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# The place of essence in the epistemology of George Santayana

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BOSTON UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

Thesis

THE PLACE OF ESSENCE IN THE EPISTEMOLOGY  
OF GEORGE SANTAYANA

by

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(A.B., Eastern Nazarene College, 1961)

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

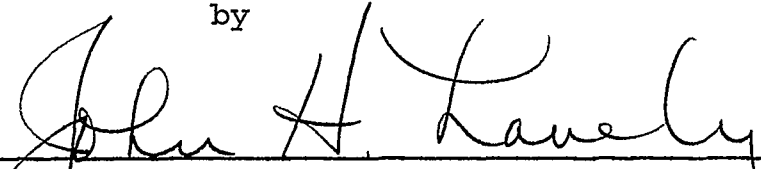
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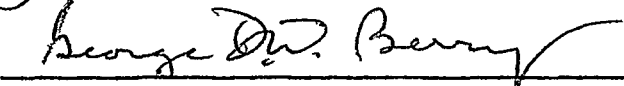
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1
A. Purpose . . . . .	1
B. Method . . . . .	1
C. The Scope of Research . . . . .	1
Chapter	
I. SANTAYANA: THE CRITICAL REALIST . . . . .	3
A. The Problem That Critical Realism Purports to Have Answered . . . . .	4
B. A Definition of Critical Realism . . . . .	9
C. The New Problem of Critical Realism . . . . .	13
II. THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	17
A. The Scope . . . . .	18
B. The Psyche . . . . .	20
C. The Spirit . . . . .	22
D. Essence and Existence . . . . .	25
E. The Nature and Function of Essence . . . . .	31
F. The Self . . . . .	32
G. A Problem Concerning the Origin and Nature of Knowledge . . . . .	35
III. THE STRUCTURE OF THE KNOWING SITUATION . . . . .	37
A. The Scope . . . . .	38
B. The Object . . . . .	39
C. The Content . . . . .	42
D. The Subject . . . . .	48
E. Summary of the Knowledge Situation . . . . .	54
F. Some Problems That Have Arisen in This Chapter . . . . .	56
IV. THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE . . . . .	59
A. The Scope . . . . .	60
B. The Beginnings of Knowledge . . . . .	62

Chapter	Page
C. Intuition Is Insufficient for Knowledge . . . . .	64
D. Belief in the Meaning of Intuition Initiates Knowledge . . . . .	69
E. Knowledge of Existence Is Normally Symbolic . . . . .	71
F. Imagination Makes Knowledge Possible .	73
G. How Can Knowledge Be Tested? . . . . .	74
H. Knowledge and Truth . . . . .	78
I. Some Problems Posed by Santayana's Account . . . . .	82
V. THE ROLE OF ESSENCE SUMMARIZED AND CRITICIZED . . . . .	87
A. The Nature of Essence . . . . .	88
B. The Function of Essence . . . . .	95
C. The Relation of Essence to Spirit . . .	100
D. Essences and Thinking . . . . .	105
E. Essences and Truth . . . . .	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .	115
ABSTRACT . . . . .	118

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the place of essences in the epistemology of George Santayana. A subsidiary purpose will be to note, in addition to the place or function of essences in Santayana's epistemology, some of the strengths and weaknesses of his view.

### B. Method

The method to be employed will be to consider the function of essences within the framework of certain established epistemological problems, viz., the origin and nature of knowledge, the structure of the knowing situation, and the possibility of knowledge. After defining Critical Realism and placing Santayana in the proper perspective within that movement (Chapter I) and determining the function of essences in terms of the above mentioned problems (Chapters II, III, and IV), the function of essences will be summarized and criticized (Chapter V).

### C. The Scope of Research

The works of Santayana that have been used for this thesis date rather conspicuously from 1918. This is in deference to the author who says:

When by chance I open one of my books, especially the earlier ones, it seems to me the work of some other man; . . . the tone and tenor remain quite foreign to me. Not that I have changed my opinions . . . [but] it has taken the greater part of a long life for me to extricate my meaning from my words, find the center of my survey, and form fresh categories and a fresh vocabulary.<sup>1</sup>

According to Butler, Santayana considered his work prior to the publishing of Scepticism and Animal Faith in 1923 as immature.<sup>2</sup> More specifically, one could hardly do research on Santayana without considering The Life of Reason. However, as recorded by Daniel Cory, his secretary, Santayana specified that one should evaluate the abridged and revised version of that work. For the above reasons, then, the scope of research has been limited to Santayana's later and more "mature" works.

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, The Idler And His Works And Other Essays, edited and prefaced by Daniel Cory (New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957), p.7.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Butler, The Mind of Santayana (Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1955), p. 58.

<sup>3</sup>George Santayana, The Life of Reason, revised, abridged, and written in collaboration with his secretary Daniel Corey (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. v.

CHAPTER I

SANTAYANA: THE CRITICAL REALIST



In this chapter, Santayana's approach to critical realism will be examined. To do this the problem must be stated so as to reveal the reasons prompting the interpretation given by the critical realists. In addition to the reasons behind this interpretation, the interpretation itself must be defined. Having defined and given reasons for this view, certain issues will emerge as problems to which Santayana must give a satisfactory solution. These problems and the adequacy of their solution will be the subject of the following chapters of this thesis.

A. The Problem that Critical Realism  
Purports to Have Answered

According to Santayana realism ranges in degree between the minimal assertion "that perception and thought refer to some object not the mere experience of perceiving and thinking," and the maximal assertion "that perception and conception are always direct and literal revelations and that there is no such thing as error."<sup>1</sup> Within this range of common assertion, there is the implicit assumption that appearances, as perceived or thought, are the source of knowledge. The differences in assertion,

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, "Three Proofs of Realism," Essays in Critical Realism, ed. Durant Drake (New York: Macmillan Company, 1920), p. 163. All further references to this work will be designated as "Three Proofs."

however, are as to whether appearances merely mean some external object or whether they are "direct and literal revelations" of such an object. Those realists who hold that appearances mean some object tend to hold that the characteristics present in consciousness may be used to interpret that object. On the other hand, those realists who hold that appearances are direct and literal revelations of some object, tend to identify the object and the subjective experience in the act of knowing. The problem then is to determine the nature of appearance and to discern whether it may yield veridical transitive knowledge. Santayana states in the "Preface" of Scepticism and Animal Faith that "the chief issue, is the relation of man and of his spirit to the universe."<sup>1</sup> In terms of epistemology this relation is apparently best explained for Santayana by a realistic dualism, but not an unqualified realistic dualism.

According to Santayana these two tendencies, the minimal and maximal assertions of epistemological realism, are complementary, and the alleged contradiction may be solved. The one stresses the difference between substance and appearance and thus, the independence of the object,

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, Scepticism and Animal Faith (New York: Dover Publications, Incorporated, 1955), p. viii. All further references to this work will be designated as Scepticism.

while the other stresses the similarity between perceived appearances and the nature of the object. The object is both distinct from the objective appearance in existence, and yet, relevant to it in essence.<sup>1</sup> Thus, any realistic theory which emphasizes one tendency over the other is inadequate, to the degree that it either stresses existential difference to the neglect of the similarity of essence, or the essential identity of essence to the neglect of the existential difference. From this, Santayana concludes that knowledge must necessarily be a new fact. He says:

Knowledge could not be knowledge at all unless it was a fresh fact not identical in existence with its object; and it could not be true knowledge unless, in its deliverance, it specified some of the qualities or relations which really belong to that object.<sup>2</sup>

The necessity of an animal body to give appearance a "focus" or "locus," and the concomitant necessity of the existence of an external object to make appearance significant, however, do not constitute evidence for the presence of physical reality in appearance.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, neither the identity or diversity of substance and appearance yields an adequate analysis of knowledge per se.

Any solution then must be a marriage of the truths of the independence of substance and the relevance of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 165-166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 165.

appearances to substance. To emphasize either, to the exclusion of the other, would be to forget important problems in experience. An over-emphasis on the independence of substance would make knowledge impossible in any other sense than sheer dogmatic assertion. To make substance merely what is perceived would make the question of independent existence gratuitous. The inadequacy of knowledge is certain evidence of the recalcitrance of substance to be reduced to the content of experience, and the meaningfulness of animal response to substance, manifested in flux, is sure evidence for the relevance of appearance to substance.

Of course we may occasionally be deceived altogether: because the machinery of animal response is necessarily so intricate that it may get out of order, and a merely internal stimulus, which ought to bring intuition without belief, may start a practical reaction, and so produce illusion, or the belief that the merely imagined essence is the quality of an external object. Yet hallucination, madness, and dreams are soon cured or soon fatal; so that the normal correspondence between perception and things re-establishes itself automatically.<sup>1</sup>

In the absence of an identity of idea and object, error is a persistent problem; yet the relevance of our ideas to their objects tends to maintain a meaningful equilibrium. Santayana says that "complete knowledge . . . is

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, "Literal and Symbolic Knowledge," Journal of Philosophy, XV (August 1, 1918), p. 434. All further references to this work will be designated as "Literal."

incompatible with mortality and with the biological basis of thought,"<sup>1</sup>

If then, knowledge is derived from appearance and appearance contains no physical realities, and yet it roughly corresponds to the movements of substance, what is the nature of the appearances and what is their relation to substance? According to Santayana substance and appearances are independent, but they were "predestined for the future partnership; for its structure involved changes of structure which in due season would evolve the genesis of appearance. . . ." <sup>2</sup> It would seem then that appearance is dependent upon substance, yet only for its evolution. This would imply that any representational view would be inadequate, for substance and appearance are not the same thing, but merely "hang together and reflect one another." Thus, appearance is "relevant" to the object, but not identical with it.

Santayana says:

Mind has no capacity and no obligation to copy the world of matter nor to survey it impartially. At the same time mind affords a true expression of the world, rendered in vital perspectives and in human terms, since this mind arises and changes symptomatically at certain foci of animal life; foci which are a part of nature in dynamic correspondence with other parts diffused widely about them; so

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 435. Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 167.

that, for instance, alternative systems of religion and science, if not taken literally, may equally well express the actual operation of things measured by different organs or from different centres.<sup>1</sup>

The relevance, then, of appearance to the world of matter allows mind to make a "true expression" while the incapacity for literal knowledge or identity renders the possibility of alternative true expressions also. How then, on the basis of this discussion, may critical realism be defined and what, in particular, is Santayana's innovation?

#### B. A Definition of Critical Realism

In critical realism the primary elements of appearance, as existentially distinct yet relevant to substance, are taken as intermediary data or transitive signs for substance and its movements. Critical realism may be divided into two camps, essence-men and non-essence men. The non-essence men (Sellars, Lovejoy, Pratt) hold that this intermediary datum is a characteristic of the mental state and consequentially, actually existent, whereas the essence men (Santayana, Strong, Drake, Rogers) hold that the intuition of essence is a psycho-physical product and therefore, essence, that which appears in intuition, is neither mental nor physical but

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 98.

logical.<sup>1</sup> According to Harlow:

Critical Realists contend that between the real object and the knowing subject of knowledge is a tertium quid, to wit, the datum, the logical character (or quality group) of the external object which is the means by which perception occurs.<sup>2</sup>

Although there is disagreement as to the nature of the tertium quid among the critical realists, there does not appear to be any disagreement on the fact that knowledge is mediated, transitive, and that the data of experience serve a vehicular function. These intermediary appearances bridge the basic subject object bipolarity and, as may be seen in the above quotation, they are vehicular because they are the logical characters of external objects which are the means of perception.

Before considering Santayana's interpretation of these intermediary data and in order to focus his view more clearly, the dissenting interpretations of the non-essence men must be seen. According to Sellars, the doctrine of the essence-men is not central to critical realism. Rather, the central doctrine is that all knowledge of past events and external objects are interpretations and not literal presences of those objects and events. The emphasis is on the mediateness of

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<sup>1</sup>Victor E. Harlow, A Bibliography and Genetic Study of "American Realism" (Not given: Harlow Publishing Company, 1931), p. 72.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Among all of the critical realists, the mediateness of knowledge is basic, but the bone of contention is the nature of this mediating vehicle.<sup>2</sup>

Sellars says that the minor point as to whether these intermediary data are platonic universals or to be thought of in a conceptualistic sense is the only point on which critical realists differ.<sup>3</sup> For Sellars a character is non-existential, but it is "a discrimination or a feature of a thought intrinsic to the total act of interpreting an object" or rather "a Gestalt in which we mean and interpret objects."<sup>4</sup> There is wide difference of opinion on what Sellars calls this "minor point." This might tend to suggest that the issue is of major importance. Santayana claims that these characters are non-physical and non-mental, whereas Sellars holds that they are mental; "they are features of the field of consciousness."<sup>5</sup> The non-essence men agree, then, that these characters are non-existential but not necessarily non-mental.

Santayana's innovation is that the mediating vehicle is logical, neutral or aesthetic, the intuition of

<sup>1</sup>Roy Wood Sellars, "What is the Correct Interpretation of Critical Realism?" Journal of Philosophy, XXIV (April 27, 1927), p. 238.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 239.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 240.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.



which is a product of the interaction of subject and object. To hold to primary and secondary qualities is to assume that the data of experience should be either constituents of the object or exact reproductions of those constituents. For Santayana, the issue of primary and secondary qualities is a false question.<sup>1</sup> As merely logical and non-existent, the data of sense and thought become essences. The identity of subject and object in the knowing situation is only postulational and touches essences only having an "ideal status" as the object of intuition or "material status" as the form of a thing.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge so considered is transitive and relevant: transitive in that "self-existing things may become the chosen objects of a mind that identifies and indicates them;" and relevant in that "the thing indicated may have at least some of the qualities that the mind attributes to it."<sup>3</sup> It follows then that knowledge requires the meaning of an object and the relevance of that meaning to the object meant. Therefore, perception and conception become for us an indication of a realm of objects, nature or substance, Santayana says:

Thus the notion of an independent and permanent world is an ideal term used to mark and as it were

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 82-83.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," pp. 167-168.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 168.

to justify the cohesion in space and the recurrence in time of recognizable groups of sensations.<sup>1</sup>

Santayana's innovation, therefore, asserts the fundamental duality of an independent existent, known only through postulation, based on an ideal term which is both transitive and relevant, but neither a physical constituent of the object nor an exact representation of that object. How adequate, then, is the critical realist's and, in particular, Santayana's solution of the problem of independent yet knowable existences?

#### C. The New Problem of Critical Realism

Butler says that the realistic tradition has failed to present an adequate realism: First the Neo-Realists failed by establishing a fruitless monistic materialism, and then, the Critical Realists failed by exaggerating the dualistic dilemma.<sup>2</sup> It is too early to say whether or not Santayana's innovation is a mere exaggeration. However, one thing may be said at this point and that is, that the introduction of non-existential but transitive and relevant essences does tend to complicate the knowing process. If the existential order can never be known as existence but

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, The Life of Reason, p. 25.

<sup>2</sup>Richard Butler, The Mind of Santayana, p. 46.

only as posited existence, mediated by non-existent logical terms, why should anyone believe there is such an order? For Santayana, the reasons why anyone should believe are unimportant in the face of the overwhelming universal and instinctive belief in an existential order. People move out of the way of running horses, jump when they are stung by a bee and pick flowers. For Santayana proof of existence is tautological because:

All reasonable human discourse makes realistic assumptions; so that these proofs, . . . are necessarily circular; without assuming realism it would be impossible to prove realism or anything else.<sup>1</sup>

Existence, however, is not the only question here. What, then is the nature of existence? According to Santayana:

What the object is in its intrinsic and complete constitution will never be known by man: but that this object exists in a known space and time and has traceable physical relations with all other physical objects is given from the beginning: it is given in the fact that we can point to it.<sup>2</sup>

The nature of existence must remain somewhat of a mystery, if by nature is meant the "intrinsic and complete constitution" of the object. If, as has been noted, existence is an assumption or merely postulated in faith, then any nature attributed to existence must be equally assumed.

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 183.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

In so far, however, as existence does have "traceable physical relations with all other physical objects" in space and time, there is a sense in which its nature is revealed. That is, nature, in the sense of the most characteristic feature. For Santayana;

The great characteristic of what exists is to be in flux; . . . It is a creature of circumstance, compacted and surrounded by external relations.<sup>1</sup>

This "inner unrest" or "flux" of matter is the "seat and organ of all manifestations."<sup>2</sup> So considered, then, the nature of existence is to be in flux and, as such, to be responsible for all manifestations, while existence itself is only postulational, and, due to the mediateness of knowledge, subject to error. Although non-existent terms are not parts of the material object, they may become relatively true descriptions of it, provided interest is maintained in the object by an instinctive belief in its existence.<sup>3</sup>

The Critical Realists have, therefore, removed themselves from the main problem posed by a monistic epistemology, viz., the problem of error. According to Santayana:

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 180-181.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, The Idler And His Works And Other Essays, p, 116.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p, 165.

Error . . . awakens even the laziest philosophy from the dream of supposing that its own meanderings are nothing but strands in the texture of its object.<sup>1</sup>

In avoiding the pitfalls of epistemological monism, however, the critical realists have inherited the traditional problems of any dualistic epistemology: (1) How do we come to know? That is, the origin and nature of knowledge (Chapter II). (2) How can we be sure that we really know what we think we know? That is, the possibility of knowledge (Chapter IV). The latter problem is complicated further when it is asserted that the relevant data of the subject-object relationship is a consequent of their interaction but neither mental or material in character. The ultimate question, then, in determining the origin and nature of knowledge and in structuring the knowledge situation (Chapter III) is: is knowledge possible and if it is, how can we be sure that our knowledge is true?

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 123.

## CHAPTER II

### THE ORIGIN AND NATURE OF KNOWLEDGE

In this chapter the origin and nature of knowledge will be examined. To do this, essence will be traced from substance to the material psyche with spirit in it. After establishing the origins of knowledge, the nature of knowledge will be traced first by distinguishing essence and existence, second by determining the function of essence, and third by considering the nature and function of the self. The conclusion of this chapter will take the form of a criticism arising out of the preceding analysis.

#### A. The Scope

For Santayana knowledge comes about as the dynamic potential of matter or flux becomes actual in spirit, or becomes in spirit "knowledge of its own existence,"<sup>1</sup> In order to facilitate this process, matter must generate in the psyche "organs fit for action and observation."<sup>2</sup> All power comes from the "inner unrest of matter" which establishes temporary equilibriums which become the focal points of interaction between the animal psyche and its environment. Psyche, too, is a product of material unrest

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, "Apologia Pro Mente Sua," The Philosophy of Santayana, ed., Paul A. Schilpp (Chicago: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1940), II, p. 521. All further references to this work will be designated as "Apologia."

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 544.

and is formed as a habitual and instinctive "knot" in the activity of nature. Sense and reason are endowed by the psyche and consequently, are part of material activity.<sup>1</sup> Spirit as passive reflective capacity becomes for matter "emotion and light" or as stated above "knowledge of its own existence."<sup>2</sup> This is, in effect, an absolute materialism because all power to act and react is material, whereas spirit may only arrest and fix various data as objects of interest. However, in fixing data of interest the spirit develops a "language of essence" which becomes a description of the activity of the psyche in response to the flux of matter.<sup>3</sup> Since response to the natural environment is fixed according to the habits or "rhythms" of the psyche, this knowledge will not effect response unless the spiritual discovery is startling enough to change the habit. Therefore, all activity and power is material although the discoveries of the spirit may effect a habitual change in the structure of the animal psyche.<sup>4</sup>

According to Santayana, then, the undisputed origin of all activity and consequent knowledge is material unrest. Out of this unrest comes the environment of natural objects and the organs fit for action and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 545.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 570.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 530.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 541-542.



observation which make knowledge of that unrest possible. The doctrine of ultimate material agency then, becomes its own criterion. In the development of the nature and origin of knowledge, Santayana must show that there is no area of conscious experience which cannot be explained in terms of material unrest and evolution, as represented by intuited essences. In the next two subtopics the pre-rational or instinctive life of animals will be dealt with.

### B. The Psyche

Psyches are material, and they make adaptive responses to external stimulation. They are "organizations in matter" or "the spontaneous formation, in living nuclei in matter, of organs fit for action and observation."<sup>1</sup> Thus, within the unity of power inherent in matter, there arises a new material agency which is the beginning of knowledge. According to Santayana the very existence of knowledge about the activity of matter proves the existence of the animal psyche. He says:

That there exists any perception or conception of a flux proves that a knot or lump has been formed in that flux, a new self-repeating tropes called life or the psyche, with spirit in it; so that a dualism arises within that monism, not a dualism of substance or dynamic process but a dualism of quality and function.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 544.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 576.

So then, the emergence or evolvement of the organs of action and observation have become the sine qua non of animal life and the consequent beginning of knowledge. Santayana says, "There is no mental machinery; the underground work is all done by the organism, in the psyche or . . . the unconscious mind."<sup>1</sup> The psyche operates instinctively or habitually. New knowledge, when startling enough, may initiate a change or modification of habit but, nevertheless, all responses of the psyche are habitual reactions to its natural environment. As will be seen later, the very habitual character of response allows for the recurrence of essence which makes true description possible. Remarking on the instinctive nature of the psyche Santayana says:

It is only in very special directions, to very special occasional stimulations that he [the animal] develops instinctive responses in special organs: and his intuitions, . . . express these reactions.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, psyche is a spontaneously evolved set of adaptive organs which, although they do have a different quality and function than substance, do not attain immaterial status.

Out of the chaos of material unrest a persisting pattern or "self-repeating trope" becomes a centre of instinctive response aimed at adaptation to the natural

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 578-580.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 64.

environment. The psyche is thoroughly mechanical, responding only when stimulated. Santayana says:

The psyche is blind in herself; . . . she is a prior principle of choice and judgement and action in the dark; so that when the light shines in that darkness, she comprehends it and feels at once whether the ray falls on the object toward which she was groping, or on some irrelevant thing.<sup>1</sup>

Santayana's language seems to get in the way here when he refers to the instinctive and habitual psyche as a prior principle of choice and judgment. This terminology may only be understood in the light of his account of the formation of habits. Habits are formed only in special directions to special occasional stimulations. Not all stimulations prefigure in the formation of habit whereas all response is in terms of some habit. This, then, is the sense in which the psyche is the prior principle of choice and judgment.

### C. The Spirit

The psyche responds to the flux of matter and in that response, the spirit which is carried along with that movement, fixes some datum in intuition. This datum becomes an ideal unity or essence which has a meaning that can neither be attributed to the organ of sense nor the material stimulus. It is through this fixing of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 156.

meaning to the content of some intuition that spirit describes the activity of the psyche.<sup>1</sup> Essence derives meaning through its conjunction with the response of the psyche to its environment. Intuition is occasioned by environmental stimulation while the nature of the psyche's response determines the form of the intuition.<sup>2</sup> The subtle relevance of the essence to its meant object is maintained by the determination of the form of the intuition by the habitual responses of the psyche. According to Santayana:

The choice and the interest of essences come from the bent [habit, instinctive nature] of the animal that elicits the vision of them from his own soul and its adventures; and nothing but affinity with my animal life lends the essences I am able to discern their moral colour. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Since, then, intuitions are materially occasioned by the environment and determined by the bent of the psyche, they become relatively true appearances of matter. Truth can only be relative in the sense that although essences are evoked by matter they are "conventional and qualified by the nature of the animal psyches in which they are

<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," Twentieth Century Philosophy, ed. Dagobert Runes (New York: The Philosophical Library, 1947), p. 320.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 76.

evoked."<sup>1</sup>

The spirit, then, allows for the first stage of knowledge, the fixation of appearance. Normally, essences present to the spirit merely describe some actual state of affairs, but occasionally "spiritual insights induce a new habit."<sup>2</sup> The spirit is immaterial and non-existent (these terms are equivalent for Santayana) and is merely a recorder of the life of the psyche.

Santayana says:

The actor is the psyche in which the spirit lives; and it is this animal psyche that acts even in the spirit. The spirit merely perceives and endures that action, become for it emotion and light.<sup>3</sup>

The self, then, which is to be discussed in greater detail in Chapter IV, has two aspects, the responsive material psyche and the immaterial, contemplative, and discoursing spirit.<sup>4</sup> Psyche acts in accordance with proven habitual responses, but is always ready to change those habitual responses for new ones, based on some new spiritual insight. The instigation of new habit on the basis of spiritual insight is the only escape from the circularity of the same old stimulus and response pattern. This has been a discussion of the pre-rational or instinctive life of animals whereas now the main concern will be the

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 508.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, cf., pp. 147-149.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 569.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 569-570.

rational life of animals. In the rational stage of development experience becomes a teacher bringing progress in the arts,<sup>1</sup> By the arts, Santayana merely means the pursuit of knowledge via the use of symbols.<sup>2</sup>

#### D. Essence and Existence

According to Santayana, "all appearances and measures are, as in the theory of relativity, relative to the observer."<sup>3</sup> Since every animal's intuitions are occasioned by his own environment and determined by his own habitual structure or bent, his perspective must be relative. On this point Santayana admits he is dogmatic but says that this dogmatism is built on faith:

A faith imposed . . . by the exigences of action and justified in the natural interplay of each animal with his environment. Such faith accumulates sufficient and trustworthy knowledge of 'things--in--themselves' . . . but this is natural knowledge. . . . It is knowledge inevitably limited to the range of natural and artificial instruments that convey it,

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 564.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana defines arts as the "arts of expression" asserting that the arts "would be impossible if they were not extensions of normal human perception." Further, "the human medium of knowledge can perform its pertinent report all the better when it frankly abandons the plans of its object and expresses in symbols what we need to know of it." Knowledge, then, is symbolical and the arts are the expression of those symbols. (Scepticism, pp. 102-103).

<sup>3</sup>George Santayana, "On Metaphysical Projection," The Idler and His Works, edited and prefaced by Daniel Cory (New York: George Braziller, Incorporated, 1957), p. 129.

and couched . . . in the language of special experience.<sup>1</sup>

Santayana says that he is a dogmatist and yet that he built his system on a sceptical foundation.<sup>2</sup> He says further, "my scepticism remains merely the confession that faith is faith, without any rebellion against the physical necessity of believing,"<sup>3</sup> Knowledge is possible but only natural knowledge, that is, knowledge limited by the instruments of perceiving. Scepticism warns about the uncertainty of knowledge against the necessity of believing. Santayana says, "only the demand for literal knowledge makes knowledge impossible."<sup>4</sup> Why must literal knowledge be an impossible quest? Literal knowledge is impossible because knowledge is mediated (symbolic) and mediating vehicle, essence, does not possess any of the constituent elements of the object for which we take it to be a sign.<sup>5</sup> Hence, error or "the conflict of dogmas" is always a possibility and a stimulus to criticism.<sup>6</sup>

Because of the "conflict of dogmas," knowledge must be empirically and transcendently criticized; empirical criticism, "to reduce conventional beliefs to the facts they rest on," and transcendental criticism, "to

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 512.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 515.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 516.      <sup>4</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 518.

<sup>5</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, cf., pp. 101-102.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 8.

drive empiricism home" showing that it cannot produce any knowledge of fact whatsoever.<sup>1</sup> If this be the case, then all knowledge must be doubted, but even "the act of doubting would . . . be ignominious, if the beliefs which life and intelligence forced upon me were always false."<sup>2</sup> Santayana says, "Scepticism is an exercise, not a life . . . a discipline to purify the mind . . . and render it . . . more apt . . . to believe and act wisely."<sup>3</sup> What then are the indubitable data of experience?

From the perspective of empirically and transcendently criticized experience, the only indubitable is an immediate psycho-physical awareness of essence. Santayana says:

I have absolute assurance of nothing save of the character of some given essence; the rest is arbitrary belief or interpretation added by animal impulse.<sup>4</sup>

What is given is not existence but essence. Although this essence is believed to be relevant to existence, there is no connection other than the constant conjunction of certain essences with certain environmental stimulations. Essence is not "invented or instituted for a purpose; it

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 3-4.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 9.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 69.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.



is something positive, anything that might be found, every quality of being."<sup>1</sup> The realm of essence is an infinite realm of characters possessed by actual things as well as the possible characters that things might have if they existed. Such essences have the ontological status of Platonic ideas but are axiologically and teleologically neutral.<sup>2</sup> To be even more explicit, essences are "anything definite capable of appearing or being thought of."<sup>3</sup> Essences, then, are the myriad of possible aspects that existence might wear, none of which has any priority over any other. Santayana uses the term existence:

To designate not data of intuition, but facts or events believed to occur in nature. The facts or even events will include, first, intuitions themselves, or instances of consciousness, like pains and pleasures and all remembered experiences and mental discourse; and second, physical things and events having a transcendent relation to the data of intuition which in belief, may be used as signs for them. . . .<sup>4</sup>

Essence, aside from being an object of aesthetic appreciation, is a sign for facts or events whether mental or physical, whether past, present, or future. Essences mean their objects.

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 78.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 527.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 47.

Essences are evoked by environmental stimulations and determined by the underlying structure of the organism, the psyche. Intuition as a material function of the psyche is existent. Consequently, intuition is "a conjunction of natures in adventitious and variable relations" and, that which is given in existence, essence, can never be existent since it is immediate and unrelated to any other essence. For Santayana it is axiomatic that "nothing existent can appear, and nothing specious can exist."<sup>1</sup> On the issue of the correspondence, yet difference, between existence and essence, Santayana says:

Nothing can ever make existence and essence continuous, . . . like parallels such orders of being can never flow into one another. But they may be conjoined or superimposed; they may be simultaneous dimensions of the same world.<sup>2</sup>

As it now stands then, there is a posited or assumed existential order of substance which cannot appear, because nothing existent can appear, and an order of specious datum which cannot exist because they do appear. The divorce of substance or existence and essence would seem to be complete, almost too complete, were it not for the fact that these two orders seem to be "simultaneous dimensions of the same world." As mentioned above, the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>George Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," p. 315.

reason why essence is simply relevant rather than being a direct reflection or representation of the material order, is that the intuition of essence is an indirect function of the psyche or underlying organism which is consequent to environmental stimulation. Seen thus, the intuition of essences are evolved from environmental stimulation but elicited according to the habitual and instinctive structure of the psyche. As the datum of intuition, essence, is not a direct representation of existence but comes in response to a reaction of the psyche to an external stimulus interpreted by an immaterial spirit, it cannot be considered existent and as elicited, that is, not produced by conscious effort, it cannot be considered mental, therefore, it must be considered neutral. Belief in a thing means the existence of that thing, whereas essence is anything that we do not believe in. Essence is merely taken as a sign of some believed in object.<sup>1</sup> According to Santayana:

In order to reach existences, intent must transcendent intuition, and take data for what they mean, not for what they are. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Essences, then, may mean objects that exist but are not in themselves proper objects of belief. No essence is ever a "goal" or "motive power" except temporarily and per accidens.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 65.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 79.

### E. The Nature and Function of Essence

Essence is always and necessarily identical with itself and, as such, more truly is than any changing substance. Essences may be exchanged but in themselves do not change.<sup>1</sup> Essences are not only self-identical but also different from every other essence.<sup>2</sup> Essences are eternal forms of things, whereas the substance of those things is change itself.<sup>3</sup> Finally, essences are distinguished from existence in that they are internally related, whereas physical events are externally related.<sup>4</sup> The essence in intuition is "probably not simple" possessing "a foothold for discrimination of different moments or parts within it."<sup>5</sup> Thus essence may have internal relations with its "moments" or "parts" while it remains unrelated to other essences not included in it. In summary, then, substance is in flux and as externally related has a location in space and time, whereas essence is self-identical and distinct from every other essence and as internally related is eternal, having no locus in space or time.<sup>6</sup> Essence and substance touch only in change, where essences, the eternal forms of things, are exchanged for other essences. As stated above, essence

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<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, "Some Meanings of the Word IS," Journal of Philosophy, XI (July 3, 1924), pp. 366-367.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 367.

<sup>3</sup>Daniel Cory, "Some Notes on the Deliberate Philosophy of Santayana," Journal of Philosophy, XLVII (March 2, 1950), p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 116.      <sup>5</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 116.

<sup>6</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 438.

and existence are not continuous but are "conjoined or superimposed." The change or tropes of matter are determined by the essences of the moment, which are, the forms of that particular thing. Essences determine the form of existence by their very self-identity, eternality, and internal relatedness and the change of substance may only be accomplished by exchanging essences which are themselves incapable of change, Santayana says:

The essence . . . remains, in its logical identity, precisely the essence that it was during that manifestation and before it. Were it not the same throughout, it could not be picked up or dropped, recognized, or contrasted with the forms that existence might wear earlier or later. The eternal self-identity of every essence is therefore a condition for the possibility of change . . . the realm of essence is . . . intimately interwoven, by its very eternity, with this perpetual mutation. Allowing matter a dynamic priority (matter and not essence being the seat and principle of genesis).  
 . . .<sup>1</sup>

Matter is flux or change and to have knowledge of change the animal must be able to take account of the various exchanges of essence necessitated by the dynamic priority of matter.

#### F. The Self

Essences are both simple and, in allowing for discrimination of moments within themselves, complex. However, granting this internal complexity, essences may be

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," pp. 525-526.

considered as units.<sup>1</sup> To assert that different essences are the same is the condition of dialectic but this requires a leap of faith. The very force of dialectic depends on being able to identify terms in isolation with related terms, and this being an act of faith makes analytic judgements synthetic. By believing in demonstration, which is what is done in making synthetic judgements, an active intelligence is assumed.<sup>2</sup> According to Santayana:

In judgement, . . . there is more than intuition; there is assumed discourse, involving time, transcendent reference, and various adventitious surveys of identical objects.<sup>3</sup>

For Santayana, the essences are given and indubitable in themselves, but discourse requires the identification of terms in absence with terms in relations, transcendent references and adventitious surveys involving time.

Santayana says:

Dialectic . . . involves a realm of essence, independent of it, over which it may range; and its own temporal and progressive existence. . . . Thus dialectic . . . must presuppose time, change, and the persistence of meaning in progressive discourse.<sup>4</sup>

But, "any motion seen will be but a fixed image of motion,"<sup>5</sup>  
If change is material and a conjunction of natures in

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 116.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 117-119.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 119.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., pp. 120-122.      <sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

external relation, how can change be intuited? It cannot; the data of intuition can have only internal relations. How then is change experienced? Change is experienced by a discoursing self which remembers past essences, compares them with present intuitions and on the basis of remembered constant conjunctions, predicts future events. As stated above, this capacity for telescoping time and change to provide "persistence of meanings" is a presupposition of dialectic or "progressive discourse."

For Santayana experience is not mere consciousness, experience is "a fund of wisdom gathered by living."<sup>1</sup> The terms of discourse are controlled by the psyche but occasionally experience or discourse is interrupted by "shocks" or unexpected essences. To experience shock is to be aware that there was a time prior to shock, that I am now experiencing shock, and that I have since passed to another state in which I am synthetically aware of the "coming, nature and the subsidence of that shock." This experience of "presence of the absent and persistence of the receding, . . . is called memory."<sup>2</sup> Experience punctuated by shocks imposes a belief in a "concrete self" that surveys ideal objects and adds its own adventitious order as it wills, a "thinking mind."

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 1423-142.

But Santayana's self, the self of discourse, must be thickened and substantialized into "a nature . . . more biased than a discoursing mind: the self posited by the sense of shock is a living psyche."<sup>1</sup> The thinking mind fits the "critical reconstruction of belief" and yet Santayana holds:

Mental discourse is not, and cannot be, a self nor a psyche. It is all surface; it neither precedes, nor survives, nor guides, nor posits its data; it merely notes and remembers them. Discourse is a most superficial function of the self: . . .<sup>2</sup>

So, then, the habitual, instinctive, and positing psyche is the self and discourse is essentially memory.

Knowledge requires both; there must be an underlying organism which reacts characteristically or habitually to illicit essence, and there must be discourse which adds adventitious order to those essences in order to describe their objects.

#### G. A Problem Concerning the Origin and Nature of Knowledge

"According to Santayana all agency and power is in the inner unrest of matter. In his analysis the psyche is the actor and spirit merely rides along with it as its "emotion and light." In other words, spirit, as immaterial, has no motive power or agency and merely

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 149.



records the activity of the material psyche. As such, this view would seem to rule out all novelty for the responses of the psyche are habitual. However, "spiritual insights may induce a new habit" and may consequently, effect animal activity although it has no agency of its own. Of real importance, however, is not whether or not such a scheme could explain novelty but whether or not such a scheme really suits the facts. According to this view all activity is determined by the habitual response of the animal psyche to environmental cues. The problem is, can habitual response alone be an adequate answer to the apparent variety with which the human animal acts upon his environment? Can such a view adequately deal with the obvious factors of individual preferences and purpose? This problem must be referred to another part of this thesis. However, it must be stated here that the denial of any agency to spirit seems to the author of this thesis a serious weakness in this viewpoint,

### CHAPTER III

#### THE STRUCTURE OF THE KNOWING SITUATION

In this chapter the structure of the knowing situation will be analyzed so as to show the nature and function of the individual elements and their respective inter-relations to one another. After this the knowledge situation will be summarized. The conclusion of this chapter will consist of a consideration of some problems that arise in the course of the preceding analysis.

#### A. The Scope

In epistemology the structural problem is primarily concerned with the perceptual situation. Further, the perceptual situation refers to the relation of the constituent members of the knowledge situation to each other.<sup>1</sup> The usual members of this situation are: (1) the subject, which for Santayana is the self; (2) the object, which for Santayana is nature believed in; and, (3) the content, which for Santayana is joint-product of nature and one of its evolvments, psyche. Along with these members must be included the modes of cognition which are: (1) memory; (2) imagination; and, (3) belief. The structuring of these elements usually comes to a head in the form of two basic issues: (1) Are content and

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<sup>1</sup>Dagobert Runes (ed), Dictionary of Philosophy (New York: Philosophical Library, 1942), p. 96.

object identical or distinct? and, (2) Does the object exist independently or dependently in regard to the knowing subject?<sup>1</sup> For Santayana, as will be shown, the object is independent of the knowing subject, but the knowing subject is not independent of the existing object. This formulation is important, for as was shown in Chapter I, perception and conception are not literal revelations of the object, and yet perception and conception do refer to some object. In brief, the object is independent of the knowing subject, but the knowing subject is not independent of the object. That is, his perceptions and conceptions are relevant to the object although not literally.

#### B. The Object

Santayana would certainly agree with Bowne when he says:

Common-sense assumes a world of things in space and time, altogether apart from mind and consciousness, and we know this world by perception.<sup>2</sup>

For Santayana this is a presupposition upon which life is dependent,<sup>2</sup> In fact, "the deepest presuppositions . . . are the most trustworthy, since they express the primary adjustments of the psyche to the world."<sup>3</sup> In trusting the

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Borden Parker Bowne, Theory of Thought and Knowledge (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1897), p. 49.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 505,

deepest presuppositions, philosophy plunges "in medias res." Why the middle? Because the origin of things cannot be known. To begin in the middle is to begin at the beginning of something. These presuppositions or principles of discourse "can never be discovered . . . until they have long been taken for granted, and employed in the very investigation which reveals them."<sup>1</sup> What then is the object of perception?

Substance was their [the senses and languages] common object from the beginning, faith in substance not being a consequence of reasoning about appearances, but an implication of action, and a conviction native to hunger, fear, feeding and fighting; as an aid and guide to which the organs of the outer sense are developed, and rapidly paint their various symbols in the mind.<sup>2</sup>

The assurance of substance, then, is implicit in discourse. To deny substance, therefore, is to deny the occasion for consciousness and consequently, discourse itself. Hence, substance as the deepest of presuppositions, cannot be denied since its denial must be based on experience which is itself a product of material forces.

Since substance is the most basic presupposition, reason cannot be its justification, for reason is merely a form of animal faith. Or, to put it another way, "the suasion of sanity is physical: if you cut your animal

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 1-2.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 198.

traces, you run mad."<sup>1</sup> Santayana does not make a plea for substance, he reveals it as the necessary condition of all action and discourse. As such, substance is not a theory appealing for philosophical acceptance but a reality for the materialist and non-materialist alike. Denial of substance is a denial of life itself, which is merely a response to material agency. Santayana does not feel that theoretical justification is necessary here since substance is more basic than any possible criterion by which it might be judged. Somewhat of a parallel can be found in Bowne's category of being. Being, as the most fundamental category, asserts the necessary existence of something prior to the possibility of any predication. As with Bowne, predication is impossible without the all pervasive category of being, so also with Santayana, discourse would be impossible without substance.

A traditional argument against substance or permanence has been that all existence is in flux. Santayana accepts this dictum but adds that flux implies permanence. Successive or contiguous change implies a medium in which external relations are assumed and exchanged. The intuition of essences as internally related exclude the possibility that change is a function of appearance and therefore, change must be a function of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

substance as being in flux.<sup>1</sup> Flux, then, as denied of internally related essences or appearance and affirmed of externally related substance, does not deny permanence of substance but rather, removes permanence to the status of the medium in which flux takes place.

Substance, then, is a medium in which the constituent elements are constantly changing their relations to one another. Flux accordingly has become a problem for the possibility of knowledge and not an argument against the existence of substance.

### C. The Content

As was stated in Chapter I, the subject of knowledge or the content of experience is a tertium quid, a logical character which is the means of perception: This datum is an essence which, although it is distinct from the object, means or refers to that external reality. Although ~~essence~~ essence and substance are distinct, in terms of existence and conditions there is a "great similarity" between the "immediate data or symbols of sense or thought and . . . its object."<sup>2</sup> If this were not the case, then either the independence of the object or the possibility of knowledge would have to be denied. Santayana is not about to do this. Hence, the knowledgeable must be a

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<sup>1</sup>Cory, "Some Notes on the Deliberate Philosophy of Santayana," p. 118.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 165.

"fresh fact," not identical with its object, yet somehow relevant to it.<sup>1</sup> It might be asked here whether what must be for Santayana necessarily is, in reality. Is the must a product of independence yet relevance or is the appearance of essence really a fresh fact? In other words, does Santayana make the existence of a "new fact" necessary to maintain the independence of the object and yet the relevance of its appearance to that object or are the appearances of essences really new facts in experience. Considering that he has avowed the independence of the object while concurrently affirming the relevance of essence to the object, it could be that essence is simply a rational deus ex machina. This is a problem that must be considered although not at the present stage of this analysis.

The content of experience then is a logical essence, existentially different, but relevant in intuition to its object--substance. This datum is logical since it is not only not a part of nature or mind but not even of the nature of the object or the mind. However, without this ideal datum "every supposed instance would be either a bit of sentience without an object, or an existing entity unrelated to any mind,"<sup>2</sup> How then is this ideal character related or relevant to its object? Since all that is

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 81.



known with certainty is the immediate, "the immediate must be vehicular" in identifying its object. Further, as "animal endeavors" have previously selected their object by intent and "passive sensibility" has reported their appearance to the animal mind, "what is given becomes . . . a sign . . . and conventional description" of its object.<sup>1</sup> As established above, however, matter is in flux or in external relations, whereas essence is internally related and consequently, cannot be a sign for change. For essence fixes some quality which is internally related but bereft of external relations, which can only be a property of existence. As discussed in Chapter II, it is only the spirit which endures the succession of essences, is interrupted by "shocks and consequently, posits change. The immediate data, then, are only signs of static states which represent mere pauses in the flux of existence, it takes essences plus adventitiously imposed external relations to symbolize living matter.

Existence necessarily precedes its idealization as essence. However, in the order of knowledge, ideals, as the immediate data of experience, must precede existence.<sup>2</sup> Essences as ideal forms becomes the means of material

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.

<sup>2</sup>George Santayana, The Life of Reason, p. 427.

change, matter displaying its formlessness by "shedding every form in succession." However, essences need matter to "pass from . . . ideal possibility into selected and instant being."<sup>1</sup> Substance and appearance or existence and essence have an identity touching essence only; that is, when essence is the form of a thing and not just an object of intuition.<sup>2</sup> It would seem, then, that when the particular essence is transformed from ideal possibility into instant being and as such, is fixed by intuition, that substance and appearance identify if only for one instant. Matter, which is basic as "the seat and organ of all manifestations," continually exchanges its essences as timeless ideals, whereas, intuition, as a function of the psyche, does not contemplate the purity and eternity of essence for they are identified with their intended objects.<sup>3</sup> Spirit, however, may contemplate essence in its purity, refusing to give any preference to any particular essence by taking it as a sign. This spiritual contemplation of essence, however, is epistemologically bankrupt; though, aesthetically, it may be a source of great joy.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 434.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 168.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "On Metaphysical Projection," pp. 116-117.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 74-76.

There is a way in which essences do become existent. As soon as appearance ceases to be actual and can be viewed externally or taken as a sign for an absent appearance, it becomes existent.<sup>1</sup> It is not, however, the essence but rather the intuition that occurs and may be used by an "adventurous belief."

Thus existence and non-existence seem to be relevant to appearances in so far as they are problematical and posited from the outside, not in so far as they are certain and given.<sup>2</sup>

What appears is an ideal object and not an event. This ideal object may, however, be confused with the event of its appearance and this consequential existence is attributed to it by the exigencies of animal life. According to Santayana, essence, "by being noticed and treated as a signal . . . puts on the garment of existence." Essences, then, take on the aura of existence when they are singled out by the animal life, but this existence is not part of the true being of any essence,<sup>3</sup> Essences are non-existent and, except in the instant of their actualization in flux, never touch existence, whereas intuition, having a time and locus does have existence.

Essences are not abstract ideas since their intended objects are not given.<sup>4</sup> The given cannot be

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 44-45.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 45.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 38.      <sup>4</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 534.

abstracted from what is only posited, therefore, essences cannot be abstract ideas; they are the direct data of sense and thought. Essences are not abstractions, neither do they exist. Essences are logical, but they are not neutral: "They are psychical in quality and status."<sup>1</sup> As logical, essence maintains a logical identity. It is this very "eternal self-identity" which makes recognition, comparison, and ultimately knowledge possible for the self.<sup>2</sup>

To sum up, substance, as environment, determines the occasion on which intuition is evoked; however, as determined by "the inherited organization of the animal" essence has a psychical status.<sup>3</sup> As such, essence, the content of experience, is truly vehicular. As evoked by the underlying animal organism, it cannot be a constituent part of substance; yet, as its presence is a result of environmental stimulation, it may be taken as relevant to that environment. Essences are the means whereby substance "flows" and yet by their eternal self-identity they make recognition, comparison, and judgment possible. What then is the nature of the subject in the perceptual situation? Santayana says:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 523.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 525-526.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 88.

That there exists any perception or conception of a flux proves that a knot or lump has been formed in that flux, a new self-repeating trope called life or the psyche, with spirit in it; so that a dualism arises within the monism, not a dualism of substance . . . but a dualism of quality and function.<sup>1</sup>

Substance, then, changes by exchanging essences while somehow, out of that flux, a persisting pattern (psyche with spirit in it) evolves and ultimately becomes an awareness of that flux which produced it. This is the subject of the perceptual situation.

#### D. The Subject

The essence as a vehicle is like a ping-pong ball; it has no motive power of its own. Essences do not impose themselves on nature, rather nature chooses its essences (by virtue of its dynamic priority) and likewise essences do not impose themselves on mind unless material circumstances have occasioned that essence.<sup>2</sup> The experience of the subject, then, is a consequence of two antecedent conditions, organ and stimulus, and their interaction.<sup>3</sup> Since the subjects response is habitual and non-deliberative "the body . . . is the true 'subject' in experience . . . and . . . the natural environment of the body, . . . is

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 576.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," p. 318.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 23.

the true 'object.'"<sup>1</sup> The subject, then, is essentially material but with a different quality and function than mere substance. As was noted above, this quality is psychic while its function is to observe the flux of its physical counterpart--nature. Matter may respond but it cannot observe, and, it is for this reason that spirit is posited to account for the fact that the subject fixes some datum and lends it a moral colour. For Santayana moral colour simply means the particular meaning that essences take on as a result of man's adventitious interpretation. Moral colour must be given to essences which, of themselves, have no particular meaning. This moral colour can neither be attributed to the organ of sensation nor the stimulus.<sup>2</sup> Moral colour comes entirely from the bent of the animal in its adventures.<sup>3</sup> The subject, then, is a habitual psyche with spirit in it which responds in characteristic ways to its object-environment.

The subject to be aware of itself must be more than mere response, it must be "a principle of steady life," or better "a thinking mind."<sup>4</sup> According to Santayana:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., pp. 23-24.      <sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 530.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 76.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

I have absolute assurance of nothing save of the character of some given essence; the rest is arbitrary belief or interpretation added by my animal impulse.<sup>1</sup>

To live, however, the self must break out of the certain contemplation of essence into the uncertain meanings of essence as determined by "subterranean forces."<sup>2</sup> From the assurance of the identity of various essences in various circumstances to the necessary presuppositions of time and time transcending thought, the self reveals itself. The self that manifests itself "when intuition has been deployed into a successive survey of constant ideal objects, adding . . . an adventitious order to the themes it rehearses; . . . suspending or picking . . . them up at will."<sup>3</sup> The transition, however, from a responding organism to a discoursing mind would not have been possible without three cognitive modes; believing, memory, and imagination,

Belief manifests itself when an essence is taken as a sign and not merely aesthetically admired. Santayana says:

Ideas become beliefs only when by precipitating tendencies to action they persuade me that they are signs of things; and these things are not those ideas simply hypostatized, . . . The belief is imposed on me surreptitiously by a latent mechanical

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 110.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 111.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

reaction of my body on the object producing the idea; it is by no means implied in any qualities obvious in that idea.<sup>1</sup>

Bare intuitions then, are not believed in until the body, after the mind intuits an essence, makes a latent mechanical reaction. The concomitance of bodily attitude and intuition of essence becomes, in perception, "a stretching forth of intent beyond intuition; . . . an exercise of intelligence."<sup>2</sup> Belief, as latent mechanical reaction, is a function of the more substantial self, the underlying psyche, and "precedes all deliberate use of intuitions as signs or descriptions of things."<sup>3</sup> It is clear to see, then, that although discourse or thinking is a function of the spirit which is immaterial, all agency or power remains in matter. Belief, as a product of a latent mechanical reaction, is the material bridge over which spirit must tread to reach its object. Since knowledge can only be of the absent, memory must be among the believed in.

Memory is essentially the presence of the absent.<sup>4</sup> Memory is necessary to the claim of transitive and realistic knowledge since mere intuition of essences, which are non-existent, cannot be called knowledge. Even

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 282.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 179.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 141.



description of essences as necessarily adventitious is inadequate to knowledge.<sup>1</sup> Essences must be believed in, that is, taken for signs of existence. Memory is an implicit presupposition of sign meaning which requires some form of judgment. Somehow, what has passed out of present experience must be retained for comparison and judgment. The psyche interacts with the environment whereas spirit, which lives in it, "merely perceives and endures that action, [and] becomes for it emotion and light."<sup>2</sup> The spirit perceives, endures, and retains in memory the description of the psyche's involvement with its environment. Santayana says:

In nature each moment is gone when it is past; in memory, for spirit, it is only when past that it can be present, and is then essentially present forever.<sup>3</sup>

These remembered essences, then, are not retained in their entirety as forms but rather "as signs for existence of which they furnish but an imperfect description,"<sup>4</sup> Without "irrational expectation" and belief in memory, man lacks that "sagacity" necessary to interaction with his environment.<sup>5</sup> Memory, then, as well as belief in substance is assumed in action.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 154.      <sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 570.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 574-575.      <sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 155.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

Essences may be retained in memory and taken as signs of existences; however, unless, as internally related, they are given some order they can never become knowledge of externally related existence.

Perception is thus originally true as a signal, but false as a description; and to reach a truer description of the object we must appeal to intelligence and hypothesis, imagining and thinking what the effective import of our data may be. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Existence is externally related and essences are internally related and never the twain shall meet save by "sympathetic imagination." Signs will never attain the "citadel" if it is indeed attainable at all, except by the imaginative ordering of essences remembered and believed in.<sup>2</sup>

Essences must be given external relations by a self before they can be descriptive of externally related existence.

In that case our knowledge will be as complete and accurate as . . . it can possibly be; yet since this adequate knowledge will remain transitive in intent (seeing as it is not satisfied to observe the given essence passively, as disembodied essence, but instinctively affirms it to be the essence of a thing confronting us, which our bodies are hastening to cope with) therefore, this affirmation remains a claim to the end, subject to the insecurity inseparable from animal faith. . . .<sup>3</sup>

Essences, then, must be taken as meaning existence (believed in) retained by memory, and imaginatively reconstructed before they become knowledge, which is, the goal of

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 440.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 443.

perception.

#### E. Summary of the Knowledge Situation

Substance, which possesses dynamic priority, changes by exchanging its essences. In the course of material flux, the psyche, which is a "self repeating trope" evolving out of material flux, is stimulated and responds habitually or instinctively according to patterns of response arising from special stimulations upon special occasions. The psyche or substantial self, as material, has the power to act and does so only to environmental cues. The psyche acts for the spirit which is immaterial and, ipso facto, has no power to act. The spirit, however, which merely rides along with the psyche, has the function of fixing the intuitions of essence which arise from the underlying organization of the organism and lend them an ideal identity and continuity through memory. Spirit, then, is the source of knowledge in that it records the activity of the psyche. Since the spirit has no agency, it cannot directly influence the activity of the habitual psyche and hence, seems to make knowledge worthless. However, although spirit may not directly influence psyche, occasionally its insights are so intense that they initiate a change of habit. According to Santayana's naturalism all response is habitual and environmentally stimulated, hence, the only way a

response may change is that the habit which illicit that response be changed.

The spirit in enduring the psyche's activity and fixing the identity of consequent intuitions of essences, creates the tools of comparison and judgment. Through the comparison of the absent with the present, made possible by a time transcending memory and an externally relating imagination, spirit passes from sign meaning to discourse. Discourse, as an art of expression, expresses itself in symbols and gives the inescapable conclusion of a thinking self. As has already been noted, there are two levels of the self for Santayana. The most basic level of the self is the "substantial self" which alone interacts with the environment. The second level of the self, the self of discourse, is carried along in the substantial self but is itself "all surface" or insubstantial or better yet immaterial. By two levels of the self, Santayana does not mean two distinct entities but rather two distinct operations; the one substantial and therefore, active; the other insubstantial and therefore, passive.<sup>1</sup> The knowing situation, then, is essentially an interaction between a stimulating natural environment and a responding "self repeating trope" (knot in material

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, cf. pp. 147-149.

flux) whose activity is recorded or described by an immaterial or passive spirit. All power is in matter, hence, only substance and psyche act whereas spirit as immaterial cannot act.

#### F. Some Problems That Have Arisen in This Chapter

Certainly the most unique feature of Santayana's thought here is that thinking is contemplative. He admits that the object of perception is a construction or true description adventitiously made and yet denies any agency or motive power to the spirit. He speaks of "dramatic" and "sympathetic imagination," of giving external relations to internally related essences and of progress in the arts, made possible through symbolic expression, and yet, says that the discoursing self is all surface. It apparently is necessary to think of two kinds of activity, one which is capable of effecting its environment and another which is capable of constructing grandiose schemes but incapable of effecting directly its environment. Such a distinction is important in Santayana's treatment of the perceptual situation though nowhere specifically alluded to. The question, is, then, how can these interdependent yet parallel operations effectively interact?

Another problem, related to the first, arises out of Santayana's epiphenomenalism, so Spirit is sort of an

excrecence or function arising out of material flux (everything is accept essences), yet, not directly effecting matter which is its source. How did such a function arise and how does it effect, even directly, the change of habit it makes after particularly intense insights?

Unfortunately, Santayana's answer here would not be particularly helpful; he would say, the function which we call spirit or self is a necessary presupposition, second in importance only to the deepest presupposition of all, substance, which is its parent. The question of how it came about is mooted by the overwhelming evidence of the actual operation of some such faculty. How spirit arises out of substance and how it in turn effects that substance, though indirectly, still remains a mystery and a serious problem in Santayana's epistemology.

Certainly another problem, which will be treated in more detail later, is why does substance, which has dynamic priority, have to exchange platonic essences in order to change? And further, if essence touches existence as the very forms of change, in what sense can we deny that in perception we perceive at least the forms that existence would wear? If there is a concomitance of external stimulation and intuition of essence, why must the construction of our object be arbitrary and wholly imaginative? To these could be added a much more

fundamental question, That is, why cannot the content of experience be conceived of in conceptualistic terms, that is, as psychical reactions of the underlying sentient organism constructed into concepts by the constant conjunction of sign and significate?

These and many other possible questions might be raised; however, the true test of any epistemological theory is whether or not it can account for the possibility of knowledge. In the next chapter it will be seen that the relevance of appearance to substance assures the possibility of knowledge, while the necessary independence of substance qualifies the traditional realistic conception of what would constitute knowledge.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE POSSIBILITY OF KNOWLEDGE



In this chapter the possibility of knowledge in Santayana's epistemology will be considered. To do this it will be necessary to make a distinction between intuition of essences as insufficient for knowledge of existence and belief in the meaning of essence, taken as a sign, which is sufficient for knowledge of existence. After this the verifiability and truth of knowledge will be analyzed, ending with a consideration of some problems posed by Santayana's account.

#### A. The Scope

The whole epistemology of Santayana is aimed at the ultimate problem of the possibility of knowledge and what would constitute knowledge. Essences, as the only indubitable data, "are therefore indispensable terms in the perception of matters of fact, and render transitive knowledge possible."<sup>1</sup> The reason why science gets discouraged is because it has a false conception of what would constitute knowledge: science feels that knowledge ought to be literal when, in fact, it can never be such; knowledge must be symbolical and as such its "moral function of not leaving us in the dark about the world we live in is perfectly fulfilled."<sup>2</sup> So then, knowledge, or

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<sup>1</sup>Butler, The Mind of Santayana, p. 174.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 436.

rather what would constitute knowledge for Santayana, is at best symbolic or derived. The animal can only have literal knowledge of what is actually present to it, and consequently, it has literal knowledge of essence but essences are non-existent and, therefore, do not constitute real knowledge about existence.

For Santayana the dualism of sign and object is undeniable as well as the undeniable "direction of attention and intent" to an object from whose representation information is derived.<sup>1</sup> As will be shown further on, it is "bodily attitude" which confirms the existence of the object believed in. Mere intuition of essence without the corroborating evidence of bodily attitude and consequent belief in existence would make knowledge impossible. It would be "sensuous idolatry" to attempt to make non-existent essences part of the existent nature of the object. It is, however, understandable that this could happen, for the object, in acting on the organs of perception, evokes essences. These essences then become true as signs but false as descriptions until by imagining and thinking a truer description may be made,<sup>2</sup> Knowledge, then, is necessarily symbolic and because of a fundamental dualism it cannot be literal. According to this view,

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 339.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

the object of signification becomes knowledge when the event of intuition of essence is confirmed by bodily attitude and believed in. According to such a view, then, knowledge is belief, though, as will be shown later, not an unqualified belief.

### B. The Beginnings of Knowledge

It is proper here to determine why man studies nature at all. Man does not study nature so that he may know how to act for man reacts habitually or instinctively out of the inherited organization of the organism.<sup>1</sup> Spirit merely lives in the psyche, it simply "perceives and endures that action" and becomes its "emotion and light."<sup>2</sup> Animal faith and action is the proper activity of the psyche, it needs no rational justification and is prior to that knowledge. Santayana says:

Animal faith . . . requires no special philosophical evidence of its validity. All experience, all knowledge, all art are applications of it, and reason has no competence to defend this faith, because it rests on it.<sup>3</sup>

Certainly, then, knowledge to act cannot be the reason for the study of nature. What then is the reason?

Man studies nature simply because his environment, by its impact, will shock or startle him into attention

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 75-76.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 570.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 581.

and new thought. Man is not startled by mere "isness" but rather by some movement; therefore, man is interested in nature for what it does and not what it is.<sup>1</sup> Because of the duality of the knowing situation, knowledge is derived. Environment evokes in the organs of perception the intuitions of essences which are the indubitable data of experience. Hence, essences are indirect representations of the movements and objects of nature, and consequently, knowledge of them can only be vouched for by animal faith or presumption. For this reason Santayana can say that "complete scepticism is not inconsistent with animal faith,"<sup>2</sup> It is because the object itself cannot be known and yet life must go on that scepticism is not inconsistent with faith.

Nature in startling man initiates the process of transitive knowledge. This knowledge is facilitated by two leaps: the one, from the organism to the intuition of essence; the other, the leap of faith, from the symbol sensed or thought to the external object.<sup>3</sup> The only sense in which Santayana could call the intuition of essence a leap would be that intuition somehow passes from the "state of the living organism" or the underlying

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 104.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 183.

organs of sensibility to the consciousness of essence in spirit. The reason why the second leap is designated as a leap of faith is implicit in the uncertainty of the accuracy of correspondence between the symbol and its intended object. Unfortunately the necessity of faith is irremediable for "fatality . . . links the spirit to a material organ so that, in order to reach other things, it is obliged to leap," but if the spirit were not so linked to some organ "and expressive of its rhythms and relations," spirit could not exist.<sup>1</sup> Spirit by itself is "omnipresent and omnimodal" and nothing could be "out of its cognitive range," but the spirit is dependent upon the psyche to direct her attention through involvement with the environment.<sup>2</sup> Spirit describes the objects that "instinct is materially predisposed to cope with," but it needs the essences evoked by that involvement to exist and function. Nature, then, makes a gesture towards man but man must interpret that gesture in terms of faith; faith that the gesture has meaning and ultimately that there is a gesturer.

### C. Intuition Is Insufficient for Knowledge

Knowledge can never take place in the comparison

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 165-166.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 166.

of two data given at the same time. Simultaneous data are merely aspects of a complex essence and as such have no signification. Unless one of the terms is known by intent, the other may not serve to qualify the first.<sup>1</sup> Learning, therefore, may only come about through the comparison of present intuitions with remembered essences. Although essences present to intuition are non-existent, remembered essences can and do become objects of knowledge because, as past events, they can become objects of intent.<sup>2</sup> Knowledge, then, cannot come from bare intuition; it comes when animal necessities lead man to give an adventitious order to his intuitions and especially when man learns "to discipline the otherwise too hurried credulities of timorous minds."<sup>3</sup> Knowledge is not immediate but mēdiatē or indirect and comes only when, through animal faith, man gives an adventitious order to otherwise sterile essences. Existence is externally related, whereas essence is internally related and if essence is ever to mean existence, it must be given an adventitious order or external relations as signs or symbols for that existential order. According to Santayana:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 167.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

<sup>3</sup>Sterling P. Lamprecht, "Animal Faith and the Art of Intuition," The Philosophy of Santayana ed., Paul A. Schilpp (Vol. II, Chicago: The Library of Living Philosophers, 1940), pp. 126-127.

The experience of essence is direct; the expression of natural facts through that medium is indirect. . . . The human medium of knowledge can perform its pertinent synthesis and make its pertinent report all the better when it frankly abandons the plane of its object and expresses in symbols what we need to know of it.<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge, then, if it is to be knowledge of externally related existence must itself be externally related. As the only indubitable data are essences and they are simple or unrelated (if complex they are internally related) knowledge of existence or knowledge on the plane of its object must be abandoned. In giving an adventitious order to essences and consequently abandoning the plane of the object and the immediate data of experience, knowledge necessarily becomes mediate. If, then, knowledge is to be attained, essences must become signs or symbols for nature.

To say that essences must become signs or symbols would be to overlook the fact that "sensibility naturally becomes objective, expectant, and full of assurance and transcendent intent."<sup>2</sup> Since essences are provoked by environmental stimulations, they are associated with the bodily attitude that is assumed as a result of that stimulation. In this way then sensibility becomes

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 102.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 506.

knowledge of the material world "but in its own sensual or conceptual terms."<sup>1</sup> Habit, then, responds in characteristic ways to special stimulations, and therefore, gives off data which may be relied upon as signs. Santayana says:

I am by no means compelled to yield ignominiously to any animal illusion; what guides me there is not illusion but habit; and the intuitions which accompany habit are natural signs for the circle of objects and forces by which that habit is sustained.<sup>2</sup>

In taking essences as signs illusion does not guide. Habit assures the relevancy of signs to their intended objects.

Signs have intent and transcendent reference, they mean some external objects, past, or future events but they cannot reveal the Ding-an-Sich. If the thing-in-itself is ever to be revealed it will be through "sympathetic imagination," but even when "the given essence will be the essence of the object meant . . . knowledge will remain a claim."<sup>3</sup> Santayana asks what has happened to the "gross object" encountered in experience when we analyze it, nothing remains but a few abstract, logical elements. His answer is:

Our powers of perception and conception are soon outrun; the threads become invisible which, when

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.    <sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 105.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 107.



woven together, made the cloth we saw. . . .  
Matter must include a thousand concrete  
accompaniments, which in such description are  
ignored.<sup>1</sup>

Matter is very complex, however, even if "apprehension could be adapted to the fine texture of substance" and substance were to be known, this would not be of any practical benefit. But, in fact, we do not know the fine texture and "the elementary terms of any description must--in that description, at least--remain undescribed; we must commend them to intuition."<sup>2</sup> Description may be made on the basis of the "threads" we do perceive; however, those perceived threads are themselves elementary terms of intuition and cannot be analyzed further. Ultimate knowledge, that is, knowledge of all the material threads of the object in their actual relations is impossible and at best a claim. Intuition gives some but not all of the material threads of the object and even those that intuition does give lack any of the external or actual relations possessed by material objects. Therefore, intuition cannot give knowledge of existence but must be content to supply the indubitable terms of experience which the spirit may take as symbols for matter.

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 430.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 431.

#### D. Belief in the Meaning of Intuition Initiates Knowledge

Intuited essences cannot be believed in since they are non-existent and "to believe in anything is to believe that it exists."<sup>1</sup> Essences, then, may only have epistemological value when intent transcends intuition and takes essences for what they mean.<sup>2</sup> This transcendence of intuition is only possible through the operation of animal faith. Animal faith as earlier than intuition assumes existence in the habitual response of the psyche to its environment while intuitions come merely to lend the animal something to posit. These accompanying intuitions are "natural signs for the circle of objects and forces by which the habit is sustained."<sup>3</sup> Hence, it becomes obvious that knowledge of existence comes when indubitable but unbelieved-in essences are transcended while their intuitions become signs for whatever objects the psyche is materially predisposed to cope with. Santayana says:

I have absolute assurance of nothing save of the character of some given essence; the rest is arbitrary belief or interpretation added by my animal impulse.<sup>4</sup>

This arbitrary belief or interpretation is not, however, unjustified for as Santayana goes on to say:

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 65.      <sup>3</sup>Ibid., pp. 105-107.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

Ideas become belief only when by precipitating tendencies to action they persuade me that they are signs of things; and these things are not those ideas simply hypostatized, . . . The belief is imposed on men surreptitiously by a latent mechanical reaction of my body on the object producing the idea; it is by no means implied in any qualities obvious in that idea.<sup>1</sup>

Belief in an existence beyond our ideas, then, requires a transcendence of intuition and this transcendence of intuition is a necessity of animal life.

The appearance of essence must not be confused with the event of its appearance. The essence itself is logical or neutral or better yet eternal; it is non-existential and hence, cannot be a sign for existence. It is the event of the appearance of essence that is tied to the latent mechanical reaction of the psyche and therefore, it is the event of the appearance of essence and not essence qua essence that is taken as a sign of existence. Existence is attributed to appearance "by the irrelevant momentum of my animal life."<sup>2</sup> For Santayana knowledge is knowledge of existence and, therefore, the non-existential data of consciousness must be put into external "presumptive relations," that is, the event of the appearance of essence must be taken as a sign for existence. According to Santayana:

Whereas intuition of essence . . . is not knowledge, because it has no ulterior object, the designation of

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 16.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 38.

some essence by some sign does convey knowledge  
 . . . of what essence was.<sup>1</sup>

The event of appearance, then, is the reason for belief in existence, and the source of knowledge as to what essence was for existence. Belief in existence or taking the event of appearance for a sign of existence, then, is necessary if knowledge is to be possible.

#### E. Knowledge of Existence is Normally Symbolic

As has been noted above, existence is externally related and the only indubitable data are essences which are internally related. For this reason, knowledge, which Santayana equates with knowledge of existence, must be of essences placed in presumptive relations. To do this, intuitions become signs for existence and discourse becomes symbolic description of those existences in terms of adventitious or presumptive relations. Knowledge of existence is gained through the inspection of a representation of the object which is of our own creation, albeit, guided by the habitual responses of the psyche to its environment. The relevancy of the representation to existence is due to the fact that existence and the intuition of that existence are "materially collateral, one comes to carry our thoughts in the

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 169.

direction of the other, and to give us prophetic knowledge of it."<sup>1</sup> According to Santayana, the reason why intuition carries thought in the direction of existence is that:

In knowledge of fact there is instinctive conviction and expectation, animal faith, as well as intuition of essences; and this faith (which is readiness to use some instinctive category) while it plunges us into a sea of presumption, conjecture, error, and doubt, at the same time sets up an ideal of knowledge, transitive and realistic, in comparison with which intuition of essence, for all its infallibility, is a mockery. We might almost say that sure knowledge, being immediate and instinctive, is not real knowledge, while real knowledge, being transitive and adventurous, is never sure.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge, then, is necessarily symbolic and transitive; however, as transitive the symbol may have a different status and form than its object. This is ideal, for Santayana goes on to say:

Were the representation a complete reproduction . . . it would be no symbol, but simply one more thing, intransitive and unmeaning, like everything not made to be interpreted.<sup>3</sup>

The insufficiency of intuition of essence for knowledge, then, is turned into the sufficiency of knowledge when the event of the appearance is taken as a sign for existence and essence is consequently recognized for what it was. Knowledge of existence requires the placing of essences in presumptive relations based on the sign meanings of the events of intuition.

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 439.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 433.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 437.

## F. Imagination Makes Knowledge Possible

For Santayana, symbols, considered as facts, have their own particular character which may be visual, audible, or verbal. The function of symbols, however, is "wholly and essentially transitive."<sup>1</sup> Since it is unlikely that any one symbol would adequately mediate any complex system of external relations, it becomes imperative to question how symbols are to be combined in order to represent existence? Symbols must be given an adventitious order if they are to represent any actual state of affairs in nature. Symbols, then, are woven into an adventitious representation of existence, but mere perception, though "originally true as a signal . . . is false as a description"; therefore, an appeal must be made to "intelligence and hypothesis, imagining and thinking."<sup>2</sup> Symbols qua symbols cannot enter the citadel of existence except through "sympathetic imagination."<sup>3</sup> It is a sympathetic imagination that copies or reproduces the actual relations in the thing signified by weaving symbols into a system of external relations. Sympathetic imagination as intent is a "dramatic figment sort of feeling."<sup>4</sup> Imagination or opinion, however, is not free floating, it is guided by the habitual response

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 438.    <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 440.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

of the psyche to its environment. Santayana says:

They are all creations of some living psyche, of human senses and passions stimulated and controlled by external facts. They therefore are indicative, first, of the life of the organism, its well being or distress, and secondly of the character of the environment, expressed in language of the psyche life.<sup>1</sup>

Knowledge, then, is made possible by an imaginative intent guided by the life of the animal which weaves its representative object out of the available signs and symbols for existence.

#### G. How Can Knowledge be Tested?

Since only symbols and not facts are transitive, the representation, if it were a perfect reproduction, would not be transitive, it would be a fact, just another object.<sup>2</sup> A perfect reproduction is not the object itself and being intransitive could not be interpreted. True knowledge is knowledge of external relations and according to Santayana:

It is only the system of external relations into which the symbols are interwoven that copies or reproduces the same system of relations in the thing signified.<sup>3</sup>

As existence is a system of external relations, it is

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," pp. 539-540.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 437.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 438.

only transitive symbols that may give true knowledge of existence. If this be true, then, how can the accuracy of knowledge be tested when the object is likely nothing more than an object of intent?

That the object of intent is objectively real is attested to by the obvious fact that bodily behavior is modified on the basis of such intended objects. As stated above, it is bodily attitude which confirms beliefs in signified objects. According to Santayana:

Knowledge is knowledge because it has compulsory objects that pre-exist. . . . I express in discourse the modified habits of an active being, plastic to experience, and capable of readjusting its organic attitude to other things on the same material plane of being with itself. . . . This attitude, physical and practical, determine the object of intent, which discourse is about.<sup>1</sup>

Realism is confirmed in practical behavior. Realism may be philosophically rejected, however, in practical behavior it is assumed, man does not jump out of the way of a speeding idea of an automobile.

It is not bodily attitude alone which confirms the existence of the significate, it is bodily attitude as a concomitant reaction of the organism to environmental stimulus. This concomitant reaction is the basis of knowledge.<sup>2</sup> The ground of knowledge, then, is the

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 425.



instinctive or habitual readjustment of the organism to its environment. For every sign there is a logically prior but chronologically concomitant physical reaction. This concomitance encourages belief and belief consummates transitive knowledge. Santayana says:

Transitive knowledge simply recognizes in a judgment the actual relation in which our living bodies stand to their environment. . . . The gift . . . is called sagacity.<sup>1</sup>

Since organic reaction and intuition originate in the psyche, and the psyche is instinctive, it stands to reason that there should not be any contradiction. Santayana holds that such contradiction as may exist, lies in the implication of terms and this is admittedly adventitious. Diversity of signs and description, however, are normal and involve no contradictions.<sup>2</sup> Although the "intrinsic and complete constitution" of the object cannot be known, its existence is assured by the fact that it can be pointed at, and its movements can be anticipated "by reckoning it up in symbolic terms such as words."<sup>3</sup> Santayana says:

The conclusion of our whole inquiry is that complete knowledge of natural objects cannot be hoped for. We know them by intent, based on bodily reaction. . . .<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Ibid.      <sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 176.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 172.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 443.

Adequate knowledge is transitive in intent and is not content to observe disembodied essences, its essences are essences of things affirmed by faith.<sup>1</sup>

The conclusion, then, is that knowledge is possible; however, it is a knowledge qualified by the inherent insecurity of transcendent intent. According to Santayana, "knowledge . . . is belief": a belief that is "native to animals, and precedes all deliberate use of intuitions as signs or descriptions of things." Beyond this, however, "knowledge is true belief" or rather, "appropriate description."<sup>2</sup> In recognition then of the limits of knowledge, Santayana says that "the ideal of knowledge is . . . natural science."<sup>3</sup> Why natural science?

It is only things on the scale of the human senses and in the field of those instinctive reactions which sensation calls forth, that can be the primary objects of human knowledge: . . . It is these instinctive reactions that select the objects of attention, designate their locus and impose faith in their existence.<sup>4</sup>

Only physical objects will stimulate instinctive reaction and consequently only physical things can be the primary object of knowledge. We are not bound in discourse to physical things; however, knowledge in the sense of appropriate description can only be of physical things.

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 443.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 179.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

## H. Knowledge and Truth

A proper treatment of the possibility of knowledge cannot be made until knowledge is seen in its relation to truth. Knowledge can only be meaningful if it is true knowledge. Coryy quotes Santayana as saying that the realm of truth is "that segment of the realm of essence which happens to be illustrated in existence."<sup>1</sup> That is, only that portion of the myriad of possible essences that is exhibited in existence is a part of the realm of truth. No matter how different these essences may be from one another, they cannot "exclude or contradict one another." In other words, ultimate knowledge of truth would entail a knowledge of every essence exhibited in existence as simply what it is, that is, unrelated to any other essence.

Such truth may only be attained by stepping up the ladder of "spiritual progress," Santayana says:

Life carries every sensitive animal as far up as appearance; intelligence raises him, at least in intention, to the level of truth; contemplation lifts him to that of essence, and ecstasy into the heart of pure being.<sup>2</sup>

Such a knowledge of truth, however, cannot be attained

<sup>1</sup>Coryy, "Some Notes on the Deliberate Philosophy of Santayana," p. 121.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "On Metaphysical Projection," p. 120.

except in intent, hence, such knowledge remains out of reach as the "aspect the universe would wear to omniscience."<sup>1</sup> As shown above, the animal may even attain, through ecstasy, the heart of pure being which includes unmanifested as well as manifested essence but "there is no way down from heaven to earth, from being to existence."<sup>2</sup> Hence, ultimate truth is unattainable and even pure being once experienced cannot become knowledge of existence. In what sense, then, can attainable or transitive knowledge be true? Knowledge of existence can only be pragmatically true. Ten Hoor says:

Ideation is valid if it fits the flux of perceptual experience; where purposes are concerned, it is invalid if it promotes the ultimate synthesis of meaning and values.<sup>3</sup>

Knowledge is, first of all, belief. The only indubitable data are essences, but essences are insufficient to knowledge, so, the animal must take his life in his hand and believe in what the event of the appearance of essence means. Thus, knowledge becomes symbolic and transitive and hence a belief. It must, however, be more than belief per se, it must be "true belief" in the sense of "appropriate description."<sup>4</sup> Truth as appropriate

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 118.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 123.

<sup>3</sup>Ten Hoor, "Santayana's Theory of Knowledge," p. 209.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 179.

description is essentially pragmatic truth. According to Santayana:

The relevance and truth of science, like the relevance and truth of sense, are pragmatic, in that they mark the actual relations, march and distribution of events, in terms of which they enter our experience.<sup>1</sup>

In another place Santayana says:

It is not resemblance but relevance and closeness of adaption that renders a language expressive or an expression true.<sup>2</sup>

It is clear, then, that for Santayana, knowledge of existence may only be pragmatically true. Pragmatic truth does not give the relations between actual things, but rather the actual relations in terms of which they enter our experience. Such truth is "partly truth to oneself, partly workable convention and plausibility."<sup>3</sup>

To say, however, that there may be as many private truths as there are persons is to miss Santayana's meaning. Santayana clearly felt that pragmatic truth ought to have a public significance. Hence, "the word truth ought . . . to be reserved for . . . the standard comprehensive description of any fact in all its

<sup>1</sup>George Santayana, Soliloquies in England (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1922), p. 257.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, Soliloquies in England, p. 83.

relations."<sup>1</sup> Knowledge of existence, then, is pragmatically true and ought as such to give a standard and comprehensive description of existence by means of marking the actual relations, in terms of which events enter our experience.

There is a "normal correspondence" between knowledge and its object; however, it does not represent "direct, exact, and complete knowledge of its object." For this reason, "complete knowledge" is impossible and we may be occasionally deceived by error.<sup>2</sup> The possibility of error is a constant reminder of the fact that knowledge is not literal, that is, knowledge of existence qua existence. According to Santayana:

The happy results and fertility of an assumption do not prove it literally, but only prove it to be suitable . . . a good myth. The axioms of sanity and art must correspond somehow to truth, but the correspondence may be very loose and very partial.<sup>3</sup>

The test of an assumption, then, is its heuristic value. On this point Santayana says:

The naturalist . . . constructions, though no less hypothetical and speculative than the idealists dreams, are such legitimate and fruitful fictions that they are obvious truths. . . . Truth, at the intelligible level.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 268.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Literal," cf. pp. 434-435.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 114.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, The Life of Reason, p. 60.

Although knowledge of things will never be literal, there is one other form of knowledge which does approach literal knowledge. This type of knowledge is called "literal psychology" and of it Santayana says:

Knowledge of discourse in other people, or of myself at other times, is what I call literary psychology. It is or may be . . . the most literal and adequate sort of knowledge of which a mind is capable. . . . This rare adequacy of knowledge is attained by dramatic sympathy. . . .<sup>1</sup>

Literal knowledge, then, is only approachable in knowledge of discourse in oneself or others but knowledge of existence is belief and plagued by all of the uncertainties of animal faith.

#### I. Some Problems Posed by Santayana's Account of the Possibility of Knowledge

The question should be raised here as to whether the definition of knowledge as "appropriate description" or true knowledge (public) as a "standard comprehensive description of any fact in all its relations" is equivalent to what is normally meant by the term truth. If by truth is meant corresponding somehow or other to the actual or real world in some demonstratable manner, then, Santayana's concept of what would be true is inadequate. For Santayana all demonstration depends on animal faith, hence,

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 173-174.

to demonstrate that something is true is merely to believe that it is true. However, this belief is not unwarranted, it is guided by the responses of the psyche to its environment. If this belief is publicly acceptable in terms of a "standard comprehensive description," then it is probably that the description is true in a more ultimate sense than mere animal preference. The publicity, then, of any standard and comprehensive description implies that it is true of existence in its actual relations, however, knowledge must remain a belief. This conclusion naturally follows from a dualistic epistemology which stresses the independence of the object while holding that that object must be known by means of transitive symbols which are in no way constituent elements of the actual object. Santayana simply seems to be stating categorically what dualistic epistemologists grudgingly admit, the basic insecurity of mediated knowledge. In the absence of absolute certainty, knowledge becomes belief, albeit warranted belief.

Santayana's meaning of the word truth or true does not appear to be contrary to the normal applications of true and truth, although, it is antithetical to the assurance that is associated with these terms. For example, when, say, two people agree on the identity of an object, the agreement or publicity of their statements



about that object is the basis for their assurance of the truth of their statements. What people mean by true or truth is the publicity and comprehensiveness of descriptions although the absolute assurance that they lend the terms true and truth is unwarranted, non sequitur, because of the inherent insecurity of symbolic knowledge. The conclusion, then, is that Santayana's conception of true and truth is behavioristically true to the normal use of these terms; although his meaning is not the accepted meaning of these terms.

A second problem is concerned with an over-emphasis of the role of imagination in acquiring knowledge of existence. If the psyche responds to only special stimuli on special occasions and is thus guided by habit, then, the intuitions of essences are not chaotic and have already some system or rhythm prior to their presentation to the spirit. This is the reason why the psyche makes intelligent responses possible, and further, this is the reason why animal faith, expressed through the habitual responses of the psyche, guides the spirit towards true knowledge. Santayana depicts the spirit as presented with a myriad of unrelated essences (certainly, if this was all the spirit had to go on, imagination would necessarily have to play the major role), however, these essences although unrelated to any other essence

are very much related to an intuition which is a consequent of the habitual psyche's response to some special stimuli on some special occasion. It appears quite obvious that essences which are necessarily tied in perception to some intuition which, along with every other intuition, presents itself to the spirit in a definite order or system as predetermined by the habitual responses of the psyche, have an order already and do not require any extensive use of imagination or "fancy." It does appear, then, that there need be an excessive emphasis upon the role of imagination or "fancy" in knowing.

A third problem is concerned with the failure of Santayana to make clear the role of quasi or even non-instantiative particulars such as symbols in allowing for a realm of discourse and knowledge which is not tied to some present environmental cue. Granted the spirit in fixing an idea in memory accumulates a storehouse of instruments of expression, however, spirit as immaterial has no power or agency; hence, it cannot of itself initiate thinking. It would seem as if the self, being prepared in every way except as a material agency for thinking in the absence of instantiative particulars, must wait for a push from its environment before it can begin. If this be the case, however, having once been

stimulated, the psyche has a predetermined set of habitual responses and consequent intuitions of essences, and hence, thinking in the absence of at least some environmental cues becomes impossible. The question that arises and one that Santayana does not answer is: How may thinking in the absence of environmental cues take place, as experience suggests that it does take place?

CHAPTER V

THE ROLE OF ESSENCE SUMMARIZED AND CRITICIZED

In this chapter the role or function of essences in the epistemology of Santayana will be summarized and criticized. To do this essences will be considered in terms of the nature of essence, the function of essence, the relation of essence to the spirit, essence and thinking, and essence and truth. The apparent strengths will be given in the course of each summarization whereas a consideration of the apparent weaknesses will be given as a conclusion to each subtopic.

#### A. The Nature of Essence

The nature of essence, in terms of its most distinctive quality, is the non-existence of essence. Considering the claim of Santayana that essences are the only indubitable data of experience they become ipso facto the basis of any knowledge of existence. The question naturally arises as to how non-existent essences can give knowledge of existence? This question will be considered under subtopic B, "The Function of Essence," however, here the main concern will be why, according to Santayana, essences may not be considered to be either physical or mental.

For Santayana the fundamental duality of sign and object is undeniable as is the fact that sign and object

are "materially collateral" the former bringing, via thought, "prophetic knowledge" of the latter.<sup>1</sup> To say that signs or essences, taken as meaning existence, bring knowledge of the object or existence is not to say that essences are constituent elements of existence. In fact essences, which may only have internal relations, could not exist, for, according to Santayana:

Existence is a conjunction of natures in adventitious and variable relations. [Hence] . . . it is evident that existence can never be given in intuition. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Santayana, then, by definition establishes the exclusive duality of sign and object. Essences as the indubitable data of experience are immediate, simple, and unrelated, whereas existence is "a conjunction of natures in adventitious and variable relations."

To deny that essences are constituent elements of their intended objects is to say that essences are not and cannot be physical. However, it is understandable that they should be considered so. On this point Santayana says that to assert that essences are a part of the object itself is a "hypostasis of symbols" or "sensuous idolatry," However:

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 339.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 48.

Such sensuous idolatry is constitutional in the animal mind, because its intended object is whatever external existence may be acting upon it, while its data are essences evoked by the organ of perception. Perception is thus originally true as a signal but false as a description.  
 . . .<sup>1</sup>

Essences are simply "predicates" or "poetic epithets for that substance, not constituents of it."<sup>2</sup> According to Santayana, "signs cannot be parts of what they signify, nor essences parts of things." In fact "what qualities shall be found in or attributed to an object is . . . determined by the structure of the organ, not by . . . the object."<sup>3</sup> If, then, the appearance of qualities are determined by the structure of the organ, why could essences not be considered mental?

Before considering the issue of why essences cannot be considered mental, a judgment must be made as to the value of non-physical essences. If essences were to be considered as constituent elements of their object, how could the fact of error be accounted for? According to Santayana:

Error thus awakens even the laziest philosophy from the dream of supposing that its meanderings are nothing but strands in the texture of its object.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 440.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Some Meanings of the Word Is," p. 372.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 441.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 123.

Santayana, then, has a strong empirical argument here, for error is a fact and to consider sense contents as physical constituents of their intended objects would seriously strain any account of error.

Essences are neutral, logical, and non-existent, or, to put it another way, "sheer possibles" and they will only exist, as new facts, existents, when they are included "in the material or in the spiritual chain of contingent events."<sup>1</sup> That is, in the material chain of contingent events as the forms of existence, or in the spiritual chain of contingent events as "distinguishable features in a total field of apprehension."<sup>2</sup> Essences in themselves are neutral but "charged [by the particular organ of sense] . . . with emotional and sentimental values" and as such "are psychical in quality and status."<sup>3</sup> What Santayana is saying, then, is that essences exhibited in intuition which have not yet been taken as a sign for some intended object are truly neutral and non-existent, but as taken as a sign and given a moral colour by the animal intuitions of essences take on a psychical quality and status and further, as included in some material or spiritual chain of contingent events they take on existence as new facts.<sup>4</sup> Essences, then, are neutral and non-existent

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 522.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 523.      <sup>4</sup>Ibid., cf., p. 523.



but drop their neutral and non-existent status when given a moral colour (that is, interpreted) by some animal.

Santayana, therefore, denies that essences are mental although they may, as interpreted by the organs of sense, take on a physical quality and status. If, however, the nature of essence is considered to be neither physical nor mental they necessarily take on some ontological status. According to Santayana:

Essences have the texture and ontological status of Platonic ideas, [but] . . . can lay claim to none of the cosmological, metaphysical, or moral prerogatives attributed to those ideas. They are infinite in number and neutral in value.<sup>1</sup>

It is interesting that a confirmed naturalist would abandon the realm of the nominalists simple, immediate, and unrelated sense-contents, to account for knowledge in terms of universals. Santayana says:

Existence naturally precedes any idealization of it which men can contrive (since they, at least, must exist first), yet in the order of values knowledge of existence is subsidiary to knowledge of ideals.<sup>2</sup>

Hence, to escape making essences either physical or mental Santayana has had to make essences universals. However, why could essences not be considered as either physical or psychical?

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, pp. 77-78.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, The Life of Reason, p. 427.

Among those who have criticized Santayana for the claim that one may have knowledge of existence by means of neutral and non-existent essences is Calkins who says:

The critical realists may not . . . both conceive essences as detached alike from physical and mental existents, and also as constituting the very nature of these existing things.<sup>1</sup>

This criticism, however, is inadequate for Santayana does not claim that essences constitute the very nature of existing things. For Santayana essences are the forms that existence sheds in order to change, in fact, without the help of substance essence would never "pass from its ideal possibility into selected and instant being."<sup>2</sup> Essences, then, do not constitute the very nature of existing things, they are simply the forms that existence might wear and exchange in its flow. Essences are simply signs for existence.

In Chapter I, subtopic C, "The New Problem of Critical Realism," Butler is quoted as claiming that the critical realists have exaggerated the dualistic dilemma by introducing the realm of essences. Certainly if essences were considered to be sense-contents and psychological in nature the problem would be simplified. Why not,

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<sup>1</sup>Mary Calkins, "On Certain Difficulties in Modern Doctrine of Essences," Journal of Philosophy, XXIII (December 23, 1926), p. 704.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, The Life of Reason, p. 434.

then, consider essences to be sense-contents, psychical in nature? Marten Ten Hoor makes this suggestion in the following manner. He says:

Why does the animal point or attend to an object? . . . If knowledge implies 'belief posited in faith and action' we must necessarily inquire into the grounds of this belief. . . . The animal 'points' because he 'senses.'<sup>1</sup>

When the environment stimulates the underlying organs of sense why are not sense-contents evoked rather than essences? Ten Hoor goes on to say that if one takes the object to have been sensed the experience of sensing could be explained as a "reverberation or mere momentum of the neutral mechanism."<sup>2</sup> In other words, if one holds to sensing there is a possibility of a scientific account whereas, if one holds to an intuiting of non-existent essences there is no apparent account of how an intuition takes place. Ten Hoor, then, along with Butler feels that the "intuition [of] essences seems an unnecessary complication."<sup>3</sup>

The denial by Santayana that essences are psychical or constituent elements of their objects seems quite valid, allowing for the fact of error and the monistic

<sup>1</sup>Marten Ten Hoor, Review of Scepticism and Animal Faith by George Santayana, XX (November 22, 1923), pp. 660-661.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 662.    <sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 661.

dilemma. However, the denial that essences are mental or psychical in quality does not appear to serve any useful function. It does not even rule out the subjectivism of the assertion that all we know immediately are our own sense-contents. Even according to Santayana's scheme, all we can know indubitably are our own intuitions of essence and if they are to represent existence at all, they must be given an adventitious order which is not intrinsic to their own nature. The introduction, then, of non-existent and neutral essences does not serve any necessary function, and consequently, tends to complicate an already tedious epistemological dualism.

#### B. The Function of Essence

Essence qua essence is simply "anything definite capable of appearing or being thought of."<sup>1</sup> On the other hand:

The realm of essence . . . is simply the unwritten catalogue, prosaic, and infinite, of the characters possessed by such things as happen to exist, together with the characters which all different things would possess if they existed.<sup>2</sup>

As may be seen from the above, essences qua essences have no function, they just are. However, essences are used by substance in order to facilitate change and they are

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," p. 317.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 77.

used by the self when they are taken as signs for existence. Essences, then, have no agency (all power is in the inner unrest of matter) their function consists in the manner in which they are used.

As discussed in the preceding subtopic, essences function in existence to allow for change and multiplicity. Santayana says:

A changing world is defined at each moment or in each movement by the essence of that moment or of that movement; and when it drops that pattern or that trope, the essence then dismissed remains, in its logical identity, precisely the essence that it was during that manifestation and before it. Were it not the same essence throughout, it could not be picked up or dropped, recognized, or contrasted with the forms that existence might wear sooner or later. The eternal self-identity of every essence is therefore a condition for the possibility of change; and complete as the realm of essence is and unaffected in its ideal infinity, and unaffected there by the evolution of things, yet it is intimately interwoven, by its very eternity, with this perpetual mutation.<sup>1</sup>

Essence does not interject itself into the flow of existence, rather, matter has "dynamic priority" and is "the seat and principle of genesis."<sup>2</sup> Essences, then, function in existence as the condition, but not the instigator, of change.

The other function of essence, and perhaps the most important, is to bring knowledge of existence, that

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Transcendental Absolutism," pp. 315-316.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," pp. 525-526.

is, when essences are transcended and taken as a sign for existence.<sup>1</sup> The movements of existence, defined at each moment by some essence, stimulates the psyche and consequently some "essence imposes itself upon the mind."<sup>2</sup> According to Santayana;

Transitivity in knowledge has two stages or leaps: the leap of intuition, from the state of the living organism to the consciousness of some essence; and the leap of faith or action, from the symbol actually given in sense or thought to some ulterior existing object,<sup>3</sup>

The first stage is accomplished when the psyche is stimulated by the environment. The second state, the leap of faith, is accomplished when the sterile essence is charged with transcendent intent and becomes a symbol for some existent posited in faith.<sup>4</sup> Essence, then, has a transitive function only when a "transcendent intent" takes it as a symbol for some "ulterior existing object."

Animal faith makes essence vehicular, as has been shown above, but what is the justification for animal faith? Animal faith requires no vindication, it is a fundamental assumption of all experience and is the basis of reason itself.<sup>5</sup> The critic of Santayana faces a real

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 65.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 528.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Three Proofs," p. 183.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 433.

<sup>5</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 581.

dilemma here, if he allows animal faith, then non-existent essences may become vehicles of knowledge and, on the other hand, if he denies the validity of animal faith, then he rules out the whole realm of habitual or instinctive activity. For example, Santayana says:

The symbol taken as a fact, has an assignable character of its own--visual, audible, or verbal--but taken functionally it is wholly and essentially transitive.<sup>1</sup>

The whole question of whether essences are descriptive or transitive turns on the word "taken." Santayana says:

To consider an essence is, from a spiritual point of view to enlarge acquaintance with true being; but it is not even to broach knowledge of fact; and the ideal object so defined may have no natural significance, though it has aesthetic immediacy and logical definition.<sup>2</sup>

Therefore, when essence becomes a symbol it only becomes so when it is taken as meaning something which is foreign to its nature. Again, when essence becomes a transitive vehicle of knowledge it only becomes so when it is taken as meaning some ulterior object which is not, ipso facto, necessary by virtue of its mere presence to spirit. Hence, to allow Santayana's conception of animal faith is to allow neutral and non-existent essences to become transitive symbols with extensive descriptive powers.

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 438. Italics mine.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 75.

In the above consideration of essence it has been noted that transitive knowledge requires a mediating vehicle in order to pass from the intuition of essences to a knowledge of existence. It was further noted that the symbol could serve such a function. However, it was observed that a symbol is only taken as a fact having its own characteristics and only taken functionally as transitive. In other words, the transitive symbol or the mediating vehicle, is nothing but an essence charged with meaning which is not intrinsic to its nature by a transcendent intent based on animal faith.

How, then, can non-existent essences give knowledge of existence? They cannot, for, as was already cited above, "to consider . . . essence . . . from a spiritual point of view . . . is not even to broach knowledge of fact." Knowledge of existence comes by means of a transcendent intent based on animal faith.

It is a serious weakness in Santayana's scheme that the indubitable data of experience, essence, cannot, unembellished by animal faith, give knowledge of existence. If essences maintain their ideality they can give no knowledge of existence. What good are indubitable data of experience if they give no knowledge of fact? As soon as animal faith turns essence into a symbol of existence, it has, essentially, made over a neutral essence into a



psychical sense-content having assignable qualities of its own. If, then, essences are impotent qua essences and become sense-contents as a result of the operation of animal faith, why not call essences sense contents? This conclusion is in agreement with the conclusion of subtopic A, "The Nature of Essence." In fact, if essences are conceivably mental and symbols are essentially sense-contents, that is, they have assignable characteristics of their own, then the concept of non-existent and neutral essences appears superfluous.

#### C. The Relation of Essence to Spirit

Spirit is not the same thing as the psyche, "spirit is 'consumation' . . . this consumation is not rare or occasional but accompanies the whole orchestration of life."<sup>1</sup> Spirit, as carried along in the psyche, arises in response to "the vicissitudes of . . . animal life."<sup>2</sup> Spirit merely endures the action of psyche and cannot act in itself.<sup>3</sup> Spirit, as the actualization of nature becomes for nature "the sense and knowledge of its own existence."<sup>4</sup> Spirit, however, is subservient "to material modes of being" and hence perception becomes

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 541.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 276.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 570.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 521.

a "stretching forth of intent beyond intuition" by means of intelligence which is the "most ideal function of spirit."<sup>1</sup> Santayana says:

Ideas become beliefs only when by precipitating tendencies to action they persuade me that they are signs of things; and these things are not those ideas simply hypostatized. . . . The belief is imposed on me surreptitiously by a latent mechanical reaction of my body on the object producing the idea; it is by no means implied in any qualities obvious in that idea.<sup>2</sup>

The relation of essence to spirit, then, is that neutral and non-existent essences are transcended by a spirit which is subservient to the mechanical reaction of the psyche to its environment.

All power is in matter, therefore the material psyche must act in the immaterial spirit; The essences evoked by the reaction of the psyche to its environment are present to the spirit, which is to be emotion and light for that activity, yet the data of intuition must be transcended if knowledge of existence is to be forthcoming. However, transcendence of the data of intuition is an act of animal faith and animal faith is manifested by the material psyche and not the immaterial spirit. The activity of the psyche, then, is both prior to the intuition of essence and the means whereby the data of

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 282.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

intuition are transcended thereby allowing for knowledge of existence.

Since matter, or in the case of knowledge, the material psyche, does all of the work spirit qua spirit is reduced to a contemplative and retentative function. Spirit, "while existentially carried along" in the flux of matter "arrests some datum, lending it an ideal unity, fixity, and moral color."<sup>1</sup> Spirit, then, simply peruses the essences presented to it in the flux of existence and fixes those data with all of their concomitant moral color added by the material psyche in its adventures.

It is hard to see just how Santayana could expect anything so impotent as spirit to affect the material psyche. Santayana says:

The environment determines the occasions on which intuitions arise, the psyche--the inherited organization of the animal--determines their form.<sup>2</sup>

What, then, does the spirit do?

Spirit has no interests, no curiosity, no animal impatience; and as it arises only when and where nature calls it forth, so it surveys only what nature happens to spread before it.<sup>3</sup>

Spirit, then, surveys what nature manifests to it, but what is the nature of this survey?

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 530.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 88.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 163.

Spirit arises in response to the activity of the psyche and consequently "essence . . . symbolizes an object to which the animal is tentatively addressed."<sup>1</sup> The "attitude" of being addressed to an object shows itself either in movements available to "gross external observation" viz., pointing to the moon or in an attitude" confined to the inner readjustments [of] . . . the psyche [viz.] . . . attention, expectation, deliberation, memory, or desire."<sup>2</sup> These attitudes provide the "habitual background" out of which essences derive their meaning while the catalogue of remembered essences as well as "master-essences," which are our attitudes toward things not essences, further aid in the organization of experience.<sup>3</sup> Spirit, then, in surveying what nature manifests, classifies those experiences in terms of present attitudes towards essences just manifested and past attitudes toward things ("master-essences").

Spirit further surveys nature through the "intellectual powers of . . . attention, synthesis, [and] perception."<sup>4</sup> Attention takes place "because the animal is forming habits" or responding to its environment, while synthesis takes place when a particular impression merges with the "responsiveness of the organ affected"

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 276.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., pp. 276-277.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 277.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 281.

which modifies the reaction called for by that impression on the basis of the report of many other impressions.<sup>1</sup> Perception is, quite simply, the transcending of intuition by intent. Santayana says, "perception points to what it does not, save by pointing, know to exist."<sup>2</sup> Spirit, then, although it is immaterial, demonstrates its subservience to nature in giving knowledge of nature.

There is a fundamental weakness in Santayana's account here for he assigns to spirit the function of gaining knowledge of existence yet he does not give any adequate account of how this knowledge may aid the habitual psyche. The problem, then, is how may spirit use this knowledge to affect the active psyche? Cory, quoting Santayana says, "the freedom and glory of essence comes from its impotence," and further "its essence is to be light, not . . . power."<sup>3</sup> Santayana's spirit is epiphenomenal, it "is only an intermittent light that plays over but does not intervene in the material processes of nature."<sup>4</sup> Santayana does not consider spirit as alien to matter for if it were, "perception . . . would be a miracle and an impossibility."<sup>5</sup> One could safely conclude, then, that matter does affect spirit but that spirit cannot affect matter. On this point Santayana says:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.      <sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 383.

<sup>3</sup>Cory, "Some Notes on the Deliberate Philosophy of Santayana," p. 123. Quoted from The Realms of Being, p. 643.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 123.      <sup>5</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 282.

My materialism regards the mind as purely expressive; there is no mental machinery; the underground work is all done by the organism, in the psyche, or in what people call the unconscious mind.<sup>1</sup>

Santayana cannot satisfactorily account for the fact that we do change our ways of thinking and acting on the basis of what is learned in experience.<sup>2</sup> According to Santayana's analysis, spirit cannot affect the activity of the material psyche for it is purely expressive. Of what possible value, then, is knowledge of existence if it is possessed by an impotent spirit which is unable to affect the material psyche or aid the psyche in dealing with its environment?

#### D. Essences and Thinking

In Santayana's epistemology there is a heavy emphasis on the behavioristic accompaniments of thinking rather than on thinking itself. This is due, primarily, to the fact that spirit only exists for the actualization of nature in essence and essences are only manifested when

<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," pp. 579-580.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana does attempt an answer to this problem when he says "Spiritual lives are facts. . . . Nor is this taste of liberty altogether momentary. . . . Spiritual insights induce a new habit, open a path to a deeper stratum of the soul. The heart has found a truer good, and does not forget it." ("Apologia," p. 569) However, he still fails to show how the spiritual insights of an impotent spirit could possibly change a habit in the material psyche.

some psyche is responding to the flux of his environment. Hence, without environmental stimulation, there can be no manifestation of essence to spirit and without this manifestation of essence there can be no spirit, consciousness, or thought. For this reason Ten Hoor says, "thought [for Santayana] is merely the froth and foam on the surface of flux."<sup>1</sup> The main issue to be analyzed here, then, is given the conceptual framework of Santayana's epistemology, what is the value of thinking?

In Santayana's account of knowledge, essences are the indubitable and unanalyzable elements of what may be known. He says:

All ultimate elements in what is known--including their primary relations--must be known by intuition; they are data given absolutely and unbuttressed by any reasons, . . . The elementary terms of any description must--in that description, at least--remain undescribed; we must commend them to intuition.<sup>2</sup>

Knowledge, however, is knowledge of existence, which is a conjunction of natures in external relations, whereas essences have only internal relations. Essences, then, are in themselves insufficient for knowledge of existence. If essences are to represent existence they must be taken as signs by animal faith and be deployed in a system of external relations.

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<sup>1</sup>Marten Ten Hoor, "Santayana's Theory of Knowledge," Journal of Philosophy, XX (April 12, 1923), p. 207.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Literal," p. 431.

For Santayana, then, essences, before they can become transitive symbols, must be taken as meaning some ulterior object and symbols, before they can represent existence, must be woven into a system of external relations. Individual perceptions may truly be a sign for existence; however, if existence is to be symbolically represented, an appeal must be made, "imagining and thinking,"<sup>1</sup> For Santayana, then, there cannot be any description (knowledge) of existence without thinking and imagining. Why is imagining necessary? Imagining is necessary in order to give external relations to essences, or, in other words, to "imagine the object" rather than individual essences which are insufficient for knowledge.<sup>2</sup> What is the impetus to imagine our object? Reason consciously interprets nature by means of "the function of imagination or 'fancy.'"<sup>3</sup> However, "there is no dilemma in the choice between animal faith and reason, because reason is only a form of animal faith."<sup>4</sup> Hence, the whole process of knowledge, from the intuition of essence to the interpretation of nature, may

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 440.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," cf., pp. 515-516.

<sup>3</sup>Butler, The Mind of Santayana, p. 56.

<sup>4</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 383.



be explained in terms of an animal positing and representing existence in faith.

As has been noted in Chapter I, error may be used as an argument against epistemological monism; however, Santayana would have to admit that error was also a sign of imagining and thinking, and, more specifically, thinking in the awareness of error. Santayana says:

I cannot prolong or intensify discourse without soon coming upon what I call interruption, confusion, doubt, or contradiction. An impulse to select, to pursue, and to reject specific essences insinuates itself into discourse.<sup>1</sup>

Certainly Santayana could explain this confusion in terms of a wayward "attention upon" essences,<sup>2</sup> but the discrimination that is implied in "doubt" and the awareness of "contradiction" must be considered as thinking. Certainly criticism, which comes as a result of contradiction must be considered thinking. It might be questioned, however, why make a case for thinking since Santayana admits thinking?

Santayana does not deny thinking, in fact, he says that "the self involved in discourse is a thinking mind."<sup>3</sup> However, what Santayana does deny is that "mental discourse" can be a self or psyche, for "it is all surface; it neither precedes, nor survives, nor

<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 136.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 137.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

guides, nor posits its data; it merely notes and remembers them."<sup>1</sup> As was noted in the preceding subtopic, spirit merely becomes knowledge of nature by means of its actualization in essences present to the spirit. In the conclusion to that discussion it was decided that knowledge of existence which cannot affect the manner in which the psyche deals with its environment is worthless. Santayana's assertion that particularly illuminating insights of the spirit may occasionally change the psyche's habits is inadequate, for the development and/or change of habit is a time consuming thing, and it is a fact of experience that new knowledge may initiate an immediate change in the way a self responds to any environmental situation. The issue that must be decided here is; is there any value in thought, considering the stultifying limits on thinking that have been imposed by Santayana?

The denial of any power to influence actions to thinking must be considered one of the most important weaknesses of Santayana's epistemological scheme. Munitz says:

If we draw a sharp line between the mechanical and the mental, putting all efficacy in the former, then thought becomes truly impotent and redundant in the march of events, a helpless spectator having no practical control over the instruments and

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

conditions of its activity.<sup>1</sup>

This is a fair statement concerning the fate of thought in Santayana's system, and in the light of the above stated question concerning the value of such thought, thinking must be regarded as an unworthy labor for a self concerned with the practical pursuits of life.

A further criticism of Santayana on this point is that of Ten Hoor, who says:

Santayana fails to note that certain facts true enough about thought in its genesis, are not true about thought in its maturity. Although action is purely instinctive in its first stages, a consciousness of its purpose makes it a power where it was a force.<sup>2</sup>

It certainly is very difficult in the light of experience to say that the thinking mind conscious of its own purposes is unable to affect the activity of its body or of its own thoughts. For example, one may have always brushed his teeth with long horizontal movements, yet on the advice of his dentist immediately switch to short vertical ones. Or perhaps one may have always thought Negroes to be mentally inferior but upon reading a textbook in differential psychology, may completely change his thinking on this subject. The range of examples that could be given is infinite; however, the theory that

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<sup>1</sup>Karl Milton Munitz, The Moral Philosophy of Santayana (New York: The Humanities Press, 1958), p. 36.

<sup>2</sup>Ten Hoor, "Santayana's Theory of Knowledge," p. 207.

thought is powerless is so contrary to everyday experience that further examples are not necessary. The denial then, of any power to thought to influence the activity of the self is perhaps the most serious weakness in Santayana's epistemology.

#### E. Essences and Truth

The relationship between knowledge and truth has been dealt with in detail in Chapter IV, subtopic H, entitled "Knowledge and Truth," in which we found that knowledge of existence is only pragmatically true; that is, true in the sense of being a standard and comprehensive description of existence. The problem to be analyzed here is the role essence plays in the knowledge of truth.

For Santayana, the goal of life is not to have true knowledge, it is, rather, to be absorbed into the very being of truth. He says:

When naturalism . . . had been firmly rooted in my mind, the other half of the total problem spontaneously came to the fore. What . . . is the nature and possible virtue of man? On what . . . can he set his heart? . . . Only on the life of reason, only on union with the truth, only on ideal sympathy with that irrepressable spirit which comes to light on all human beings, flowering differently in each, and moving in each towards a special perfection.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, The Idler and His Works And Other Essays, p. 17.

This union with truth is not a union with a world-soul or anything like that, it is, rather, the forgetting of ones "temporal status and perus[ing] both temporal and eternal things in their truth, that is, under the form of eternity."<sup>1</sup> To do this is to take off "the garment of existence" by refusing to take the datum of intuition as a sign for existence and to consider it simply as "that which it inherently, logically, and unchangeably is"--essence.<sup>2</sup> If, however, "intuition . . . preserves [the] . . . insecurity proper to the flux of existence" while informing the spirit about existence, then "the bright flower of consciousness [is shed] as a useless husk."<sup>3</sup> Then, in the absence of consciousness spirit is separated from the truth.

For Santayana, then, there are two forms of truth. There is truth in the sense of "appropriate description" which occurs when the animal clothes an essence with existence by taking it as a sign for existence, and there is the truth in the more absolute sense which occurs when the spirit refuses to take essence for anything other than what it is. Santayana

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<sup>1</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 585.

<sup>2</sup>Santayana, Scepticism, p. 39.

<sup>3</sup>Santayana, "Apologia," p. 585.

chooses the latter form of truth for himself.<sup>1</sup> However, as was noted above, to take essences as signs for existence is to shed "the bright flower of consciousness" and to suffer the "insecurity proper to the flux of existence." The choice, then, is up to the animal to either seek "union with the truth" by forgetting his own "temporal status" and seeing all things "under the form of eternity," or to clothe essence with existence by taking it as a sign of existence and seek the only truth possible concerning existence--pragmatic truth.

Essence, then, as the indubitable and ultimate elements of experience may serve either to give man knowledge of existence or they may serve to aid him in escaping the inherent insecurity of existence towards that special perfection that is the reward of an unbiased contemplation of essence. This, then, is the role that essences play in attaining knowledge of truth.

The major weakness in Santayana's analysis of truth is the ambiguousness of what he actually means by Truth. As has already been cited in subtopic H, Chapter IV, Truth is "the aspect the universe would wear to omniscience." If truth were this, what could it possibly mean? Formally speaking this definition is a

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid., p. 584.

mere tautology, for Truth is contained in the very concept of omniscience. It is a meaningless statement.

In Santayana's conception of pragmatic truth, however, we have a conception of truth that is closer to the epistemological problem. Existence is problematical, hence, any knowledge of that existence must be problematical also. A pragmatic definition of truth is equipped to deal with the inherent insecurity of Santayana's epistemology and is perhaps the only one so suited.

Unfortunately The Realm of Essence is not particularly relevant to a consideration of the place of essence in Santayana's epistemology. His utterances in this work are characteristically ontological and as such refer primarily to the subsistence of essences as possibles and not their symbolic function of revealing existence. For this reason The Realm of Essence has not been cited as there were more suitable references in Santayana's more characteristically epistemological works.

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this thesis is to determine the place of essences in the epistemology of Santayana and by doing so to make some judgment as to the adequacy of his view. The place of essences is considered within the framework of certain established epistemological problems, viz., the origin and nature of knowledge, the structure of the knowing situation, and the possibility of knowledge. Finally the theory of essences is summarized and criticized but only after setting Santayana within the perspective of critical realism.

As a critical realist Santayana believes that knowledge is mediated and he is therefore concerned with the nature of the mediating vehicle. The problem of error presents a serious obstacle to the assertion that the data of experience are constituent elements of their objects. And yet not all of our experience is erroneously interpreted, hence the object must be considered as independent of appearances and yet somehow appearance must be considered as relevant to its object. Essences, then, cannot be physical and as relevant neither can they be considered as subjective mental products, therefore they must be considered as neutral.

In Chapter II intuitions of essences are seen as occasioned by environmental stimulation and determined by the underlying structure of the organism. All power is material, hence all activity is restricted to either substance itself or its evolved physical counterpart--psyche. In order to account for knowledge a spirit which records the activity of the psyche must be assumed. However, as epiphenomenal this spirit cannot affect the material psyche. Nature stimulates the psyche which, in responding to that stimulation, evokes an intuition of essence. This intuition of essence, when it is taken as a sign of some intended object, becomes knowledge of the activity of the psyche and the plane of natural objects with which the psyche is involved.

In Chapter III the perceptual situation is analyzed in terms of the inter-relations of the various elements. Matter acts, psyche reacts, and spirit records. Spirit records by fixing the data of intuition and adding, by means of animal faith, an adventitious order to these essences. Since existence is externally related and essence is internally related, essences, if they are to represent existence must be adventitiously placed in external relations. To do this spirit must trust the animal faith of the psyche and take essences as meaning existence. Spirit, then, is powerless to act, therefore the material

psyche must act for it and turn neutral essences into meaningful signs and symbols for existence.

In Chapter IV it is shown that intuition is insufficient for knowledge; it is essentially belief, and consequently fraught with the insecurity inherent in the life of the animal. Symbols must be imaginatively woven into a representation of existence which may or may not adequately express reality. Knowledge or true belief, then, is essentially pragmatic, that is, belief is true if it aids the animal in dealing adequately with his environment. Pragmatic truth is appropriate description and to be appropriate it must be public in the sense of being a standard and comprehensive description. Knowledge, then, is possible but qualified by the necessities of animal life and the fundamental dualism of sign and object.

In Chapter V the nature, function, and relation of essences to spirit, thinking, and truth are summarized and criticized. The first major weakness that is noted comes out of the discussion of why essences cannot be either physical or psychical. Granted essences cannot be considered physical, for how could we account for error, but why may not the data of intuition, Santayana's essences, be considered mental or psychical? Since the intuiting of essences are admittedly psychical in status why may they not be considered psychical in fact? Intuitions of

essences are evoked from the organs of sense and are the only undubitable data of the immaterial spirit. Hence it seems quite natural that they should be considered mental data, the product of simple sensing. That Santayana does not consider them to be so and clings to the concept of non-existent essences seems to be a weakness in his epistemological theory.

The second major weakness that is noted is that since essences, as ideals, cannot give knowledge of existence but must be clothed with the garment of existence and turned into sense-contents by animal faith, why not call intuitions of essences sense-contents? If essences must become sense-contents before they can give knowledge of existence then at least in the context of the knowing situation they must be sense-contents. Essences qua essences then, are only relevant to a spirit that simply stares, or contemplates them, in belief and knowledge they are sense-contents, signs for transcendent objects. For knowledge, at least, non-existent and neutral essences are superfluous.

A third weakness in Santayana's account is the impotency of the spirit as simply contemplative. He says spirit becomes knowledge of existence yet denies to spirit the power to aid the psyche in dealing with its environment. The fact is that we do change our ways of thinking and

acting on the basis of what is learned in experience, hence the claim that the spirit is impotent or merely contemplative is unacceptable and contrary to the most obvious facts of experience. The change of habit which comes after particularly illuminating insights is inadequate. The speed with which we modify thought and activity can hardly be explained by the cumbersome and time-consuming process of changing our habits.

Finally, Santayana's concept of pragmatic truth is quite adequate and perhaps the only adequate concept of truth considering the complexity of his epistemological scheme. His more ultimate concept of truth as the aspect the universe would wear to omniscience, however, is quite ambiguous. In fact, it is tautologous, for truth is implied in the very concept of omniscience. Also such a concept of truth is meaningless for it is impossible to conceive of such a truth as being known by anything other than an omniscient being. Santayana's concept of ultimate truth, then, is quite ambiguous and unlikely to be verified.