not be able to observe the transplant operation which places it in another man, even if the recipient is subsequently able to see with this eye as a result of the operation.

Treating consciousness as analogous to vision, then,

spirit is obviously not a force independent of the other organs controlled by the psyche. It cannot be separated from a body and transplanted into a cadaver. For the confluence of specific organs regulated by the psyche is a necessary condition for consciousness in a given situation. And an awareness of something present in the visual field requires a heart circulating blood and a complex nervous system as well as two open eyes.

In certain circumstances, then, consciousness is a necessary condition which enables an organism to execute a particular form of behavior which could not be performed otherwise. But being aware of an essence representing something in the realm of matter does not in itself alter the existing thing. And although spirit can assist the psyche in tracking down something desired in the environment, it cannot itself pounce on the prey. So Santayana, by treating matter as the dynamic system which alone can provide the sufficient conditions for action or change, has designated spirit as impotent simply because it cannot be a sufficient condition for any change in the space-time matrix (RM 216).

The relation between body and mind specified by Santayana is thus not really contrary to common sense as it first appeared to be. For after some adjustments in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions have been made to Santayana's claim that spirit is "neither a drain nor an

influence," a weary Teamster will probably agree with this conditional: "If my brain stops functioning when I have finished typing this antecedent clause, then I will not be able to type this consequent clause." But he will not agree with the conditional out of any great respect for the subtleties of logic but because of one rather secular fact which looms over the local headquarters--ghosts do not testify or pay dues.

The realm of spirit, then, is wholly dependent on the realm of matter for its existence and can in no way influence or modify anything in the flux by itself. And if psychokinesis were to become a phenomenon as common as a strike, Santayana would situate the invisible picket lines in the realm of matter in order to maintain the impotence of the transcendental spirit. For spirit is an "ontological overflow" from the realm of matter (RM 346). And like Wittgenstein's "metaphysical subject," spirit is "the limit of the world--not a part of it."<sup>4</sup> For by being "transcendental," spirit is "withdrawn from the sphere of categories which it employs" (RS 600). And like the eye, it is not itself within the visual field.<sup>5</sup>

The apparent "unbridgeable gulf"<sup>6</sup> between the realms of matter and spirit is perhaps most visible in an adaptation of an experiment suggested by Wittgenstein.<sup>7</sup> Because of his successful performance in my earlier film, the method actor has been rehired for a role far more physically demanding

than that of a sedentary sceptic. For in this film short he will portray a physiologist whose dedication to science transcends the ordinary to such a degree that we may name him Dr. Jekyll.

The scene is a laboratory filled with mirrors. When Dr. Jekyll enters, the screen of behaviorism shows a man likely to be noticed in a crowd. From the front he may appear to be a member of the silent majority, but when he is viewed from the rear one's first impression about his politics must be revised. For the back of his skull has been removed and a throbbing brain can be seen sticking out of his head.

When Dr. Jekyll sits down in an appropriate place relative to the position of the mirrors, an unusual scene is projected on the screen of consciousness--the throbbing brain which the doctor sees. Art and science have thus conspired to represent spirit contemplating its source in the realm of matter. But the image of the brain reflected in the mirror and the corresponding symbol projected on the screen of consciousness are only essences. And no amount of contortions will ever bring consciousness closer to the realm of matter for all it can ever illuminate lies in the realm of essence.

Given this revelation, the actor, if he remembered anything of his last role, will be able to anticipate the denouement. Santayana will insist that irrational faith



is the only force capable of transcending the gulf between matter and spirit. And this force, by being a force, will have to gain its momentum in the realm of matter--in the psyche--and thus can leap only in one direction. For spirit and essence were gelded by definitions long ago and cannot themselves produce or reproduce.

But in the end, the precise relation between neuro-physiological processes directed by the psyche and the manifestations of spirit which depend on these processes is left as one of the mysteries of the lay religion. And Santayana gallantly turns the problem over to science, but with one warning (RM 333, RS 601). He warns science that consciousness, by not itself being physical, cannot be said to be produced from matter by "physical derivation" but that spirit is nonetheless "entirely dependent on matter for its existence and distribution" (RS 632-3). And science, when it understands the limitations reflected in the realms Santayana has distinguished, will "abandon the effort" to translate the language of spirit into the idioms of matter (RS 644). And then science, on a holiday from its prosaic laboratory, will be able to appreciate the poetry of the world.

The lay religion of Santayana, then, presents a consistent position on the matter-spirit or mind-body relation although one has to go on a pilgrimage through the sacred texts in order to discern this position. Evolution is held to be a

construction of irrational matter in which some psyches capable of supporting consciousness emerge accidentally. This asymmetrical relation between matter and spirit from the perspective of evolution is then extended to the analysis of the mind-body problem. Consciousness is presented as being wholly dependent on the material forces which it expresses without itself being able to influence these forces in return. The relation between matter and spirit from the perspective of the mind-body problem is thus epiphenomenal.

A Teamster, however, may not be impressed enough by Santayana's account of spirit and matter to convert to the lay religion. For he may sense that the irrational faith appealed to by Pope George has no more rational power for persuasion than the creation ex nihilo which is not admitted as a legitimate article of faith in the lay religion. And he may feel that the ritual of definition which Santayana uses to exorcise power from spirit is no less arbitrary than the specified acts of baptism or communion. But it is likely that he will admit that Santayana's religion, while incomplete in its account of the universe, is nonetheless based on enough facts displayed in public experience to vindicate Santayana from the charge of groping. For Santayana may be wrong and his immortal soul may be suffering in Hell for his sins against the creator. But at least he was consistent.

References:

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, (New York, 1953), p. 18e.
2. C. D. Broad, The Mind and its Place in Nature, (London, 1929), p. 118.
3. Ask any Teamster about this.
4. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus, p. 119.
5. Ibid., p. 117.
6. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p. 124.
7. Ludwig Wittgenstein, The Blue and Brown Books, (New York, 1958), p. 8.

## BEHAVIORISM, INTROSPECTION, AND LIBERATION

We regard an act of vision as complete at any given moment: it lacks nothing which has to develop later in order to make complete the specific form that constitutes seeing.<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle

In the perfect exercise of any function the instruments are ignored and attention rests directly on the object, the scene, and the volume of vital music concerned in the action (RS 685).

The accounts of evolution and of the epiphenomenal relation between the psyche and spirit which Santayana gives are clearly based on an attitude towards science which regards observation as the primary source of significant evidence. Without the inconclusive support provided by the fossils which have been discovered and dated, the notion of evolution would be no more satisfactory or persuasive than the fundamentalist's belief in God's last six day work week. And without x-rays and organ transplants, the substantial soul of Descartes might still be reigning from its throne on the pineal gland.

Santayana, however, gives his blessings to behaviorism in a manner which would even warm the cold hearts of Skinner and the other animal psychologists who enjoy using electricity to mold animal faith. For having banished substance and power from the realm of spirit, Santayana stipulates that

"behavior is the only conceivable seat of mind" (RM 315). And since Santayana's notion of a psyche corresponds to Skinner's notion of the "self" as "a functionally unified system of responses,"<sup>2</sup> it is not surprising to find Santayana state that the "psyche, being a habit of matter, is to be described and investigated from without, scientifically, by a behaviorist psychology" (SAF 148).

But since behaviorism can only describe or predict "what people are likely to say and do under specific conditions" (RGR 836), it is confined to the realm of matter and cannot meddle with the realm of spirit. And while the criterion for identifying a living psyche is its behavior, Santayana stipulates that the criterion for the existence of spirit is internal--"it finds itself thinking" (RS 598). The behaviorist, then, can study the public and the external but cannot reach the private and internal realm of spirit. He cannot grasp the quality of the feelings or thoughts of another man from behavior any more than he can see through another man's eyes by observing them closely.

Most behaviorists seem to be satisfied with the limitations Santayana has imposed on the range of their influence for they feel that they lost nothing when they were denied access to consciousness. But some people seem to desperately want some form of telepathy to emerge as a normal feature of human beings. For they want to be relieved from the dull routine of being conscious of only their own trite thoughts

and feelings. And perhaps the old man kicked the sceptic because he suspected that something obscene was being enjoyed by another which he could not enjoy because stupid matter had not made man extrasensory yet.

But if moments of consciousness cannot be adequately described or detected by a behaviorist, then how is the existence of spirit ever recognized in a society of creatures? Will each member of the community reduce the world to his own solipsism and ignore the existence of others of his kind? Santayana uses irrational faith once again to answer these questions. One spirit merely assumes that another of its species resides in any body it recognizes as similar to its own body. And although one spirit can never be assured of the specific contents or essences present to a fellow spirit at a given place and time, he can utilize his own memories and imagine the feelings and thoughts of another. For spirit is quite introspective and quickly learns to correlate the pains it feels with forces encountered in the environment; and soon after it is able to project its own feelings on fellow creatures.

Santayana calls this art of projecting introspection or imagining the thoughts and feelings of others "literary psychology." It studies the realm of spirit primarily but it is closely connected to the science of behavior. For Santayana points out that the human habit of expressing thoughts and feelings through language and gesture allows the two psychologies and the two realms of matter and spirit to be bridged by

the infinite amount of symbols available in the realm of essence. (SAF 252).

The success of literary psychology, then, does not depend on statistics and electricity. It rests entirely on a practitioner's ability to identify someone in a specific situation and project a reasonable interpretation of the thoughts and feelings assumed to correspond with certain types of behavior. So if a literary psychologist observes an old man frowning at an attractive young girl wearing a bathing suit, he may project his professional experience and acute imagination into the observed situation and characterize the amateur voyeur's thoughts with the exclamation "The young girls of today have no sense of decency!" And if further observation discloses that the frowning old man climbs up a tree to reach a good position to frown from when the girl lies down to sun herself, the literary psychologist can revise his earlier interpretation of the frown by thinking "If I were only forty years younger!"

Given the perspectives of behaviorism and introspection, the "groping" charge brought against Santayana can finally be considered and evaluated in terms of the various aspects of Santayana's system and style which I have presented thus far. For I have tried to show that Santayana's use of personifications of matter and spirit can be confusing if the particular perspective involved in the context of a passage is not recognized.

A rather striking piece of evidence which suggests that Schilpp was the one who was groping can be found in the first paragraph of the Realm of Spirit. For here Santayana explicitly states what he is doing for a change.

...the singularity of my book is perhaps this, that it traces in spiritual things only their spiritual quality, whilst planting them, as far as their existence is concerned, unequivocally on natural ground, and showing how they spring out of it (RS 549).

Santayana is even more explicit about his point of view in another passage: "In this book I am deliberately taking the point of view of spirit fully awake, contrasting itself with other things, and aspiring to its own freedom and perfection" (RS 659).

With this statement of perspective understood, one can assume that Santayana has directed the "eye of the spirit" (RM 198) throughout the five volumes of his system and has deliberately attempted to make the reader see the world in a particular way. And this assumption allows one to perceive a progression through the five works which suggests rational design rather than blind, groping matter. In Scepticism and Animal Faith, the prejudices and cognitive faculties of man were reduced to a solipsism of the present moment which disclosed the split between essence and existence. In the Realm of Essence, the ultimate ground of all distinguishable characteristics was treated as ontologically distinct from and prior to any distinctions realized in an existing



world. In the Realm of Matter, the irrational flux was studied as it borrowed forms from the realm of essence and placed them in the existing universe of space and time. In the Realm of Truth, an eternal inventory of all essences which had been granted the status of existence was presented as a realm of all perspectives.

The progression comes around "full circle" (RM 194), however, when the spirit or consciousness presupposed in the presentation and discovery of the other realms records its own emergence from a psyche situated in the realm of matter. And in the Realm of Spirit, the pure light of consciousness shows its respect for the three factors which create, define, and dignify its own nature--matter, essence, and truth.

From the perspective of the final volume of the Realms of Being, then, spirit is a "focus of knowledge" (RS 565). By realizing its source and limitations, however, spirit has achieved a step necessary for salvation in the lay religion of Santayana. It may give thanks for its existence to the realm of matter from which it has sprung, but it will prefer to concentrate its attention on the two realms which transcend time and space--the eternal realms of essence and truth. For the discovery of these two realms made spirit aware of a remarkable gift which it had been given by the psyche--an imagination plastic enough to ascend to the eternal (RS 556). And from a point at eternity, the spirit is free from the "sophistry" of one restricted perspective and can appreciate

its kinship with all living creatures similarly restricted in the realm of matter (RS 556, 592).

The phase of scepticism, then, was an exercise in self-denial which both purified the spirit and foreshadowed the heaven which it could ascend to when completely pure. For spirit becomes aware of itself only "when intuition supplants convention" (RS 553). And the sceptic, by questioning everything convention has presented, liberates the spirit from its demanding master in the realm of matter (RS 552). And thus consciousness, initially designed to help protect the psyche situated in a world of secret terrors, escapes to a peaceful asylum where it can either seek truth or create amusing lies.

But although a sceptical philosophy can easily strip the realm of power of any intellectual authority over spirit, "it cannot strip the world of its power" (RS 713). The shocks from the outside world cannot be ignored and spirit is once again "distracted" from the "spontaneous exercise of its liberty" by the needs and desires of its animal source (RS 673). Happiness can only be attained occasionally and not eternally as spirit would have it if it had matter's power (RS 737).

Spirit, then, while "complete at any given moment" in the same sense that Aristotle described seeing as "complete" (RS 590), is dependent on a substratum of processes which it completely ignores when it is not distracted by some animal command issued by the psyche. It is an ultimate "fruition of

function" (RS 590), an "actuality" which ignores both the source of its energy and its eventual death. And in Santayana's lay religion, the spirit thus earns salvation only when it understands its birth, accepts its inevitable death, and then focuses all of its attention on the eternal realms of essence and truth while ignoring the secular realm of matter as much as possible. For when spirit can appreciate the beauty of a snowfall or imagine the uniqueness of each white flake, it is living a life which differs in quality from one which would not welcome a change in weather that makes survival more difficult. And the quality of life achieved by spirit when it reaches this level of disinterested aesthetic contemplation is, to Santayana, a culmination of freedom which is superior to the life of worry, need, and desire that the unliberated spirit must endure (RS 737). For when spirit reaches the plane of eternity it is "too much above nature to chafe at being existentially a very small part of it" (RS 588).

Santayana, then, was not "groping" when he personified consciousness as spirit and examined it from different perspectives. For the spirit created by the psyche in evolution, the spirit at the mercy of a single body, and the spirit which can vibrate with empathy and sympathy for all other spirits are all aspects of a single consciousness which recognizes its limitations. It knows that it needs the organs of the body; it knows that its silent wishes or prayers for peace

in the world cannot deter mankind from the daily acts of violence which have marked human history in the realm of truth; and it knows that its precarious existence really means nothing to anyone but itself.

And if a studious spirit has contemplated the vastness of the other realms of being long enough to realize how little of the infinite and eternal darkness can ever be illuminated by one small flame during a short life, it will probably distrust "all high guesses" and limit its belief and prejudices to a bare minimum.

References:

1. Aristotle, Nicomachean Ethics, (New York, 1962), p. 279.
2. B. F. Skinner, Science and Human Behavior, (New York, 1953), p. 285.

## CONCLUSION

What signs fail to express, their application shows. What signs slur over, their application shows clearly.<sup>1</sup>

Wittgenstein

I have tried to show that Santayana is not groping in print and that his system of philosophy does present a consistent account of man's position in the universe. Beginning with a statement of Santayana's notion of philosophy as a way of life, I have presented aspects of his thought which give an account of experience that in no way violates the tenets of common sense divorced from superstition. And by giving descriptions of ultimate scepticism, the discovery of essence, the evolution of matter, and of spirit contemplating its nature and limitations I have tried to convey a feeling of both the style and the content of the Realms of Being. Using examples set in the cinema, I have deliberately projected a representation of the multitude of perspectives which are expressed in personifications, metaphors, and similes throughout Santayana's writing. And by stressing behaviorism, introspection, and the vantage point at eternity I have tried to bring out contrasts which figure greatly in Santayana's overall view of spirit as a small flame in an infinite darkness.

I have also tried to point out that Santayana can indeed be confusing. I can easily sympathize with Schilpp's sense

of frustration because it is true that Santayana has scattered his comments on a given problem throughout five books, usually without offering arguments in support of his conclusions. One must therefore collect all statements which pertain to a given problem, sort them out according to the perspective they were written from, and then attempt to supply the many missing steps needed to support a conclusion before one can begin to understand some of the aspects of Santayana's system.

But I do not believe that Santayana either wanted or expected his philosophy to be understood through any technical type of logical analysis. For unlike his contemporaries in philosophy, he claimed to "detest disputation and distrust proofs and disproofs."<sup>2</sup> He was a logical pacifist writing for the "poets and artists who have not bothered with modern philosophy."<sup>3</sup> And being "an ignorant man, almost a poet" (SAF ix), he deliberately employed a technique of writing in poetical prose in order to convey a philosophy which merely represented what "everybody knows."

Some of the effects of his style are worth noting. Whether or not this chosen style was conceived as a ritual of his lay church, the difficulties or felicities one may encounter in his works will probably elicit reactions based on the temperament of the reader. Schilpp doubted that a positivist could read beyond the preface of the Realm of Spirit without putting it down in disgust.<sup>4</sup> And I know that when I first attempted to dissect Scepticism and Animal Faith with a sentence by

sentence analysis, I was unable to recognize those things which "everybody knows" that are indeed imbedded in his system. But when I stopped trying to choke a confession, a definition, or an argument out of each paragraph and allowed myself to be carried along by the flow of words, I found myself automatically using the vocabulary which had once baffled me. I saw the world through the concepts of 'essence' and 'eternal' and Santayana's philosophy seemed so patently correct that I could no longer quarrel with it.

When I reflected on the remarkable "conversion" my thinking had undergone, however, I began to suspect that my animal nature had been taken advantage of by a very devious behaviorist. For the maze of realms which I had been led through seemed to possess the characteristics of a programmed text. The examples which Santayana had used to illustrate the nature of a concept were invariably drawn from the visual world and almost always so strikingly expressed that one could not help but remember them. And for the rest of my life I am probably condemned to recalling unwed psyche giving birth to spirit whenever I see a pregnant woman. Even the scattering of statements on a given subject which I have bemoaned suggests a behavioristic technique of conditioning by selective reinforcement. For rather than drill home the same definition or distinction time after time the way Kant did, Santayana seems to have deliberately placed a key term in new surroundings each time in order to force the reader to discriminate the

essential characteristics of his use of the term. If this technique is successful, then the reader will have been conditioned to see the world in the way that Santayana wants him to see it. But if this technique fails because of the strength of the previous conditioning the reader has undergone as it is likely to do in the case of a professional philosopher, the reader will probably become confused or annoyed and may dismiss Santayana as either "unclear" or "groping"--possibly even as "effeminate." Since programmed texts emerged far after the Realms of Being, however, it is idle to think that Santayana had deliberately designed his work on a model of conditioning more sophisticated than the one employed by poets throughout history. For like a poet, Santayana has only tried to evoke thought and feeling by using expressions appropriate for conveying a particular perspective or attitude towards life.

But beneath the attitude expressed poetically in his philosophy there is a doctrine which can be stated as well as shown. And this doctrine, if I have understood it correctly, is one which the Teamsters could officially adopt without fearing repercussions within the rank and file. At the risk of being unfair to Santayana a second time, then, I will offer a brief summary of the commonplace wisdom of the separate realms of being.

- (1) The Realm of Matter: Many things in this world pay no attention to the particular desires or plans of individuals or groups. The roads are sometimes closed down because of the weather and management does not always yield to union demands.



- (2) The Realm of Essence: Ideas differ from things and men can imagine the strangest things because of this difference. One does not gain sixteen pounds by thinking of a bowling ball. And one can imagine a management which would always meet union demands.
- (3) The Realm of Truth: An individual cannot observe an event from all possible perspectives at any given time. One can only drive in one direction and can never be entirely sure that the cargo in the truck contains nothing illegal.
- (4) The Realm of Spirit: Life is beautiful when all one's needs and desires have been fulfilled. Bills paid, stomach filled, genitals satisfied, one can relax and enjoy a ball game or go fishing.

If these statements are a fair translation of the common sense doctrine of Santayana's philosophy, some empirical support is given to Wittgenstein's dictum: "theses in philosophy, it would never be possible to question them, because everyone would agree with them."<sup>5</sup>

Santayana's significance, however, is not restricted by the banal doctrine of his system. His reputation will be preserved in the realm of literary expression. His insights will be respected and quoted. And kindred spirits will appreciate the two eternal realms he loved as well as respect the realm of matter as he did.

And perhaps some American on another planet will someday appreciate a philosopher who knew that the earth was small and insignificant. And he may think of this philosopher when he looks at other galaxies anticipating the surprises that blind matter may have in store for him. And appreciating both the prose and the poetry of the universe, he too may be

driven to express himself with figurative rather than scientific language.

References:

1. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logicus-Philosophicus, p. 25.
2. George Santayana, "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," in The Philosophy of George Santayana, ed. by Paul A. Schilpp, p. 604.
3. Ibid., p. 500.
4. Paul A. Schilpp, op. cit., p. 379.
5. Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations, p. 50e.

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