A Study of Transcendental Materialism in the Philosophy of George Santayana

Thomas N. Munson
Loyola University Chicago

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A STUDY OF TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM IN THE
PHILOSOPHY OF GEORGE SANTAYANA

BY
THOMAS N. MUNSON, S.J.

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Thomas N. Munson, S.J., was born in Chicago, Illinois, January 26, 1924.

He completed his elementary education at St. Ignatius Grammar School in that city. He was graduated from Loyola Academy in June, 1941, and the following August entered the Society of Jesus at Milford Novitiate of the Sacred Heart, Milford, Ohio. During his four years at Milford he was registered as an undergraduate in the College of Arts and Sciences in Xavier University, Cincinnati, Ohio.

In August, 1945 he began the study of Philosophy and Science at West Baden College, West Baden Springs, Indiana, and was enrolled in Loyola University, whence he received the Bachelor of Arts degree with a major in Latin in June, 1946.

Since that time he has pursued graduate studies in Philosophy in Loyola University.
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CHAPTER I

THE ORIGINS OF SANTAYANA'S TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM

While it is true that the influence of hereditary and environmental factors on a man's philosophy can be overemphasized, it is only natural to believe that these factors are of some account in the molding of his thought. This is definitely the case in the philosophy of George Santayana. Indeed, Santayana himself characterizes his philosophy as a synthesis of Spanish and American traditions.1 Traditions in their original and vital expression are oral. It will be of advantage, then, to study in detail the men with whom the young Santayana came in contact at Harvard, because there, in the dynamic interplay of intellects, Santayana's supple mind was steeped in a kaleidoscopic philosophical tradition, to which each professor contributed his own hue. During his own teaching years at Harvard, Santayana transmitted this same tradition, flecked with the ideas of his masters, but suffused with the fresh light of his own thought. And finally, since philosophical content and presentation are circumscribed by the author's purpose in philosophizing and his attitude towards philosophy, an understanding of these factors will prove an

1 Paul A. Schilpp (Editor), The Philosophy of George Santayana, The Library of Living Philosophers Series, Northwestern University, Evanston and Chicago, II, 1940, 3.
invaluable source for a crystal-clear comprehension of, and sympathy for, Santayana's philosophy.

George Santayana was born in Madrid on the sixteenth of December, eighteen hundred and sixty-three. His father had spent many years as a government official in the Philippines. Mrs. Santayana, who had previously married Nathaniel Sturgis, an American merchant resident in Manila, likewise had a Philippine background, since her father had also been employed in the Spanish service. Consequently it is not surprising that Santayana has lived from childhood, as he tells us, in the imaginative presence of interminable ocean spaces and coconut islands. During the years this child's imagination was to know an unusual development; and the importance of the role of this faculty in Santayana's philosophy ought to be grasped at the very beginning of this thesis, since it will run through this paper like a fugue. For Santayana, metaphysics is an excursus of the mind over the facts of fancy; and the imagination is the great unifier of humanity.

What are some of those influences which molded the contour

2 Schilpp, 4.
3 George Santayana, The Realm of Spirit, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1940, 274.
4 George Santayana, Interpretation of Poetry and Religion, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1900, 9.
of this child's imagination? One of the chief was his mother, a cool, stoical woman, as her son recalls her, who disdained the corruption about her. Did her son inherit any of his mother's aloofness? Perhaps, for Will Durant focuses upon this point in his critique of Santayana, with the result that he characterizes him as a Spanish grandee who views our little systems with unwondering and superior eye. While aloofness would not necessarily be an inherited characteristic, the power of example is considerable. Add to this the fact that as a child Santayana was brought to America to be educated with his Sturgis relatives. Undoubtedly the problem of adjustment was a severe trial to his sensitive soul. Is it surprising that the lonely boy withdrew into himself to live in his own dream-world?

Traces of these early influences are to be found in Santayana's philosophy. It is an other-worldly philosophy, the philosophy of a man without a country, since he became alienated from Spain, and, as Mr. Durant observes: "his soul, softened with much learning, and sensitive as a poet's soul must be (for he was poet first, and philosopher afterward), suffered from the noisy haste of American city-life." His

5 Schilpp, 4.
7 Schilpp, 7.
8 Durant, 366.
philosophy is that of the lover of peace and solitude who is buffeted about by a cruel world, and seeks, therefore, peace and freedom of spirit in a realm beyond the reaches of harsh, complex material existence. The philosophical expression of this storm-tossed spirit is, as a consequence, tinged with melancholy:

…it is a veracious and fearless self-expression; here a mature and subtle, though too sombre, soul has written itself down quietly, in statuesque and classic prose. And though we may not like its minor key, its undertone of sweet regret for a vanished world, we see in it the finished expression of this dying and nascent age, in which men cannot be altogether wise and free. 9

Finally, there is one more home-influence to be mentioned, the religious influence. Like his parents before him, Santayana considers himself, nominally at least, a Catholic. But a better expression of his religious creed can be found in his statement: "Religions are the great fairy-tales of the conscience." 10 Indeed, it is most difficult to reconcile his search for peace and enlightenment of spirit with his espousal of the darkness of disillusion. Yet he has chosen the latter:

For my own part, I was quite sure that life was not worth living; for if religion was false everything was worthless, and almost everything, if religion was true... I saw the same alternative between Catholicism and complete disillu-

9 Durant, 380-381.
10 Schilpp, 8.
sion: but I was never afraid of disillusion, and I have chosen it.11

Santayana graduated with the bachelor's degree from Harvard in 1882. The graduate's life-time spanned a period in which rationalism and materialism were in the ascendancy.

The decades of the seventies and eighties were the very pinnacle of rationalism and materialism, before the reaction of the nineties set in. They were the decades of Huxley and Leslie Stephen in England, of Taine and Renan in France, of Haeckel and Dühring in Germany, of the Fortnightly Review, the Nineteenth Century, and the Revue des Deux Mondes. At Harvard, Charles Eliot Norton, more than the professors of philosophy, was imbued with this Zeitgeist... Now Santayana, for all his detachment, kept abreast of the times and could not help absorbing much of this scientific and sceptical spirit.12

Still, Santayana claims to be outside the watershed of nineteenth century philosophical thought.13 But the reader of The Life of Reason will find that it breathes the very spirit of nineteenth century rationalism.14 Without doubt Santayana, in claiming to be divorced from the thought of his day, has overlooked the very decided, although unconscious, influence of various writings in molding his general mentality.

11 Ibid., 7-8.
13 Schilpp, 12.
14 Cf. Howgate, 132-133.
Santayana admits that during his undergraduate days he came under the spell of William James and Josiah Royce, the free-thought leaders of the times, for whom, however, he says he had more wonder than agreement. He believes that as a novice-philosopher he was more attracted by the teachings of Royce than those of James. Royce, the leader of the voluntaristic wing of the Post-Hegelian Idealists, was more akin to Fichte than to the other members of that school. His philosophy presents a synthesis of elements gathered from different schools: an a-priori metaphysics, a touch of British empiricism, coupled with Hegelian monism and pantheism, and blended with American individualism and moral dualism.

What influence did such a philosopher have on Santayana? It was from Royce that he culled his relative morality. Santayana confesses that his scholastic logic tempted him to reduce Royce to a solipsist. Yet Royce was no mean dialectitian himself. As an idealist of the general Hegelian type, he necessarily relied on his dialectical acumen; and through this facility, states Santayana, he opened vistas to his students, and disturbed Santayana's too easy dogmatism.

15 Schilpp, 8.
16 Ibid., 10.
18 Schilpp, 8.
19 George Santayana, Persons and Places: The Background of My Life, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1944, 244.
Although Santayana claims that he remembers more of James' mannerisms than his teachings, his empiricism testifies to the efficacy of James' influence. The empiricism of the master echoes in Santayana's theory of knowledge. Their correspondence manifests the sympathy of James for his pupil's empiricism, but not for his Platonism. To James' radical empiricism, together with Berkeley's nominalism, Santayana attributes the credit of leading him to the realm of essence. It was James again, not so much in his actual teaching, but rather in the spirit and background of that teaching, who gave to the young Santayana his idea of the utterly irrational nature of existence: "the unadulterated, unexplained, instant fact of experience."

But for the later teachings of his former master, Santayana lost all sympathy. In his more mature years James tried to make his philosophy a philosophy of reality.

He suggested a new physics or metaphysics in which the essences given in immediate experience should be deployed and hypostatized into the constituents of nature: but this pictorial cosmology had the disadvantage of abolishing the human imagination, with all the pathos and poetry of its animal status. James

20 Ibid., 241-242.
21 Ibid., 242.
22 Schlipp, 15.
thus renounced the gift for literary psychology, that romantic insight, in which alone he excelled; and indeed his followers are without it. I pride myself on remaining a disciple of his earlier unsophisticated self, when he was an agnostic about the universe, but in his diagnosis of the heart an impulsive poet: a master in the art of recording or divining the lyric quality of experience as it actually came to him or to me.23

Clearly Santayana rejects James' philosophy of reality on the grounds of disloyalty to the imagination.

Another member of Harvard's philosophy department during Santayana's undergraduate days was Professor Palmer. Santayana mentions little about Palmer: he merely says that he indicated to him the verbal cogency of dialectic and acquainted him with the English Moralists.24 Perhaps Santayana's affinity to these Moralists can be traced to the lectures of Palmer. In Santayana can be found that same preference for the imagination, and the corresponding diminution of the power of reason. But more probably the idea of a sentiment which is a determination of human nature came to Santayana from Hume, whose environment was charged with the teachings of the Moralists. Professor Palmer was gifted with a comprehensiveness of view and an in-

23 Ibid., 16-17.
24 Persons and Places, 247.
tellectual sympathy, which enabled him to fire the imagnations of his students with sweeping panoramas, and bend their minds "to a suave and sympathetic participation in the views of all philosophers in turn."25 Yet his "scholastic dogmatism" disturbed the young Santayana, and coerced him to ask himself what was true.26

The works of previous philosophers were undoubtedly a source of further inspiration to the young Santayana. He recalls that

The only solid foundation for all my play with this subject was supplied by the sturdy but undeveloped materialism of Hobbes, powerfully supported by the psychology of Spinoza and insecurely by the earlier medical psychology of James: to which in Germany my passing enthusiasm for Schopenhauer may be added.27

He discovered, he claims, the foundation for his philosophy in several respects, notably as regards morality, in a careful study of the "ipsissima verba" of Spinoza.28 But to Fichte and Schopenhauer must be ascribed the combination of those two elements which are to be examined in this thesis, his transcendentalism and his materialism. By showing Santayana that he must oscillate between a radical transcendentalism and a materialism, these earlier philosophers taught him, he main-

25 Schilpp, 9.
26 Ibid.
28 Ibid., 243.
tains, the causes of knowing and becoming of immediate experience.29

For three years, while sharing the Walker Fellowship with Charles A. Strong, Santayana pursued his studies abroad, where he lived under the aegis of Paulsen and Simmel in Berlin. Simmel's materialistic interpretation of conduct was in line with Santayana's own inclination; and his relativism, as Howgate remarks, "may have encouraged Santayana to think of ethics, history, religion, and even metaphysics as autonomous creations, constructions of the mind, rather than as revelations of absolute fact."30 Paulsen was a panoramist like Palmer, who expounded the "sweet-reasonableness" of the Greeks to the eager Santayana with a considerably more telling effect than did his American contemporary. The harmony and balance of Greek life and thought appealed to the poetic Santayana, and from that time he found in the ancients the natural support and point of attachment for his own philosophy.31 Long after his Fellowship days had passed, Santayana spent a sabbatical year, 1896-1897, in England, where he read Plato and Aristotle under Jackson. He became convinced that the Pre-Socratic Greeks, notably the Atomists, had reached orthodoxy in natural philos-

29 Schilpp, 17.  
30 Howgate, 33.  
31 Schilpp, 13.
ophy; while he believed the Post-Socratics to have attained this same orthodoxy in morals. This "orthodoxy" in two lines of investigation is what has enhanced Greek philosophy in Santayana's eyes.

The Greeks in their sanity discovered not only the natural world but the art of living well in it... The sentiments and maxims, whilst very properly diverse, had all of them a certain noble frankness in the presence of the infinite world, of which they begged no favors. Nature was essentially understood and honestly described; and... for that very reason, the free mind could disentangle its true good, and could express it in art, in manners, and even in the most refined or the most austere spiritual discipline.

While in England, Santayana contacted James' old friend, Dr. Hodgson. Regarding his former professor's friend, Santayana is uncommunicative, but not so Professor James. James quotes a favorite maxim of Hodgson's in his Principles: "Whatever you are totally ignorant of, assert to be the explanation of everything else." To what extent Santayana succumbed to Hodgson's influence is difficult to discern. The two men are significantly alike in regarding the immediate deliverance of consciousness as consisting of essences, and not of

32 Schilpp, 22.
It becomes clear to the reader of Santayana's philosophy that, however much he admired the Greeks and intended to anchor his speculations on Greek thought, his attitude towards philosophy is altogether different from that of his ancient models. Thales and the early Ionians were seeking in their physics a "world-stuff," a material principle for the world which they investigated. The problem of change in this world perplexed them, and contrary solutions to this difficulty were proffered by Heraclitus and Parmenides. The atomic theory of Democritus and Leucippus likewise aimed at being a solution to this problem in the real world. Is Santayana's philosophy a philosophy in the Greek sense of the term, an attempt to explain reality? Santayana eschews metaphysics, and contends that his own system is metaphysical only in a literary sense. He views metaphysics as an attempt to establish truths about nature and existence otherwise than by observation, measurement, and experiment. His system is a system of logical essences, and

36 Spirit, 274.
essence, truth, and spirit are indeed non-physical; but for that very reason they are not to be invoked at all in physics or cosmology, which deals with common sense facts—assumed to exist by themselves—and studies their factual relations without pretending to explain or understand them.38

Unlike the philosophy of the Greeks, Santayana's is not a philosophy of reality. A letter to James of December 18, 1887 shows that this was already his position at that early date.

If philosophy were the attempt to solve a given problem, I should see reason to be discouraged about its success; but it strikes me that it is rather an attempt to express a half-undiscovered reality, just as art is, and that two different renderings, if they are expressive, far from cancelling each other add to each other's value. The great bone of philosophy is the theological animus which hurries a man toward final and intolerant truths as towards his salvation. Such truths may be necessary to men but philosophy can hardly furnish them. It can only interpret nature, in parts with accuracy, in parts only with a vague symbolism. I confess I do not see why we should be so vehemently curious about the absolute truth, which is not to be made or altered by our discovery of it. But philosophy seems to me to be its own reward, and its justification lies in the delight and dignity of the art itself.39

It thus becomes more and more obvious to Santayana's reader that the author intended no system, but merely took

39 Barton, 402.
delight in speculation for itself. In fact, Santayana has definite views on systems, seeing in them only a natural tendency to adhere stubbornly to one's own opinion. His philosophy, he maintains, is not scientific. It is a lay religion, for "the goal of speculative thinking is no other than to live as much as may be in the eternal, and to absorb and be absorbed in the truth." It is in this final expression of his attitude toward philosophy that Santayana betrays not only his affinity to the Indian philosophers of Nirvana and Brahma, but also gives us complete justification for characterizing his philosophy as other-worldly.

Nevertheless, Santayana claims to be a scholastic philosopher at heart, a scholastic in his principles, not in his ways. Undoubtedly a scholastic philosopher would object to this claim of relationship, and insist that his only kinship with Santayana is a penchant for distinctions.

40 Persons and Places, 250.  
42 Spirit, 273.  
43 George Santayana, Reason in Common Sense, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1905, 28.  
44 Schilpp, 604.  
45 Ibid.
The task of summarizing the manifold sources of influence on Santayana's philosophy is rendered difficult because his philosophy seems to be a texture of his family history, the philosophers he studied under, his health, his ideas on the United States, Italy, Spain, wine, modern teaching methods, the architectural teaching methods of Europe, flowers, and diverse similar topics. The dominant themes, however, in his philosophy can be indicated: Platonism, materialism, and scepticism, for his thought is

...reminiscent equally of Greek idealism, materialism and scepticism, of Indian, neo-Platonic and medieval mysticism, of medieval scholastic distinctions and modern psychology.46

Santayana has tersely expressed his philosophical position in a single sentence:

We must oscillate between a radical transcendentalism, frankly reduced to a solipsism of the living moment, and a materialism posited as a presupposition of conventional sanity.¹

The logical procedure is first to attain a clear understanding of the significance which the terms "transcendentalism" and "materialism" have for Santayana. With this understanding it remains to be seen whether a philosophy based on these two elements is sound and consistent. This is the line of investigation to be taken in the following chapters.

The first thing to note about Santayana's radical transcendentalism is that it is not a pure transcendentalism, which denies the existence of objective reality; and that the solipsism to which it is reduced is a solipsism only in the sense that he does not know what this objective reality is, although he knows that it is. In The Realm of Essence Santayana affords us a somewhat clearer notion of this solipsism of the living moment.

Nothing is present to the spirit at any

¹ Schilpp, 17.
This passage seems to indicate merely that one knows what he knows, just the present atom of experience which is here and now before him, as Hume might say. In this present experience of looking out of the window, I know the tree which stands before me. The fact that I know it is sufficient; the how and why of knowing remain mysteries. This interpretation seems justifiable in the light of a section of The Realm of Matter, where Santayana treats of the two phases of transcendentalism: the sceptical one of retreat to the immediate datum of experience, and the assertive one, by which the objects which are posited by a transcendental faith are defined and marshalled in such an order as intelligent action demands. It is apparent that Santayana uses the term "transcendental" in two different senses: first, in the sense of "idealistic," since the immediate datum of experience, as subsequent observation will reveal, is an essence, an ideal or logical term; and second, in the sense in which Kant speaks of a transcendental use of knowledge; that is, knowledge in which the knowing subject goes beyond itself to the object which is the cause of its

2 Essence, 151.
idea. This act of transcendence is accomplished by the "spirit," and Santayana says that this is the only transcendental part of his system. In this thesis, however, "transcendental" is used in the first sense, meaning "idealistic".

It can readily be seen that "transcendental materialism" is primarily concerned with the critical problem, since it is intended by Santayana to bridge the gap between the knowing subject and the thing known. The spirit, the transcendental function of the "psyche," is the knowing subject, which is provided with the data of experience in terms of essences, of logical entities. Yet sanity tells Santayana that he eats things, that he touches things, things outside of himself; and since these things are tangible, visible, and edible, they are constituted of matter. Wherefore, "matter is properly a name for the actual substance of the natural world, whatever that substance may be." Now matter, in Santayana's eyes, is only a presupposition of conventional sanity, since he does not know these material things, but merely the essences which symbolize them. It is the part of the natural sciences, he frequently reiterates, to investigate these material facts; and Santayana himself is not a physicist. None the less he swears allegiance

5 Cf. Schilpp, 17-18.
6 Matter, 332.
7 Schilpp, 17.
to the atomic theory as the only possible physical explanation,\(^9\) and eulogizes Father Democritus as the possessor of "an indefensible faith in a single radical insight, which happened nevertheless to be true."\(^{10}\)

Santayana's own "faith" must be further examined. Notwithstanding his innate hostility to dogmatism, in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* he enunciates two fundamental dogmas: the belief in himself, and in the existing world which action postulates.\(^{11}\) These two dogmas are of a piece with his aforementioned pre-supposition, materialism, in that both himself and the existing world are reductively material. Now a rigid materialist has no right to speak of consciousness and other psychic states; consequently Santayana can not be classified as a strict materialist. For him, matter is not the only reality in the world, but it is the only substance, power and force in the world.\(^{12}\) This is an important fact to grasp, and it finds expression in any number of Santayana's works.\(^{13}\) He is determined that matter alone must be the ultimate principle. How this matter can generate an immaterial spirit,

\(^9\) *Matter*, 231.
\(^{12}\) Schilpp, 509.
a moral stress of varying scope and intensity, full of will and selectiveness, arising in animal bodies, and raising their private vicissitudes into a moral experience, 14

is a problem even for Santayana, who rests content to note it as a brute fact. 15 One wishes for a solution to this problem, for it is the basis of his apparently paradoxical stand as an idealistic materialist.

Mind owes its origin, growth, and development to matter, but the strange child repays his parent a hundredfold with the riches he pours in her lap. Nature gives birth to consciousness; consciousness gives value to nature. 16

In The Realm of Matter Santayana indicates how a materialist might be a true idealist, by preferring the study of essence to that of matter. 17 Yet Santayana's materialism has been devised to keep his poetic ecstasies in their proper place. Does not this materialism seem inadequate to the task, since it must fall back on the extraordinary to account for mind and spirit?

It is disconcerting to the reader of Santayana when he begins to understand that this materialism rests on a belief. 18

The dominance of matter in every existing being, even when that being is spiritual, is the great axiom of materialism,

14 Spirit, VIII.
15 Schilpp, 17.
16 Howgate, 110.
17 Matter, 382.
18 Truth, 453.
to which this book is only a corollary.\textsuperscript{19} This materialism, or naturalism as he sometimes calls it, is an assumption,\textsuperscript{20} not an academic opinion, but an everyday conviction\textsuperscript{21} in which he has always believed.\textsuperscript{22}

Mr. Howgate (who, it may be said in passing, though he recognizes many inadequacies in Santayana's explanations, shares none of his sympathy for Catholicism or Scholasticism) remarks that Santayana's dogmatism enables him "to march boldly and consistently through an undergrowth of metaphysics which might entrap the more circumspect philosopher."\textsuperscript{23} A closer analysis of Santayana's philosophy reveals the truth of this statement, but not quite as Mr. Howgate intended it. Philosophy, in the general acceptation of the term, is a science of causes. Since Santayana has rejected a theory of causality, he has developed a philosophy of description, personal and subjective.\textsuperscript{24} Confronted by the "brute fact"\textsuperscript{25} of materialism, he can penetrate no further.

The question naturally arises: is he justified in accept-

\textsuperscript{19} \textit{Matter,} 292.
\textsuperscript{20} \textit{Spirit,} 174.
\textsuperscript{21} \textit{Schilpp,} 12.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Howgate,} 239.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.,} 110.
\textsuperscript{24} Cf. \textit{Schilpp,} 605. This personal element is best seen in Santayana's dealing with his adversaries.
\textsuperscript{25} \textit{Schilpp,} 504-505.
ing this "brute fact," and is it as brutal as he makes it? Santayana has sufficient justification for this supposition if matter, as the only power and force in the universe, is capable of explaining the essential difference between living and nonliving beings, between animals and men. But what philosophical evidence does Santayana offer for such a position? He has claimed that his materialism is the conviction of his "experience and observation of the world at large." But his experience should indicate to him an essential elevation of man over the brute, manifested in the power to speak, to generalize, and to make progress. And yet commonly he uses the generic term "animal" to designate animals and men, implying that there is no fundamental difference. In fine, he believes that man surpasses inanimate creation only because external circumstances have been more favorable to him.

Accordingly the analogy of nature would suggest that the other living creatures in the world are animate too, and discourse privately no less assiduously and absurdly than I do. It would even suggest that all the substance of nature is ready to think, if circumstances allow by presenting something to think about, and creating the appropriate organ... a stone will think like me, in so far as it lives like me.

But this passage ought to be read side by side with his address,

26 Ibid., 12.
27 Matter, 233.
28 Scepticism and Animal Faith, 250.
The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy. A sharp contrast is presented.

By their mind, its scope, quality, and temper, we estimate men, for by the mind only do we exist as men, and are more than so many storage-batteries for material energy. Let us therefore be frankly human. Let us be content to live in the mind.²⁹

It seems that the idealist has forsaken his materialism.

Santayana is cognizant of the objection that matter of itself can not explain life. His response to this difficulty is, incidentally, illustrative of his passion for subtle distinctions. He points out that when a man says: "Matter can not explain the origin of life, of consciousness, or of morals," he means his own idea of matter. Since a man's idea of matter is, in Santayana's terminology, an essence, then Santayana heartily agrees with him, because no essence can be the origin of anything, either of another essence or of any fact. But real matter, says Santayana, is a hidden power, and its capacities are unknown to the mind of man. Accordingly, the materialist is incapable of offering any rational explanation of things, and must rely on description.³⁰ It is to be noted that after all is said and done, Santayana returns to his basic supposition, that matter is the source of all things.

²⁹ Muelder-Sears, 190.
³⁰ Essence, 140.
It may be that the root of this basic supposition lies in Santayana's observation of the fact that living beings need matter for their conservation. \(^31\) Could it be that in recognizing this need for matter by living beings in this world, Santayana has concluded that these beings must be constituted of matter, and only matter, even though his conclusion does not seem capable of explaining their life? Since matter is necessary, why not postulate a material principle? But, in addition, why not include an immaterial principle which can explain life? Summarily, this difficulty might be phrased: how can an immaterial issue from a material? Can an effect exceed its cause?

Dr. Rudolf Allers in his critique of Freudianism, The Successful Error, manifests a further consequence of any materialistic philosophy: the rejection of all causality save that of the efficient cause. \(^32\) Causation, as explained in The Realm of Truth, can be reduced to a mere succession of one thing from another. \(^33\) Certainly an effect does succeed its cause. Since Santayana's materialism can give him no explanation of causation from intrinsic principles, he can only describe this succession which he observes as causality. But even Santayana ad-

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\(^{31}\) Matter, 288; Cf. Scepticism, 109.


\(^{33}\) Truth, 504.
mits that in mere succession there is no necessity, not even in the "so-called laws of nature." 34

This generalization, embracing even the laws of nature, inclines Santayana's reader to suspect that this whole question of causality could be cleared up if some distinction were made between absolute necessity or consequence and physical necessity, in which latter, because of the nature of physical laws, some exception might occur. 35 But Santayana seems to prefer to center upon the exception and claim absolute spontaneity. Yet immediately following upon this assertion he retracts to some degree by stating that this particular event will recur "spontaneously" if the same external circumstances are given. Santayana faces a real problem in reconciling his assertion of spontaneity with his equally emphatic claim for uniformity in nature, especially when he realizes himself that life is practically impossible if everything is absolutely spontaneous. 36

Here it might be noted that Santayana ascribes a peculiar efficacy to external conditions, while he assiduously denies this same efficacy to a body submitted to these conditions. For example, the production of a rose from a certain seed is not, in Santayana's mind, due to the seed, but to the soil and

35 Matter, 299-300.
36 Ibid., 201-202.
climate, which, if he would so speak, "nourish" the seed.\(^{37}\) He favors an absolute potentiality for every seed, capable of varying its specific form because of the conditions. Undoubtedly with such absolute spontaneity it would not be necessary to buy pea seeds were one to wish pea vines. Besides, would it be possible to have turnips and violets growing next to each other? The external conditions would seem to favor one or the other, but not both.

Consistent with his limitation of causality to efficiency, Santayana rejects teleology or finality. And yet this statement ought not to be made categorically. In *The Realm of Matter* he speaks of a certain "mock explanation" in what is called teleology; namely, "when the ground of things is sought in their excellence, in their harmony with their surroundings, or in the adaptation of organs to their functions and of actions to their intentions."\(^{38}\) Still, he asserts, such correspondences actually exist in the world, and "teleology, if it be only a name for them, is a patent and prevalent fact in nature."\(^{39}\) But how is this fact to be explained? Once again attention is diverted to external conditions, which seem to be invested with an unusual causal potency. The explanation of

\(^{37}\) Ibid., 289-290.  
\(^{38}\) Ibid., 310.  
\(^{39}\) Ibid.
the intrinsic finality of the thing itself which is submitted to these conditions is evasive.

Instead, we must attribute the pursuit of this good, and its eventual realization, to her previous blind disposition, fortified by the fact that circumstances were favorable to that development. 

This explanation provokes two questions. What proof has Santayana for the efficacy of the circumstances? Is there more evidence for the action of these external factors than for the hidden force, the "blind disposition" of the thing? Moreover, is it philosophical to rest content with this "blind disposition"? To all appearances Santayana's materialism has left him without any ultimate explanations. The opinion stated above as to the personal and descriptive nature of Santayana's philosophy would seem to be verified here. He has observed the fact of teleology in nature and describes it, although he prefers another name for this fact. But description is not explanation, and one finds a "previous blind disposition" operating under favorable conditions not a whit more elucidating.

Two factors seem accountable for this teleological doctrine, and ultimately both of these factors can be resolved into one. The first is Santayana's materialism, the inevitable cause of his failure to offer an adequate explanation. The

40 Ibid., 323.
41 Supra, 21.
second is the understanding, so painful to Santayana, of the consequences to which a doctrine of final causality inevitably leads. Even to the materialistic Santayana the fact of teleology is observable in nature. But the actual tendency or "blind disposition" is something intangible. Can Santayana explain this intangible thing with his materialism? It seems that in this instance he would have to relinquish his materialism as the "pre-supposition of conventional sanity."\textsuperscript{42} The same difficulty is encountered in the theory of cognition. Santayana recognizes that only an immaterial faculty (for him the "spirit,"), is capable of the spiritual operation of knowing. Still, as in the case of teleology, he does not want to say that this immaterial or spiritual operation flows ultimately from an immaterial principle. For this reason he enunciates the principle that nothing can be learned of the nature of an agent from its action; or, to put it into the words in which he expresses it in \textit{Scepticism and Animal Faith}: "The only behavior that can give proof of thinking is thinking itself."\textsuperscript{43} Here one encounters the two elements of Santayana's philosophy. The thinking person is tangible, visible, and, in Santayana's eyes, material. Since it is the person who thinks, it is understandable why he says

\textsuperscript{42} Schilpp, 17.
\textsuperscript{43} \textit{Scepticism}, 243.
that matter is the only power, the only force in the world. But the actual thinking is not material; it is spiritual. In his explanation of cognition Santayana must fall back on the person, the material thing, and relegate to the imagination whatever explanation may be had of the epiphenomenal, immaterial element. This lies behind Santayana's distinction between teleology, a fact present in the world, and final causes, which, as the sources of this intangible tendency, this "blind disposition," he styles "mythical and created by a sort of literary illusion."

The consequence of this understanding of finality is that the "sumnum bonum" of Plato and the God of the Christian, as final causes, become figments of the imagination. This is the second factor involved in his doctrine of teleology, to which the first factor is reducible, because it appears that Santayana rejects finality, not so much because of his materialism as for fear of the consequences of the doctrine. Santayana himself bears witness to mankind's long-standing conviction that finality is linked with theology.

In either case, after making our bow to this divine will, out of deference to antiquity and human rhetoric, we should be reduced to studying as far as possible the crawling processes of nature. These will

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44 Schilpp, 509.
45 Matter, 323.
be the seat of such teleology as surely exists, and as a critical philosophy may record without falling into rhetorical ambiguities. 46

And is not materialism a philosophy utterly incompatible with theology? Santayana's chosen faith is not religious: "Santayana's faith is, as always, in naturalism, not as a logical sine qua non, but as the only possible interpretation of experience." 47

But if materialism rejects all causality save that of the efficient cause, can not theology still be preserved by efficient causality? The only reasonable conclusion Santayana's reader can draw is that "chance, matter, fate---some non-spiritual principle or other" 48 is accountable for the universe. Actually, it is difficult to visualize precisely what Santayana intends, when passages such as the following occur frequently:

It is sheer ignorance to stare at anything as if it were inexplicable and self-created, a mere intruder in the world. The universe itself no doubt is groundless and a perpetual miracle. 49

His treatment of the order manifest in the universe is similar. 50

First he speaks of a continuous flux, of the "blind course of

46 Ibid., 316-317.
47 Howgate, 110-111.
48 Scepticism, 285.
49 Matter, 224.
50 Ibid., 306.
cosmic events,"51 which, however inexplicable, seems to show some signs of order.52 In spite of his espousal of chance, of absolute spontaneity, he finds that "the seasons return, their fruits varying with the weather; the generations repeat themselves..."53 Moreover, though he attributes a teleological function to external conditions to the extent of practically denying it to the body subjected to these conditions, he discovers a marvelous precision and timeliness in the growth of an embryo,54 and the bloom of consciousness only in "certain predetermined classes and intensities of sensation."55

Contrary also, to his absolute chance is another fruit of his materialism, his mechanism, which is not one principle of explanation among others, but "is explanation itself."56 To divine a mechanism is to observe a recurrence, to fathom a trope.57 In Santayana’s terminology a trope is a name given to the essence of any event as distinguished from that event itself, such as today’s sunrise as distinguished from yesterday’s.58 A trope, then is an expression of that order in the world which is Santayana’s daily experience, although philo-

51 Truth, 451.
52 Matter, 316.
53 Ibid., 228.
54 Ibid., 353.
55 Ibid., 348.
56 Reason in Common Sense, 17.
57 Edman, 283.
58 Matter, 293, 294.
sophically he espouses absolute chance. Truly he says that the entire universe is a perpetual miracle. From this it is clear why Santayana's philosophy is not a pure materialism, since the deterministic nature of materialism is incompatible with his indeterminism.

Man is of a piece with the rest of creation, and Santayana claims that he discerns the same mechanism, the same material forces, even behind man's love and loftiest ambitions. But is not mechanism contrary to free will? Assuredly. Then how can Santayana account for his own experience? Did he not say:

When people feel a power of origination and decision within them, so that, unless externally hindered, they are free to do whatever they will, undoubtedly they are not deceived?

Now Santayana is faithful to his experience, and must have recourse to his fundamental materialistic supposition to explain this experience.

It is an obscure, complex, groping movement of the psyche, or of many psyches in contact: it is a perpetual readjustment of passionate habits of matter.

Santayana gives the example of a man with a parched throat, who desires water because he is thirsty. Since it is a

59 Ibid., 224.
60 Edman, 287.
61 Matter, 356.
62 Ibid.
63 Ibid., 313.
bodily need that craves satisfaction, Santayana concludes that the will is a habit of matter. As material, it seems that the will must desire material goods. But Santayana does not so conclude, for he admits that the will can desire immaterial goods: honor, beauty, love, etc. Just as in the process of cognition he denies an immaterial principle for the immaterial "spirit" which knows, so he consistently denies an immaterial will which desires immaterial goods. Could it be that because of his materialistic supposition, he is unwilling to designate man a composite being, constituted of both material and immaterial principles? The need of an immaterial principle is not, as is commonly supposed among materialists, an a priori religious belief, but an essential philosophical principle, necessary to explain the difference between stones, dogs and men.

In conclusion it can be said that Santayana's fundamental difficulty is to reconcile his poetry and his materialism. As a poet he can not renounce the significance of man's spiritual gifts, and as a materialist, he can not deny the physical origin of these gifts. His creed is expressed succinctly:

While the existence of things must be understood by referring them to their causes, which are mechanical, their functions can only be explained by what is interesting in their results, in other words, by their relation to human nature and to human happiness.64

64 Interpretation of Poetry and Religion, 91.
Indeed, it requires a unique theory of causality to demonstrate the consequence of the spiritual component of human nature and human happiness from a material principle. A reasonable explanation of mind is impossible for a materialistic philosophy. The Platonic element in Santayana's philosophy ought to have provided him with copious spiritual entities; but it had a disadvantage which did not accrue to materialism, that of leading to the Platonic "summum bonum". The connotations of that Idea were too much for Santayana, and accordingly he renounced Catholicism in favor of naturalism.65

65 Howgate, 46.
CHAPTER III
THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND EPISTEMOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS
OF TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM

The critical problem lies at the root of Santayana's transcendental materialism. His materialistic pre-supposition renders difficult a rational explanation of an immaterial mind. Hence, an even greater insight into Santayana's position can be gained by examining his idea of the nature of man, the knowing being, and illustrate his concept of the manner in which man knows.

Fundamental to Santayana's psychology is a material "psyche," the "self-maintaining and reproducing pattern or structure of an organism, conceived as a power."¹ The actual form of an organism, such as a plant, hides a power capable of maintaining or restoring that form. This potentiality, which is often concentrated in a seed, dwells in the matter of the organism, but in a manner cloaked in mystery, "so that for observation the form itself seems to be a power (when locked in that sort of substance or seed) and to work towards its own manifestation."² This psyche, in its moral unity, "is a poetic or mythological notion, but is needed to mark the hereditary vehement movement in organisms towards specific forms and

¹ Spirit, 15.
² Ibid.
This last description of the psyche by Santayana cannot be read without evoking a question mark. How can this "hereditary movement" towards specific forms be reconciled with the absolute potentiality Santayana attributes to every seed, which is capable of varying its specific form according to the conditions which foster it? The very teleology which, in the previous chapter, Santayana styled a "mock explanation" is no longer ludicrous. The "blind disposition" there depicted now enters in in the guise of the psyche.

Another point to be noted in connection with Santayana's description of the psyche quoted above is its "moral unity". Why does Santayana call this moral unity a "poetic notion"? Is there anything in Santayana's own experience to deny the reality of this moral unity, this acting as a unit? There seems to be only one satisfactory answer to this query: that Santayana realized the insufficiency of his materialism to explain

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3 Ibid., 15.
4 Matter, 289-290.
5 Supra, 26-27. The task of interpreting Santayana is no easy one. In The Realm of Spirit he speaks of this power as "often concentrated in a seed." (Spirit, 15.) In The Realm of Matter he flatly contradicts this assertion. The mysterious potentiality packed in the seed would, then, not be internal to it, or due to a specially wonderful essence therein embodied.
--- The Realm of Matter, 289-290.
the unity of action in human beings. Of itself matter does not act as a unit. To state that this matter has an innate dispositions for adhesion not only begs the question, but also indicates that something besides matter is required. In his treatment of the spirit, Santayana furnishes abundant evidence for the discrete nature of matter. Happiness is found when the spirit attains its transcendental throne, and establishes itself in equilibrium amidst diverse material demands. Moreover, what would Santayana say of experience, which, in its own admirable fashion, teaches every man that the material organs of his own body are in constant antagonism unless something is present to harmonize them? Did a man's stomach ever cease from craving for food because it realized that it was making the man sick?

Santayana is logical, then, in attributing only moral unity to the material psyche, and denying to it any real or metaphysical unity.

In saying this I am far from wishing to attribute a metaphysical fixity or unity to the psyche, or to claim for my own person an absolute singleness and consistency. Some passive drifting and some fundamental vagueness there must be in every animal mind; and the best-knit psyche still participates in the indefinite flux of matter, is self-forgetful in part, and is mortal.⁷

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⁶ Cf. Spirit, 262.
⁷ Schilpp, 25.
Santayana explains the psyche as the source of the spirit, and, therefore, the source of all spiritual functions, such as consciousness. This psyche "participates in the indefinite flux of matter," and probably does so in the same way as our material bodies participate, by undergoing, as the biologists say, a change every seven years. Now if this psyche is changing, certainly its spiritual function must also change. The problem of memory, then, as well as each man's consciousness that he is the same person who lived seven, ten, or twenty years ago, becomes insoluble. Hence it is understandable why Santayana denies to his person "an absolute singleness and consistency."

But is he not also denying the common conviction of all mankind, that a man remains the same even though his material body is undergoing constant change, a conviction, indeed, which forms the basis for the sanctions of law? Once again it seems that Santayana must forfeit his materialism for the sake of sanity, rather than posit materialism for sanity's sake.

Santayana acknowledges that he borrowed the term "psyche" from Aristotle; but his "psyche" is not a "form" in the Aristotelian sense. Aristotle's "psyche" is the form of the body, the intelligible element of a composite being. Santayana's "psyche," on the contrary, is "this self of mine," the "active and passionate" man which each one of us perceives himself to be. It is the self which is "a principle of steady life"; the self which "slumbers and breathes below, a mysterious natural
organism, full of dark yet definite potentialities." There is a world of difference between the two, since the Aristotelian form is the intelligible element of a composite, while very little is known about Santayana's psyche. Apparently all that Santayana can say about the inner constitution of this psyche is that it is material; yet not a substance or an atom, but a mode of substance, or, in other terms, a definite organization of matter. This materialistic explanation of man's psyche seems to result from Santayana's conclusion that since composite beings depend upon matter, a material principle must be their only principle.

Why is it that Santayana knows so little about the psyche? He answers in Scepticism and Animal Faith:

I must discard at once, as incompatible with the least criticism, the notion that nature or certain parts of nature are known to be animate because they behave in certain ways.

In other words Santayana would say that the observation of any operation informs the spectator that such an action is capable of being performed by the operator, and tells the spectator nothing about the nature of the operator. For example, the exponent of this position would logically be forced to say:

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8 Scepticism, 148-149.
9 Matter, 332.
10 Supra, 23.
11 Scepticism, 243.
"If the dog runs, he runs;" and not, "If the dog runs, he is a living being." But does not Santayana himself say that consciousness and cognition are functions of the spirit, and therefore immaterial? To be consistent with himself, then, he must not call the psyche material when he observes only spiritual operations. Rather than have recourse to his basic pre-supposition, materialism, he should at most profess the agnosticism he admits elsewhere.

I cannot hope to discover, therefore, what precisely this psyche is, this self of mine, the existence of which is so indubitable to my active and passionate nature.\(^\text{12}\)

If operations tell him nothing of the nature of the operator, then Santayana's psychology must be behavioristic. Actually he does consider behavioristic, or, as he sometimes says, biological psychology,\(^\text{13}\) as the only scientific psychology;\(^\text{14}\) for the scientific psychologist is bound to the observation of physical facts, of material events.\(^\text{15}\) If the object of this scientific knowledge is only the operations of the psyche, Santayana rightfully concludes that he does not know "this self of mine," because he knows only his activities. To this can be traced the reason for one of his fundamental dogmas, his own ex-

\(^{12}\) Ibid., 148-149.
\(^{13}\) Letter of June 15, 1947.
\(^{14}\) Scepticism, 251; Spirit, 282.
\(^{15}\) Scepticism, 257.
istence, "which is so indubitable to my active and passionate nature," and yet undemonstrable by his materialistic psychology.17

Since the scientific psychologist examines physical facts or material events, how does Santayana classify the other manifestations of his "active and passionate nature?" To literary psychology, the art of imagining how animals feel and think,18 belong "sensuous images, memories, lyric effusions, and dramatic myths."19 Santayana remarks that even the simplest perception of scientific psychology has present in it an element which only poetry can describe or sympathy conceive. In scientific psychology are involved words, actions and attitudes.20 But these words, actions and attitudes are not the understanding of the words, nor the sense of the attitudes and actions. Clearly, Santayana conceives the necessity of a mind to interpret these data of scientific psychology. But since he has declared that actions are not indicative of the nature of the thing acting, he must rely on the fallible imagination to conjure up an inter-

16 Ibid., 243.
17 One reasonably questions this use of the term "psychology". Santayana borrowed the Greek term "psyche"; but of what profit is it to speak of "scientific psychology" when this science can produce no information about the "psyche," but only catalogue its activities, which are powerless to reveal its nature?
18 Scepticism, 252.
19 Matter, 315.
20 Scepticism, 252.
pretation. An example might clarify this point. Were Santayana to see a man with flushed countenance violently waving his arms, and addressing his ferocity to another man, Santayana could only classify the activities as given in the description. He could not say that the symptoms indicated anger, or that the language betrayed the human nature of the agent. He might imagine that this is the case. But surely if the angry man were to address himself to Mr. Santayana, Santayana would forget his materialistic "pre-supposition of conventional sanity," and acknowledge that it is not a case of imagination, but an incontrovertible, reasonable fact.

It seems clear that Santayana's materialism is a factor in his preference for the imagination. It is the materialist voicing the opinion that "there is no such thing as mental substance, mental force, mental machinery, or mental causation." By this Santayana does not intend to deny the immateriality of mental facts, but only a spiritual source for mental reality.

Substance, in diversifying the field of nature, sometimes takes the form of animals in whom there are feelings, images, and thoughts. These mental facts are immaterial.

Could this be an instance of Santayana's centering his whole attention upon the material concomitant, and thus upon only half of the facts?

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21 Matter, 380.
22 Ibid., 233.
The important point to grasp is that this assertion of mental or spiritual reality without a source of the same nature is the basis for Santayana's dichotomy between transcendentalism and his materialism. Santayana himself equivalently admits this fact:

He (man) constantly exerts power, sometimes visibly by bodily acts; but often the physical sources of his power are hidden from his mind, or not attended to, and he attributes his action to his ideas. But his ideas have no place in the traceable sequence of material events; they brood over that flux like the invisible gods or the laws of nature.25

Since "ideas have no place in the traceable sequence of material events," they have no place in Santayana's scientific psychology. For this reason Santayana must have recourse to the imagination for a psychology of ideas. And since ideas merely "brood over that flux," they exert no influence on material events. Thus Santayana denies all final causality to ideas, and places an insurmountable barrier between mind and matter, between his transcendentalism and materialism.

Santayana's effort to surmount this barrier involves him in an unusual problem of causality. How does the material psyche generate the knowing, immaterial spirit? In Aristotelian terminology, says Santayana,24 the psyche is a physical potency,

a material entity existing in potency. Spirit is the act of this potency: it is the "existens in actu". In an effort to clarify this generation of the spirit, Santayana was asked if it were not true that Aristotle himself would demand a proportion between a potency and its act, since a "potency" signifies "capability for an act", and a definite potency is specified by its act. Santayana replied:

Your difficulties in understanding my philosophy do not surprise me, and I think they are insurmountable as long as you reason on Scholastic axioms such as nihil dat quod non habet.

In concrete terminology Santayana's reply would mean that it is possible to obtain a cow from an acorn. Santayana continued:

Since the 'quod' or 'quid' is defined as an essence—nothing existent is definable—the system of the world becomes entirely a system of essences.

Yet if nothing existent is definable, but only essences, which are logical or ideal terms, then Santayana's philosophy is entirely in the ideal order.

But he realizes that a purely ideal philosophy, a pure transcendentalism, is utterly divorced from external reality. In order to remain faithful to his experience of an existing reality external to himself, Santayana posits his materialism to

25 A letter to Santayana by the author.
27 Ibid.
explain this external reality. But since "nothing existent is definable," this materialism is actually incapable of affording any real explanation. Thus his materialism remains a "presupposition of conventional sanity," and the "facts" that it is designed to explain are "brute facts" which any man loyal to his experience can not deny. For example, Santayana is constrained "merely to register as a brute fact the emergence of consciousness in animal bodies."28 Does Santayana offer any explanation of this brute fact? In The Realm of Truth he states that consciousness is due to certain tropes or cycles fixed in matter, or in other words, to material organization.29 Undoubtedly it is true that living beings are highly organized, but can mere material organization explain their life? Most probably Santayana would consider this to be a biological, not a philosophical problem. But it does not seem fair to accept as a philosophical fact a highly-disputed biological opinion, however well it may accord with a materialistic philosophy. Materialism or material organization might, with an equal degree of intellectual honesty, be rejected as an explanation of life on the scientific data of such renowned biologists as Driesch, McDougall, Carrel, and other Vitalists. Moreover, a philosopher ought not to rest content with "material organization" as an explanation, because certainly he will be asked

28 Schilpp, 17-18.
29 Truth, 516-517.
whence comes this organization. Not only, then, does Santayana's transcendentalism, in which only essences are definable, prevent him from explaining anything existent; but also the very materialism which he has invoked to explain reality utterly fails to supply a convincing, ultimate explanation. This failure to explain adequately has led us to characterize Santayana's philosophy as description, since both elements of man, the material and the immaterial are represented, though without sufficient justification, in transcendental materialism.

The irreconcilable dichotomy between transcendentalism and materialism is echoed in the cleavage between Santayana's literary and scientific psychology. Subjective data, Santayana admits, may be signs of powers at work, but they are "the insubstantial fabric of a vision." Any attempt to investigate the nature of these signs, or a fortiori, these powers, belongs to literary psychology, to the imaginative faculty, and consequently are mental constructions. Although his scientific or behavioristic psychology, the fruit of his materialism, is limited to the classification of material events, it is incapable of rendering an explanation of the psyche, since an operation is not indicative of the nature of its principle. Moreover, Santayana refuses to examine the psyche because the analysis of substance, which he holds to be material, belongs to the physi-

30 Supra, 23.
31 Letter of April 16, 1947.
cist, not to the metaphysician. As a result of this dichotomy Santayana speaks of reason as "matter organized, and assuming a form at once distinctive, plastic, and opportune;" while the life of reason, as he conceives it, is a mere romance, and the life of nature a mere fable; such pictures have no metaphysical value, even if as sympathetic fictions they had some psychological truth.

From Santayana's theory of knowledge flows his transcendental materialism. As a Critical Realist, Santayana postulates the necessity of something or other to bridge the gap between the external world and the knowing subject's mind. Some philosophers style this medium a concept, a representation of the existing object. Santayana prefers the term "datum," which he defines as "a theme of attention, a term in passing thought, a visioned universal." To this datum Santayana attaches the name of "essence". He himself describes this as a universal

...which may be given immediately, whether to sense or to thought. Only universals have logical or aesthetic individuality, or can be given directly, clearly, and all at once. When Aristotle said that the senses gave the particular, he doubtless meant by the senses the complete fighting sensibility of animals, with the reactive instinct and sagacity which posits a ma-

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33 Schilpp, 24.
34 Scepticism, 101.
35 Ibid., 54-55.
terial object and places it in its external relations, here, now, and in such a quarter. But the senses as understood by modern idealism suggest rather a passive consciousness of some aesthetic datum, and this (which I call intuition) can never find anything but an ideal individual, which being individuated only by its intrinsic quality, not by any external or dynamic relations (since none are given, i.e., existence, origin, date, place, substance, function and duration) is also a universal. This object of pure sense or pure thought, with no belief superadded, an object inwardly complete and individual, but without external relations or physical status, is what I call an essence. 36

The role an essence plays in Santayana's theory of cognition is that of a stepping-stone between two leaps. The "leap of intuition, from the state of the living organism to the consciousness of some essence," 37 is followed by the "leap of faith and action, from the symbol actually given in sense or in thought to some ulterior existing object." 38

We have seen that according to Santayana the material psyche in its act of transcendence generates spirit. The essence which is the object of the spirit's intuition is a symbol, an ideal, non-existent term, a mere possibility which exists in the mind. 39 How does this essence become the object of the spirit's

37 Ibid., 183.
38 Ibid.
eye? To this question Santayana would answer that it was aroused by an external stimulus. He illustrates with a buttercup. A buttercup present to the eye calls up the essence or the name of "yellow." This essence is not a particular, but a universal term of perception, which is given only when attention is stretched to the thing, that is, when the buttercup evokes the term. Santayana emphatically states that this essence is not abstracted from the buttercup; and that in this intuition the mind focuses the essence "yellow," and not the buttercup. This latter point sharply differentiates Santayana's "realm of essence" from Aristotle's "realm of concepts," although Santayana says that the two have this in common: that both are realms of possible beings, not yet existing, but capable of existence. The intrinsically and inalienably external and universal nature of Santayana's essence is patently suggestive of the Platonic Idea. But Santayana believes Platonic Ideas to be prototypes only of things existing in our present cosmos. The realm of essence is, however, absolute, taking in all possible worlds; and as for Leibniz, so for Santayana, God must have chosen this particular world because it was the

40 Scepticism, 94.
41 Truth, 438.
43 Essence, 120.
Since an essence is, then, but a name, a logical term called forth by a stimulus—a doctrine which suggests Santayana's indebtedness to Locke and Berkeley—intuition must be of names, not of things. But if a definite essence is evoked by a definite stimulus, there must be some connection between this essence and this stimulus; otherwise, how would this particular essence become the object of intuition? The stimulus, therefore, must be examined to account for the occurrence in the mind of this particular essence.

This introduces the second leap involved in cognition, the leap of faith and action. This is the act of transcendence which has previously been described: in which the material psyche, in searching for the source of the stimulus, must transcend itself, thereby acquiring "a subjective spiritual accompaniment," so that the being perceives. The act of incipient transcendence, or the searching out for the stimulus in its source, involves expectation or anticipation of something out there. This anticipation or watchfulness is called "animal faith." Knowledge, says Santayana, consists in sensation,

44 Letter of April 16, 1947. Infra., 67 et sq. for Santayana's idea of God. Apparently Santayana has forgotten that "chance, matter, fate---some non-spiritual principle or other" is accountable for the universe. Supra, 36.
45 Essence, 35; Scepticism, 188.
animal faith, and the act of transcendence, or rather, what aspires to be knowledge. If the source of the stimulus is found, actual knowledge is had.

Knowledge thus understood involves a claim or belief, since "the given essence will be the essence of the object meant," or, I "instinctively affirm it to be the essence of an existence confronting me." But on what grounds is this affirmation made? In the example of the buttercup, Santayana said that the essence of yellow was perceived. But if this essence is only a name, what reason is there for attributing it to the buttercup, since yellow says yellow, and not buttercup? Is there another essence called buttercup? Another example might clarify the problem. The object of an intuition is the essence "rose", a universal term which might apply to any rose, red or white. Supposing this to be the case, the essence "rose" which is the object of the intuition would not give any particular knowledge of the red rose which is actually before the knower. If the essence "red" should appear, then it would seem that there is something peculiar to the actual rose which would make "red" appear and not "white". The problem becomes further complicated when several objects are encountered in experience, as when a person takes a comprehensive view of the whole garden, with a host of variegated flowers and other objects.

47 Scepticism, 107.
Clearly, a multitude of essences would stream into consciousness. What reason exists for assigning the "red" to a rose, "green" to leaves, etc? If essences are merely ideal or aesthetic terms, there is no reason why one person's identification of certain terms with certain objects of experience should agree with another's. This is certainly true in the case of the provincial name "prairie dog" for "coyote". If essences are names, then there should be two objects of knowledge, but in reality there is only one. And if essences are the objects of knowledge, then how would two men intuiting these different essences know that they actually do see the same object? Even Santayana seems at times to realize this, for he says elsewhere: "But it is events, in natural knowledge, that are the true objects; and the given essences are only the terms in which those events are described."48 The same idea is conveyed in somewhat different terms in Scepticism and Animal Faith.

Thus scientific psychology confirms the criticism of knowledge and the experience of life which proclaim that the immediate objects of intuition are mere appearances, and that nothing given exists as it is given.49

But so long as essences, mere names or descriptive terms of events or appearances, remain the data of intuition, Santayana can not logically assert that he knows an event or an appear-

48 Essence, 166.
49 Scepticism, 66.
Santayana's last phrase, "that nothing given exists as it is given," reminds us of the Lockian idea that secondary qualities do not exist in the object, but are the subject's reaction to that object. Santayana's statement is, however, not restricted to secondary qualities; it includes primary qualities such as extension and resistance as well. But if extension and other primary qualities do not exist in the object, one stands on the verge of absolute scepticism.

In *The Realm of Matter* Santayana speaks of ideas as "the forms which things wear in human experience," indicating that he intends "essence" to signify the actual appearance of an object, and not just a name for that appearance. These different appearances will lead, he says, to an underlying substance which can be the butt for action. But since operations are wholly unindicative of the nature of the operator, Santayana's appearances can tell him nothing of the nature of this substance. Consequently, here again he relies on his fundamental "pre-supposition" for an explanation of that substance, namely matter.

It seems that many of the difficulties which beset Santayana's doctrine of essence would be resolved if he were to

50 *Matter*, 223.
center knowledge in an external object, and not in an essence. Thus he could more resolutely state: "There is really a world, and there are real objects in each case to be described;" and would not have to terminate in the idealism expressed in a passage like this:

Our ideas are accordingly only subjective signs, while we think them objective qualities; and the whole warp and woof of our knowledge is rhetorical while we think it physically existent and constitutive of the world. 53

But in spite of Santayana's profession of a pure idealism, the majority of men have the conviction that they know things, things outside of themselves. True, they would admit with Santayana the subjective power of attention, and, by dint of ingrained habit, subjective interpretation of external data. 54 But to all appearances, unless the essences or data of intuition somehow belong to external objects, man is eternally divorced from any true knowledge of the external world. Even Santayana himself comes to this conclusion:

In regard to the original articles of the animal creed—that there is a world, that there is a future, that things sought can be found, and things seen can be eaten—no guarantee can possibly be offered. I am sure these dogmas are often false... 55

From this can be understood Santayana's purpose in entitling

52 Truth, 458.
53 Ibid.
54 Matter, 351.
55 Scepticism, 180.
the introductory volume to his mature philosophical works *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. Without doubt his scepticism has brought him to the point he thought:

Let me then push scepticism as far as I logically can, and endeavor to clear my mind of illusion, even at the price of intellectual suicide.

Despite intellectual hari-kari, Santayana's common sense argues for the existence of material things\(^57\) and his own existence.\(^58\) However, for Santayana, this existence is the fruit of animal faith, a conviction literally shocked into him. Of its very nature existence is mad. It is a blind flux, thoughtlessly running on, which "neither knows nor cares that it is making."\(^59\)

What is the origin of this concept? It has already been seen that the realm of essence is absolute, that essences are non-existent, and that God selected this particular world because it was the best.\(^60\) Since everything could have been other than it actually is, or, in Santayana's terminology, since an essence is only accidentally the essence of an existing thing, Santayana calls the world "contingent".\(^61\) For him "contingent" means "accidental" or "by chance," so that he

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56 Ibid., 10.
57 Ibid., 145.
58 Ibid., 141.
59 Matter, 347-348; Scepticism, 161-162.
60 Supra, 48.
seems to be forgetful of his statement that God selected the
world. If the world is "contingent," then Santayana is perfect-
ly logical in concluding that existence is irrational.62 This
is a necessary consequence of his reduction of causation to a
mere succession of one thing after another, because in mere su-
cession there is no necessity.63 Existence is also irrational
for Santayana in the sense that "nothing existent is defin-
able,"64 so that the only explanation Santayana has for exist-
ence is his "pre-supposition," materialism. It still remains
for Santayana to reconcile the irrational flux of existence, an
expression of his "absolute spontaneity" or indeterminism, with
his mechanism. But Santayana will never answer any questions
relative to existence: first, because it is irrational and due
to chance; and secondly, because he never distinguishes exist-
ence from existents, and these belong to the physicist's in-
vestigation, not the metaphysician's.65

It is Santayana's theory of knowledge which best eluci-
dates the dichotomy of his philosophy. Essences, as names, are
mere words which are the data known by the mind. If this is
true, then Santayana can never arrive at that understanding of
the words, which, he says, is totally different from the words

63 Supra, 24.
64 Supra, 43.
themselves. To interpret these ideal data, he must indulge in literary psychology, in imaginative fancy. Since these essences are not, and never will be, "the essences of things," Santayana never can know existing things. But common sense postulates something as the butt for action, so that Santayana falls back for an explanation of this utterly unknowable thing on a "pre-supposition of conventional sanity," materialism.

66 Scepticism, 252.
67 Essence, 135-136.
CHAPTER IV

THE ETHICAL AND THEOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSCENDENTAL MATERIALISM

The study of the dichotomy in Santayana's ethics and theology will be of a different nature from that made of his psychology and epistemology in the last chapter. "Psyche" and "existence" were found to be philosophical expressions of his materialism. "Essence," as an ideal or logical object of knowledge, was discovered to be the fruit of a pure transcendentalism. "Spirit," however, straddles the fence. It is a term of Santayana's philosophical materialism as the fruition of a material psyche; while at the same time it is ideal, in that it is the immaterial power of perception. Its ideal character is further emphasized by the fact that its investigation belongs to literary psychology, to the fancies of the imagination. Thus in the previous chapter Santayana's dichotomy was actually found in the philosophical terms of his own choosing, and in his development of a dualism in a philosophy, as it were, of these very terms. In his ethics and theology, on the other hand, Santayana's philosophical expression is materialistic. Matter is the root of morality and theology. A transcendental or idealistic element is to be found not in the terms, but in the goal of morality and theology, in the very ideal life of living in the mind.¹

¹ Muelder-Sears, 190.
Santayana considers himself a moral philosopher, who bears the message that "morality and religion are expressions of human nature."2 This "human nature," however, is simply matter. At the root of morality lies the material psyche as the ultimate power and source of life.3 This psyche, according to Santayana, is so constituted that it aspires after good, and thereby "introduces the element of preference, the distinction between good and evil, success and failure."4 Yet Santayana is careful to point out in The Realm of Matter that the movement of nature can not be attributed to the antecedent influence of the future good which she might realize. There is no real teleology based on a realization of ends.

Instead, we must attribute the pursuit of this good, and its eventual realization, to her previous blind disposition, fortified by the fact that circumstances were favorable to that development.5 Thus Santayana makes it quite clear that "the root of morality is animal bias";6 and that when he speaks of "good", he intends psychological good, since he admits of no objective or ontological good.7 As a result Santayana's morality is strictly relative; good and evil are relative to the nature of animals, and

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2 Schilpp, 23.
3 Spirit, 16; Persons and Places, 244.
5 Matter, 323.
6 Truth, 483.
7 Account of interviews in letter of April 16, 1947.
irreversible in that relation. For this doctrine Santayana says he is indebted to Spinoza, and he claims that this is the cause of his enthusiasm for the Jewish philosopher.

The logical outcome of this theory of morality can be seen in Santayana's concept of "value". For him "value" is a relative, and, therefore, a subjective thing: "a dignity which anything may acquire in view of the benefit or satisfaction which it brings to some living being." Mr. Howgate believes that for Santayana satisfaction is the very touch-stone of value.

We are now in a position to inquire what is the ultimate desideratum of the good life? Santayana's answer is brief—happiness. 'Happiness is the only sanction of life; where happiness fails, existence remains a mad and lamentable experiment.' There is nothing shameful to him in acknowledging pleasure as a criterion of moral worth. Santayana's philosophy is a frank hedonism. 'The more pleasure a universe can yield, other things being equal, the more beneficent and generous is its general nature; the more pains its constitution involves, the darker and more malign is its total temper... To deny that pleasure is a good and pain an evil is a grotesque affectation.' It will be noticed, however, that the pursuit of pleasure is not to be a mere selfish enterprise. The ideal is lost sight of

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8 Schilpp, 10.
9 Persons and Places, 244.
10 George Santayana, Platonism and The Spiritual Life, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1927, 3.
11 Reason in Common Sense, 238.
12 Ibid., 54-55.
'when a man cultivates his garden-plot of private pleasures, leaving it to chance and barbarian fury to govern the state and quicken the world's passions.' The happiness of the greatest number must be striven for...

A contradiction inherent in Santayana's philosophy becomes evident as one peruses this passage. Loyal to experience, Santayana admits the altruistic tendency in man's nature. Yet, can this altruism be accounted for by a material psyche? The commonly experienced injunction of animal bias is to flee from the revolting sight and odor of leprosy. If animal bias is the criterion of value, why would a doctor and nurse consider their actions good and remain heroically at their posts?

A material psyche as the root of morality raises another difficulty. It would seem from the very nature of a material potency, that if this physical potency is the ultimate criterion of right and wrong, of good and evil, then physical, material objects must be the ultimate right and wrong, good and evil. It remains, therefore, to be explained how men can desire immaterial goods, such as honor and fame, and this frequently in opposition to their desires for material goods, such as money or health.

14 Howgate, 116-117.
Santayana has strenuously rejected objective standards of right and wrong. The individual's psyche, in its animal bias, furnishes these standards. The psyche, then, determines what actions are right and wrong. If a man's psyche determines that it is good to kill the man's enemy, then the killing is a good act. But is this in harmony with the general opinion of men? Men judge that the sanctions of law are just, and are to be applied whether the criminal believes he did well or not. For Santayana, the same psyche which is the principle of morality is the principle of reason. Consequently, in this case of killing, the psyche as the principle of reason would contradict the psyche as the principle of morality. Should Santayana argue that punishment for murder has for its purpose the redress of a wrong perpetrated on society, then men must revise their ideas on the just punishment of malefactors. Subjectively, or according to Santayana's norms, no real crime has been committed, so that society can not justly demand retribution. In addition, can a subjective criterion of right and wrong afford a reasonable explanation of the sense of guilt and shame that the majority of men experience when they, in the usual sense of the term, "do wrong"? Since Santayana agrees with man's common experience of criminal actions, he must find another explanation for the criminal nature of these actions. He states: "The physical terror of murder has made murder criminal..." But does reason con-

15 *Spirit*, 234.
16 *Matter*, 320.
firm this explanation? Is the hardened, sadistic murderer free from the guilt of his crime because his crime does not fill him with physical terror, but gives him, rather, a thrilling sensation of pleasure? Is he innocent of any transgression of law? If so, penitentiaries and electric chairs are unjust.

Santayana would probably object to this reduction of his individualized ethics to moral license and anarchy. Lest such chaos should result from his theory, Santayana has imposed certain checks and balances. First, he recognizes in human nature a permanent core which tends to maintain uniformity in moral values. Secondly, the "blind disposition" of the psyche must be directed towards some end, since Santayana says that a person's entire life must be considered, the sum-total of his wants and aspirations, in the construction of an ideal. In addition, "a harmony and co-operation of impulses should be conceived, leading to the maximum satisfaction possible in the whole community of spirits affected by our action." In Egotism and German Philosophy is expressed that harmony which is the aim of Santayana's philosophy of a good life.

There is a steady human nature within us, which our moods and passions may wrong but cannot annul...There is no categorical imperative but only the operation of instincts and interests more or less subject to discipline and

17 Cf. Howgate, 115.
18 Reason in Common Sense, 256.
mutual adjustment. Our whole life is a compromise, an incipient loose harmony between the passions of the soul and the forces of nature, forces which likewise generate and protect the souls of other creatures, endowing them with powers of expression and self-assertion comparable with our own, and with aims no less sweet and worthy in their own eyes. 19

Although this is an admirable expression of Greek moral ideals, Santayana accomplishes this harmony at the cost of a compromise of his own philosophical principles. He speaks of the "permanent core of human nature" and "a steady human nature within us." In his system, where "chance" has superseded causality, is there room for a steady human nature, especially since the material psyche "still participates in the indefinite flux of matter?" 20 He states that this "steady human nature" may be wronged by our moods and passions. Certainly our moods and passions are spiritual products, and as such in Santayana's philosophy, stem from the material psyche. But if the psyche or the self furnishes the norms for morality, it seems impossible to speak of a mood or a passion wronging our steady human nature. Besides, the operations of instincts and interests, as experience bears witness, does not always result in a mutual adjustment and harmony. The lioness' instinct of self-preservation is sacrificed to her maternal instinct when she must defend

19 George Santayana, Egotism in German Philosophy, Chas. Scribner's Sons, New York, 1915, 167-168.
20 Schilpp, 26.
her cubs. This sacrifice results in the very opposite of harmony, her own destruction. Another one of the checks which Santayana has elaborated to prevent his individualized ethics from running headlong into moral chaos is the "ideal" towards which the "blind disposition" of the psyche tends, the epitome of a person’s wants and aspirations. In view of Santayana's rejection of finality, is it possible for this "ideal" to have any influence on the psyche, for the movement of nature can not be attributed "to the antecedent influence of the future good which she might realize?"21

Moral truth, as Santayana conceives it, is also relative. It signifies, he asserts, "only complete, enlightened, ultimate sincerity."22 Having abolished an objective standard of morality, Santayana is consistent when he rejects an objective criterion for the truth of morality. "But there would seem to be no conceivable object or reality in reference to which any type of morality could be called true."23

A materialistic ethic like Santayana's, with satisfaction as the touch-stone of value, caters to the sensitive, the material part of man's nature. However, Santayana himself realizes that man's conscience has invariably rebelled against the growing sensitive satisfaction of materialism, and reverted in some

21 Matter, 323.
22 Truth, 484.
23 Ibid., 474.
form or other to a cultus of the unseen. What kinship has the soul with the eternal and the ideal, whereby it is saddened by the thought of death, and clings to the hope of some power that may make it permanent amid the surrounding flux? Santayana bluntly affirms: "I believe there is nothing immortal." Yet once again Santayana is found faithful to experience. Poet that he is, he continually senses the immortal stirrings of his own spirit. To meet this need of the soul, he supplies the notion of ideal immortality. In it he reaches the very pinnacle of his idealism, a point far removed from his earth-bound materialism.

Since the ideal has this perpetual pertinence to moral struggles, he who lives in the ideal and leaves it expressed in society or in art enjoys a double immortality. The eternal has absorbed him while he lived, and when he is dead his influence brings others to the same absorption, making them, through that ideal identity with the best in him, reincarnations and perennial seats of all in him which he could rationally hope to rescue from destruction... By becoming the spectator and confessor of his own death and of universal mutation, he will have identified himself with what is spiritual in all spirits and masterful in all apprehension; and so conceiving himself, he may truly feel and know that he is eternal.

But this ideal immortality, by which a man vainly tries to deceive himself that he is no longer of this world, is imagina-

24 Scepticism, 271.
tive. That immortality for which man so ardently craves cannot be so elusive and unsubstantial. Could the whole human race be deceived about the fulfillment of this innate desire? If something so elusive as ideal immortality were the goal of its longing, mankind would have long ago stifled this desire.

Further proof, if there be need of it, of the other-worldly character of Santayana's philosophy can be discovered in an investigation of what he has said about God and theology. It is well to indicate at the very outset that Santayana disclaims the name atheist, and resents Fr. Martindale's appellation, "atheistic esthete". But can Santayana's materialism account for a God?

"That God is a spirit, though the text be orthodox, has never been the popular belief, nor have theologians taken it seriously." One might question this sweeping denial. It is apparent that Santayana is giving expression to his own stand on spiritual substances. Since he considers spirit as a function, the "act" of matter, he recognizes that to be logical he must reduce God to matter. But would not such a reduction degrade God? Even Santayana thinks so. Then he will reduce God to a name. A name for what? Santayana cushions the blow

27 Spirit, 283.
28 Ibid., 288-289.
out of his regard for the sensibilities and ratiocinations of the majority of his fellow-men, and states, in his most elegant style, that God is another name for matter.

God then becomes a poetic symbol for the maternal tenderness and the paternal strictness of this wonderful world; the ways of God become the subject-matter of physics.29

Since matter is the only power in the universe, if men insist that God, as Creator, is a Power, He can only be another name for matter. Men attribute the cosmos to God in the same manner that they attribute their actions to their feelings; but in reality it is their material psyches which are at work. The dispute, therefore, between theists and atheists is merely verbal.30

What is the reaction of the ordinary Christian who reads the "General Review" of Realms of Being? In a glorious summation Santayana states that his treatment of the realms of being may be regarded as a reduction of Christian theology and spiritual discipline to their secret interior source. In the cosmos man is confronted by an irrationally existing actuality, matter, which the devout soul, says Santayana, can poetically call God the Father, since from matter all things have their origin. And God the Son...?

Yet all things, according to the Nicene

29 Matter, 396-397.
30 Spirit, 284.
Creed, were perforce created through the Son; and this dogma which might seem unintelligible, becomes clear if we consider that power could not possibly produce anything unless it borrowed some form from the realm of essence and imposed that form on itself and on its works. 31

Thus God the Son is another name for the realm of essence. When matter and form fuse and become actual, there arises on occasion a love and pursuit of the Good. This third dimension of reality, which Santayana calls "spirit," is, he claims, poetically denominated the Holy Ghost. 32

Here again, in theology, Santayana's reader meets the basic "pre-supposition" of Santayana's philosophy, his materialism. Embodied in his espousal of chance in preference to a theory of finality is a refusal to explain God on any but a hypothetical or pre-suppositional basis.

Yet Santayana himself has rebelled against his own naturalism. He is a nominal, but not a practicing, Catholic, agreeing, as he says, with his father and mother in viewing religion as formally a work of the imagination, a great fairy-tale of the conscience. 33 What has been Santayana's reaction to this "fairy-tale?"

For my own part, I was quite sure that

31 Spirit, in Realms of Being, 846.
32 Ibid., 848.
33 Schilpp, 7.
life was not worth living; for if religion was false everything was worthless, and almost everything, if religion was true... I saw the same alternative between Catholicism and complete disillusion: but I was never afraid of disillusion, and I have chosen it.34

Can it be that Santayana is reaping the fruit of his materialism? None the less he seeks a refuge from this disillusion in the dream-world of the imagination. Religion takes on the meaning of having another world to live in.35 Again, materialism is lost in the safe harbor of idealism. Santayana was not, as Mr. Howgate points out,36 the first to try to find a substitute for religion in the imagination. Matthew Arnold, Mill, Comte and others attempted the same thing before him. These men felt that religion and poetry supplied the same want, and that the pure religion of poetry was better calculated to ennoble the conduct than any belief respecting the unseen powers. Comte and Mill styled such a religion a "religion of humanity," and were firm believers in its efficacy to provide both ample spiritual satisfaction in this life, and an ideal life of immortality in those who were to follow them.

Because of Santayana's reduction of God and religion to the realms of myth and fancy, Fr. Martindale has branded him an

34 Ibid., 7-8.
36 Howgate, 134.
"atheistic esthete". Santayana’s atheism stems from his materialism, for "to ask for an efficient cause, to trace back a force or investigate origins, is to have already turned one’s face in the direction of matter and mechanical laws." 37 But this matter is utterly barren for philosophical speculation, because, as Santayana admits, the universe is an unfinished experiment.

It has no ultimate or total nature, because it has no end. It embodies no formula or statable law... What a day may bring forth is uncertain, uncertain even for God. 38

Faced with this stark irrationality, it is no wonder that Santayana's philosophy is pictorial. He can be found on the brink of despair, on the verge of that intellectual suicide which he predicted for himself. But when he find himself thus confronting disaster, he completely rejects his materialism to take refuge in his idealism.

By their mind, its scope, quality, and temper, we estimate men, for by the mind only do we exist as men, and are more than so many storage-batteries for material energy. Let us therefore be frankly human. Let us be content to live in the mind. 39

Thus the two elements of Santayana's dichotomy, his idealism and materialism, are not integrated to form one philosophy.

37 Muelder-Sears, "How Thought is Practical," 458-460, 459.
38 Genteel Tradition, 188.
39 Ibid., 190.
His idealism is a harbor from the irrationality of his materialism, while his materialism is posited for sanity's sake to counteract his idealism. Santayana's own oscillation between these two elements proves them to be irreconcilable.
CHAPTER V

THE POETIC NATURE OF SANTAYANA'S PHILOSOPHY

This final chapter has as its aim to give an over-all picture of Santayana's philosophy. In calling attention to the poetic nature of this philosophy in the very title of the chapter, it has not been the intention to convey the idea that Santayana chooses between the opposing elements of his dichotomy. In this respect Santayana is loyal to an ideal he has depicted in one of his poems: "And he who chooseth not hath chosen best."¹ But actually Santayana does make a choice, not, however, in the speculative, but in the practical order. For Santayana there is no question of a choice between a materialistic and an idealistic philosophy. He considers materialism to be the only philosophical answer, for "the whole transcendental philosophy, if made ultimate, is false, and nothing but a private perspective."² But in the problem of living every-day life, as has been seen in the previous chapter, the materialistic "pre-supposition of conventional sanity"³ is lost in the glittering splendor of life in the mind, in the realm of essence. Undoubtedly this choice in

² Egotism in German Philosophy, 167.
³ Schilpp, 17.
practical life, if this life in the mind may be called practical, underlies one critic's centering upon "essence" as the keystone of Santayana's philosophy. The importance of this choice of Santayana's can not be over-emphasized. For to realize that Santayana is a poet living constantly in the presence of essences, ideal or aesthetic terms, facilitates the understanding of the otherworldly element of his philosophy. Moreover, though the poet is absorbed in the contemplation of forms, which, as universals, are immutable and eternal, he realizes that, as a man subject himself to the winds of change, who encounters constantly changing and ephemeral objects, he must exist simultaneously in a fluid, material world... Even these perpetually-moving material objects somehow exemplify eternal essences or characters. Here, once again, Santayana's materialism and idealism come together and mix, but never gel.

At the root of Santayana's philosophy, in which these two elements so strangely entwine, is his poetry. As a philosopher Santayana enunciates his concept of wisdom, a concept charged with his poetic genius, in the expression of which can be found an apt summation of this thesis. It is wisdom's part "to dream with one eye open; to be detached from the world without being

5 Letter of April 15, 1947.
hostile to it; to welcome fugitive beauties and pity fugitive sufferings, without forgetting for a moment how fugitive they are." The materials of this dream are essences. But since Santayana can not completely divorce himself from common sense, he keeps "one eye open" on the realm of existence, on the realm of matter.

It is disconcerting to discover what little certitude Santayana wishes to attach to his theories. First he asserts that he has

absolute assurance of nothing save of
the character of some given essence;
the rest is arbitrary belief or interpretation added by my animal impulse.
The obvious leaves me helpless.

But the philosophical inquirer is even more non-plussed when he considers the "given essence."

'And all that you yourself have written, here and elsewhere, about essence, is it not true?' No, I reply, it is not true, nor meant to be true. It is a grammatical or possibly a poetical construction having, like mathematics or theology, a certain internal vitality and interest; but in the direction of truthfinding, such constructions are merely instrumental like any language or any telescope.

It is not surprising, under these circumstances, to find Santayana only too willing to teach detachment: a poetic philosophy

6 Reason in Common Sense, 252.
7 Scepticism and Animal Faith, 110.
8 Truth, 418.
of escapism from a world which surpasses his comprehension. He will fulfill the role of spectator, feeling "that the sphere of what happens to exist is too alien and accidental to absorb all the play of a free mind..." He appropriately describes himself in an early sonnet:

It is my crown to mock the runner's heat With gentle wonder and with laughter sweet.10

During Santayana's years at Harvard his contemporaries had noted this same tendency, so that Professor James, in a letter recommending Santayana for the chair of philosophy then vacant at Harvard, could say of him that he was not only a very honest and unworldly character, but also "a spectator rather than an actor by temperament".11

Naturally this aloofness of spirit left its stamp on Santayana's philosophy. Essence, matter, truth, and spirit are logical categories, intended to describe a natural dynamic process, and are actual only in so far as a mind evolves them.12 Hence the pictorial, rather than the analytic, character of Santayana's philosophy. Santayana's goal for speculation, to absorb and be absorbed into the truth,13 is redolent of the Indian philosophies. Every moment one expects the terms "Brahman" or

10 Ibid., 109.
11 Barton, II, 270.
12 Spirit, 277.
13 Reason in Common Sense, 28.
"Nirvana" to express his concept of the highest good of the spirit, pure intuition. But the detachment of spirit which Santayana teaches lacks the passivity of Indian detachment; for Santayana's idea is to enjoy possessions while still being detached from them: to transcend material possessions rather than despise them.

Santayana's philosophy may be a "veracious and fearless self-expression" because its author has utilized his own experience to portray the typical man. Being a poet, perhaps Santayana believed that he would strike the deeper chords of human nature, so that the introspective man might find his own soul sketched in Santayana's pages, and experience the joy of kindred feeling. Of necessity, then, this pictorial philosophy seeks no ultimate causes, and consequently is unscientific. However much Santayana abhors dogmatizing, he unblushingly enunciates his own dogmas. With materialism as the "pre-supposition of conventional sanity," Santayana's explanation must repeatedly register nought but "brute facts". Consequently, his philosophy becomes more an interpretation than an explanation of these facts. Can this be the reason for Santayana's preference for the name "esthete"? Indeed, he is a

14 Spirit, 91.
15 Ibid., 200.
16 Durant, 300.
17 Schilpp, 17.
18 O'Connor, O.S.M., interviews.
mystical poet, patiently seeking peace in a turbulent world. The woods and the sierras teach him a poetic, not a philosophic, lesson.

It is no transcendental logic that they teach; and they give no sign of any deliberate morality seated in the world. It is rather the vanity and superficiality of all logic, the needlessness of argument, the relativity of morals, the strength of time, the fertility of matter, the variety, the unspeakable variety, of possible life. Everything is measurable and conditioned, indefinitely repeated, yet, in repetition, twisted somewhat from its old form. Everywhere is beauty, and nowhere permanence, everywhere is an incipient harmony, nowhere an intention, nor a responsibility, nor a plan. 19

Without doubt the world of "transcendental materialism" is a world of chaotic beauty. It is a blessing for him that Santayana can find refuge from his chaotic world of matter in the imaginative life of reason, for he has always considered knowledge to be "a part of the imagination in its terms and in its seat." 20 With the terms of knowledge no longer grounded in the real world, but in the imagination, all becomes for him "a tale told, if not by an idiot, at least by a dreamer." 21 From the peaceful seclusion of this transcendental dream, Santayana looks back to the world of matter to chide its ignorance:

O world, thou choosest not the better part!
It is not wisdom to be only wise,

19 Genteel Tradition, 190.
20 Schippp, 19-20.
21 Ibid.
And on the inward vision close the eyes,  
But it is wisdom to believe the heart.  
Columbus found a world, and had no chart,  
Save one that faith deciphered in the skies;  
To trust the soul's invincible surmise  
Was all his science and his only art.  
Our knowledge is a torch of smoky pine  
That lights the pathway but one step ahead  
Across a void of mystery and dread.  
Bid, then, the tender light of faith to shine  
By which alone the mortal heart is led  
Unto the thinking of the thought divine. 22

In this final rejection of materialism for his idealism, Santayana confirms us in the opinion that these two elements can not compose a sound, consistent philosophy. Of itself his materialism is incapable of explaining the existing world, and thus matter remains for him "a pre-supposition of conventional sanity." 23 As an esthete Santayana transcends his materialism to live the imaginative life of the realm of essence.

22 Edman, 22.  
23 Schilpp, 17.
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1 This is a select bibliography of the principal works used in the compilation of this thesis. More extensive bibliographies can be found in Paul A. Schilpp's, *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, which gives a complete bibliography, with an index, of the writings of Santayana to October, 1940. It was compiled by Shohig Terzian. Sister M. Cyril Edwin Kinney's *A Critique of the Philosophy of George Santayana in the Light of Thomistic Principles* gives an extensive collection of books, periodicals, dictionaries and encyclopedias. Writings about Santayana, exclusive of book reviews, notes and letters, can be found in G.W. Howgate's *George Santayana.*
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APPENDIX I

REPLY TO FATHER MUNSON'S QUESTIONS\(^1\)

1. Positions, foundations, or principles may be prejudices—ruling over thought spontaneously and undiscovered—or they may be ultimate discoveries of inevitable pre-suppositions, on which an explicit system may be constructed.

Assuming that you mean the latter, I should say that the logical basis of my mature philosophy was the principle of identity (qualitative logical possibility or definiteness) in terms which I call essences. (An essence is only by accident the essence of a thing, when there happens to be something that exemplifies that character. The essence or character itself is a mere possibility, a defining term, ideal and non-existent. The realm of essence is not limited to the Logos or morphology of the existing cosmos, as in the Platonists, but extends over all the "possible worlds" from which Leibniz says that God must have chosen this one because it was the best.)

The realm of essence is absolutely infinite and no

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\(^1\) This "Reply" was written to the author in Mr. Santayana's own hand. It was received in a letter from Rev. Terence O'Connor, O.S.M., dated April 16, 1947. This would indicate some time in late March or early April as the probable date of composition of the "Reply".
possible essence can be expunged from it. To expunge it would require us first to identify it. But to identify it would be to assign to it the only reality it claims, i.e., its inevitable place among possibles, like the place of any number among the series of numbers.

When this inevitable infinity of the possible is understood and the inevitableness of the ideal relations between essences, involved in the eternal identity of each of them, something very important becomes evident about any existing-world. Such a world is inevitably contingent, and need not have existed. In other words, everything might just as easily have been different from what it is. The so-called "laws of nature" do not prevail (if and when they do) by any necessity: they are merely descriptions of observed facts. As my old friend Emile Boutroux put it, they are all contingent. Regularity in nature is neither necessary nor impossible. How far it extends and what character it has are questions for science to investigate, not for metaphysics to decide.

2. So many points are touched here that I cannot reply without separating them.

(a) The place of the psyche in the material world.---Nature advances on a broad front but piecemeal; so that the movement at each point, though repeating itself if left
free, is often modified by interference from the neighboring movements, or even disappears in the melting pot. Of these attempted repetitions the most interesting at the level of human life is heredity. This involves an extraordinary degree or amount of involution in the seed, so that when suitably planted this seed may expand into all the organs of the parent body. The Aristotelian name for such involution is poutentiality [sic] or existence in potentia. This is not mere logical possibility, but physical potency or dynamism; and I call it the psyche. This is an observable biological cycle or "trope" (as I call it) and the "psychic", in this sense, must not be confused with the "psychological" or subjective conscious element. The place of the psyche in the material world is therefore a perfectly discoverable one open to scientific investigation and capable, I think, of great development both in extension (telepathy, prophecy, communication, etc.) and in depth (psycho-analysis, etc.)

(b) Place of Spirit in the psyche.— The reaction of animals on any stimulus from a distance, like that of plants turning to the light, is transcendent, i.e., it regards something which is not the movement of the organ itself, but is a movement of the organ towards an object external to it. But where locomotion is possible, the organism affected may move as a whole towards the source of the stimulus, and even seize or absorb it. The transcendence here acquires a subjective
spiritual accompaniment; it composes perception. In his subjective or organic sensibility an animal has only feeling or intuition of something vague and inarticulate; but in his indicative alertness and expectation his perception is transcendent cognitively and is sensation and faith or anticipation. We then have what is, or aspires to be, knowledge. The realm of spirit thus emanates from and overarches the life of matter, when this becomes self-transcendent. And it is interesting to observe that the field open to spirit from the very first is indefinite in extent. The essences intuited are seen or felt against a continuous background, virtually all time and all existence. This is the spiritual counterpart of the cosmic range of all physical tensions, and perfectly natural.

(c) My "transcendentalism" is not at all transcendent faith in matter, much less in essence, which latter demands no faith, but only intuition or definition of ideal or aesthetic terms. What is "transcendental" in my system is only spirit itself in its station on this side of the footlights. Spirit for me is no substance but only a function of the psyche, when life is concentrated and synthesized at one point, poetically the "heart" or "soul," from which all things are surveyed or surveyable. For itself, consciously, spirit is thus disembodied; but it has a temporal and spatial station and point of view, and endures all the accidents and passions of the body: so that it feels only too much its dependence and captivity there. But
that is a one-sided sentiment: more normally, the spirit is the voice or prayer of the natural man in his physical and social plights; so that it represents the body morally as well as biologically in the fourth dimension of memory, foresight, and judgment.

(d) As to scientific and literary psychology, the distinction is not meant to separate the compound life which is the object, but only to remove confusion in the method of treating it theoretically. English psychology and philosophy rely on subjective data, which they turn into substances (without using this honest word): that is literary psychology or autobiography turned into metaphysics or (as I should call it with the ancients) into physics. But to attribute to such ideal data causal effects, potential existence, or capacity to breed like rabbits, is superstition. Subjective data may be signs of powers at work; but they are the "insubstantial fabric of a vision" in their own plane of appearance.

Scientific psychology must be studied in the object, like medicine, though of course without neglecting the indications that the "subject" may give of his sensations: since these are symptoms and signs. I accept behaviorism in the positive sense of positing a continuous material process underlying all life: all appearances and phenomena have organs and substance at work beneath. But my study has always been humanistic, not scien-
tific, and I leave the detail of medicine as of all physics to the specialists.

Literary psychology has dramatic and inspirational advantages over scientific psychology. It evokes feelings and thoughts which though actually bred in the psychologist or poet, may be literally true of other people's experience. Physics, on the contrary, never gives literal knowledge, but only conventional human renderings of non-human events.
APPENDIX II

Via Santo Stefano Rotundo, 6,
Rome, June 15, 1947

Dear Father Munson,

Your difficulties in understanding my philosophy do not surprise me, and I think they are insurmountable so long as you reason on Scholastic axioms such as nihil dat quod non habet. Since the "quod" or "quid" is defined as an essence—nothing existent is definable—the system of the world becomes entirely a system of essences, and their connections logical: that makes the system meta-physical. But I have no metaphysics: essence, truth, and spirit are indeed non-physical; but for that very reason they are not to be invoked at all in physics or cosmology, which deals with common sense facts—assumed to exist by themselves—and studies their factual relations without pretending to explain or understand them. The perfect innocence of genuine men of science in this respect is admirable and touching.

Now, I leave all matters of fact to be catalogued in this unexplained way by the natural sciences: and my epistemology and psychology are radically and wholly biological, not con-

1 A letter written in Santayana's own hand in response to the author's reply to the letter quoted in Appendix I.
ceptualistic or metaphysical at all. Naturally they do not meet the requirements of a metaphysical system. But does any fact do so? Are smell, sound, and light impossible data of sense unless they exist first as such in camphor, bells, and ethereal vibrations?

Yours sincerely,

G. Santayana
APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Thomas N. Munroe, Jr. has been read and approved by three members of the Department of Philosophy.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

March 4, 1948

Signature of Adviser