

## **La “falacia patética” en el pensamiento de Santayana. Una pieza clave en su sistema**

Daniel Moreno Moreno

### ABSTRACT

This paper has two parts. The first one reports a short description of the “pathetic fallacy”, emphasising its central place in the Santayana’s thought; although the critics have almost ignored it, maybe due to the characteristic Santayanian style. The second part shows a non exhaustive selection of Santayana’s texts, borrowed from the main Santayana’s works, that support the thesis presented in the first part.

### RESUMEN

El presente artículo consta de dos partes. En la primera, se hace una breve presentación de la “falacia patética”, destacando el carácter central que ocupa dentro del pensamiento de Santayana a pesar de haber quedado en segundo plano o casi ignorada por los estudiosos de su pensamiento, debido seguramente a lo peculiar del estilo santayaniano. En la segunda parte y como apoyo de la tesis sostenida, se presenta una selección de textos del autor —sin ánimo de ser exhaustivo— que abarca algunas de sus obras y temas, habida cuenta de la necesidad de ir a los textos mismos para comprobar la coherencia del talante que los anima.

### I. LA “FALACIA PATÉTICA”. PRESENTACIÓN

Llama la atención de todos aquellos que se acercan al pensamiento de Jorge Santayana la peculiaridad de su posición dentro de las corrientes filosóficas de principios de siglo. El equilibrio —considerado a veces como difícil o contradictorio— que mantiene entre el naturalismo y su valoración de la vida de la razón; entre el materialismo y su énfasis en la vida del espíritu. De ahí que hablen de ambigüedad controlada o, incluso de “naturalismo innatural”. Por otro lado, se señala también lo difícil que resulta compatibilizar su defensa casi puritana de la honestidad intelectual, junto con una consideración amorosa del reino de la materia y del reino de la esencia; o su especial relación con el catolicismo y el modernismo.

Insisten los críticos, además, en los diferentes talentos que aparecen en la extensa obra de Santayana, que abarca, en vida del autor, desde 1896, fecha de publicación de *The Sense of Beauty*, hasta 1951, año en que aparece *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society and Government*.

Durante estos cincuenta y cinco años de intensa actividad son múltiples las cuestiones que aborda y varios los acentos que se perciben en sus obras.

La bibliografía refleja, un poco desorientada, los múltiples rostros de Santayana. Desde el mundo anglosajón se habla de materialista con idealismo latente, ecléctico desafiante, naturalismo innatural, alma dividida, ambigüedad controlada, escepticismo incoherente, filósofo riente, viajero intelectual, desesperado, entre dos mundos, profeta de nuestro tiempo.

El objetivo de este artículo<sup>1</sup> consiste precisamente en llamar la atención sobre una pieza fundamental dentro del delicado entramado santayaniano: la “pathetic fallacy”. Esta pieza constituye, a mi juicio, el hilo de oro que recorre incansablemente su pensamiento, dotándolo de unidad y fuerza, animando desde el subsuelo los distintos acentos que cobra su relación con la compleja época en que vivió: allí donde Santayana se distancia del trascendentalismo de la tradición gentil, de William James, de la religión tal como la entiende el sobrenaturalismo, del idealismo de Platón, del egotismo de la filosofía alemana, de Russell, de Bergson, allí aparece la “falacia patética”. De esta manera, el rostro de Santayana ofrece un perfil constante. A todo pensador, contemporáneo o clásico, le pregunta si argumenta falazmente o no.

En *The Sense of Beauty*, ya habla Santayana de un mecanismo psicológico común, presente en varias facetas de la vida ordinaria, que consiste en convertir una sensación en la cualidad de una cosa. En su vertiente epistemológica, según Santayana, constituye una falacia, puesto que confunde dos ámbitos respecto a los cuales es su intención expresa mantener separados, sin que se intoxiquen mutuamente: el de la realidad y el de nuestros cuadros de ella. En su vertiente moral, representa una falta de honestidad al no distinguir cuidadosamente entre lo que nosotros vemos, imaginamos o inventamos de/sobre la realidad y esta realidad misma; es legítimo e inevitable proyectar sobre el mundo nuestros intereses, pero no lo es tanto olvidarnos de que el origen de las proyecciones somos nosotros mismos, y considerar que la realidad es tal como la vemos nosotros. A esta postura la acusa Santayana de argumentar falazmente. De ahí la denominación de “falacia patética”.

Se sitúa Santayana, por lo tanto, fuera del idealismo absoluto, puesto que, según él, se puede y se debe diferenciar entre el vasto ámbito de la materia y el igualmente vasto ámbito de nuestras representaciones de tal ámbito, de nuestro conocimiento o lenguaje sobre él. Tampoco es realista ingenuo puesto que nuestro conocimiento no refleja la realidad tal cual es, sino que la organiza desde nuestros intereses. Finalmente, el origen de esas construcciones no es ideal ni lógico, sino natural.

Por lo tanto, el mundo que nos rodea siempre permanecerá ajeno a nosotros, situado a diferente escala; a nosotros sólo nos quedan los productos de nuestra imaginación. Y la decisión de cuándo creerlos reales y cuándo no.

Esta última cuestión es la que singulariza a Santayana: los niños, el pensamiento primitivo y la mayoría de las filosofías modernas, empujados

por la psique, toman sus imaginaciones por realidades. Es lo que Santayana llama “fe animal”. Nos lleva a pensar que Dios existe, que el Bien es y puede, que la realidad es contradictoria, etc..., y es el origen de la mayoría de los falsos problemas de la filosofía. Si se consideran, sin embargo, esas proyecciones falaces por lógica, por honestidad y porque la naturaleza misma nos desmiente a cada paso, la desilusión es inevitable. Pero no la desesperación, porque aún queda la contemplación de los productos de la imaginación como tales.

Aparece así Santayana como un naturalista interesado por lo menos natural, como un naturalista que renuncia al optimismo que le ofrece la ciencia y mira, sin esperanza, a las esencias.

Dentro del sistema de madurez anunciado en 1923 en *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Santayana aparece desde el mismo prólogo del libro preocupado por distinguir entre diversos ámbitos como única manera de evitar la sofistería de materializar entidades ideales, de convertir armonías en fuerzas o de disolver las cosas naturales en términos del razonamiento. Tres consecuencias inevitables si se cae en la falacia. Esta preocupación constituye el argumento insistente para impedir que el escepticismo se detenga en alguna fase intermedia antes de verse abocado al “solipsismo del momento presente”; y permite hacer luz desde dentro en la críptica “doctrina de la esencia” expuesta en *The Realm of Essence*, puesto que Santayana también detecta y critica las proyecciones animales sobre las esencias. También el reino de la esencia está lejos de poder ser medido con escalas humanas.

En 1926, en *Dialogues in Limbo*, la “falacia patética” aparece como la ilusión inocente personificada en el niño Autologos. Y en el capítulo final de *Realms of Being* en que Santayana da un repaso general a los reinos del ser, la “falacia patética”, bajo el nombre de superstición, es caracterizada como la atribución de poder a las apariencias, como la interpolación de leyes, imágenes y palabras en la materia. El hilo conductor, la idea de Santayana, habría sido disolver la superstición, distinguir los reinos del ser, pensar desde la conciencia de lo falaz que resulta confundir nuestras proyecciones con la realidad misma.

Habría que preguntarse, entonces, cuál es la razón por la que la “falacia patética” no aparece en primer plano en la bibliografía.

Quizás la razón de ese oscurecimiento sea que Santayana la llama “falacia patética” sólo en sus primeras obras; mientras que, conforme va ganando en riqueza y en carácter polémico, le cambia el nombre: trascendentalismo, subjetivismo, idolatría, egotismo. Es decir, cuando tiene un nombre convertible en etiqueta, casi pasa desapercibida; y cuando se muestra en acción, se metamorfosea como vista a través de un calidoscopio. Este juego, tan característico de la prosa santayaniana, vela ligeramente su presencia constante, pero no llega a ocultarla.

Desde esta perspectiva, Santayana estaría en la línea de Hume de reducir la teoría del conocimiento a sus mecanismos psicológicos, de reducir la

lógica del conocimiento a su psicología. Sin embargo, Santayana usa la psicología para trascenderla. Efectivamente le interesa el mecanismo psicológico que subyace a la falacia; sin embargo su interés no se acaba con su análisis, como en Hume. Le lleva, como un paso intermedio, más allá: a los momentos en que intuimos esencias.

El lado polémico lo constituye la crítica santayaniana a las reacciones antipsicologistas de su época: convierten cierta psicología en lógica, incluso cierta poesía. Al pretender separar los aspectos lógicos de los psicológicos en un tema cuya raíz es eminentemente psicológica, se dejan arrastrar por el impulso psicológico, tan humano, de convertir aquellas secuencias que les parecen universales y puras en algo más: ya no son mis/nuestras formas de pensar preferidas, son *la* forma de pensar. Así, ni pueden hacer buena psicología científica, ni reconocer el carácter poético de la lógica. Pretendiendo haber tirado la psicología por la ventana, se encuentran viviendo dentro de ella, sin saberlo.

El enfoque aquí de Santayana tiene la misma estructura que su relación con el naturalismo. No sería exacto, por lo tanto, calificar a Santayana de naturalista ni psicologista, puesto que lo específico de él es su manera particular, la única honesta desde su punto de vista, de ir más allá de esos planteamientos.

Su carta de presentación no sería ser materialista, sino la especial situación en que queda el hombre, como psique y como espíritu, entre la materia y las esencias, tras el específico análisis santayaniano de la “falacia patética”.

Habría que crear un nuevo conjunto de casi un único elemento: santayanismo.

## II. SELECCIÓN DE TEXTOS

Veamos algunos textos<sup>2</sup> representativos:

[1896] There is the expression of a *curious but well-known psychological phenomenon*, viz., the transformation of an element of sensation into the quality of a thing. If we say that other men should see the beauties we see, it is because we think those beauties *are in the object*, (cursiva de S.) like its colour, proportion, or size. Our judgement appears to us merely the perception and discovery of an external existence, of the real excellence that is without. But this notion is radically *absurd and contradictory*. [...] But *modern philosophy* has taught us to say the same thing of the perceived world; all are sensations; and their grouping into objects imagined to be permanent and externals is the work of *certain habits of our intelligence*. [...] But this percept, once formed, is *clearly different from those particular experiences out of which it grew*. It is permanent, they are variable. They are but partial views

and glimpses of it. The constituted notion therefore comes to *stand for the reality*, and the materials of it merely the appearance. The distinction between substance and quality, reality and appearance, matter and mind, has no other origin. [...] The qualities which *we now* conceive to belong to real objects are for the most part *images* of sight and touch. [...] But emotions are essentially capable of objectification, as well as impressions of sense; and one may well believe that a primitive and inexperienced consciousness would rather *people* the world with ghosts of its own terrors and passions than with *projections* of those luminous and mathematical concepts which as yet it could hardly have formed.

This *animistic and mythological habit of thought* still holds its own at the confines of knowledge, where mechanical explanations are not found. In ourselves, where mechanical explanations are not found. In ourselves, where nearness makes observation difficult, in the intricate chaos of animal and human life, we still appeal to the efficacy of will and ideas, as also *in the remote night of cosmic and religious problems* [Santayana (1988), pp. 30-2].

[1900] The poet is himself subject to this illusion, and a great part of what is called poetry, although by no means the best part *We dye the world of our own colour; by a pathetic fallacy, by a false projection of sentiment, we soak Nature with our own feeling, and then celebrated her tender sympathy with our moral being* of it, consists in this sort of idealisation by proxy. This aberration, as we see in the case of Wordsworth, is not inconsistent with a high development of both the faculties which it confuses, — I mean vision and feeling [...].

The pathetic fallacy is a return to that early *habit of thought* by which our ancestors peopled the world with benevolent and malevolent spirits; *what they felt in the presence of objects they took to be a part of the objects themselves*. In returning to this *natural* confusion, poetry does us a service in that she recalls and consecrates those phases of our experience which, as useless to the understanding of material reality, we are in danger of forgetting altogether [Santayana (1989), pp. 158-9].

[1905-1906] Apart from very elaborate and cumulative suggestions to the contrary, we should always *attribute* to an event in every other experience the value which its image now had in our own. But in that case the pathetic fallacy would be present; for a volitional reaction upon an idea in one vital context is *no index* to what the volitional reaction would be in another vital context upon the situation which that idea represents [Santayana (1954), p. 64].

[1905-1906] The insoluble problems of the origin of evil and of freedom, in a world produced in its every fibre by omnipotent goodness, can never be understood until we remember their origin. They are artificial problems, unknown to philosophy before it betook itself to the *literal* justification of fables in which the objects of rational endeavour were represented *as causes of natural existence*. The former are internal products of life, the latter its external conditions. The cause of everything must have been the cause of sin, yet the principle of good could not be the principle of evil. Both propositions were obviously true, and they were contradictory only after the mythical identification of the God which meant the ideal of life with the God which meant the forces of nature [Santayana (1954), pp. 253-4].

[1911] Transcendental logic, the method of discovery *for the mind*, was to become also the method of evolution *in nature and history*. Transcendental method, so abused, produced transcendental myth. A conscientious critique of knowledge was turned into a sham system of nature. We must therefore *distinguish* sharply the transcendental grammar of the intellect, which is significant and potentially correct, from the various transcendental systems of the universe, which are chimeras [Santayana (1993), p. 106].

[1913] M. Bergson's philosophy illustrates the worst and most familiar *vices* of metaphysics. It marvels at some appearance, not to investigate it, but to give it an unctuous name. Then it turns this name into a power, that by its operation creates the appearance. This is simply verbal mythology or the *hypostasis* of words, and there would be some excuse for a rude persons who should call it rubbish.

The metaphysical *abuse* of psychology is as extraordinary in modern Europe as that of fancy ever was in India or of rhetoric in Greece [Santayana (1926), p. 94].

[1913] The hypostasis of philosophical terms is an abuse incidental to the forthright, *unchecked* use of the intellect; it substitutes for things the limits and distinctions that divide them. So physics is corrupted by logic; but the logic that corrupts physics is perhaps correct, and when it is moral dialectic, it is more important than physics itself. Mr. Russell's ethics *is* (cursiva de S.) ethics [Santayana (1926), p. 154].

[1923] Metaphysics, in the proper sense of the word, is dialectical physics, or an attempt to determine matters of fact by means of logical or moral or rhetori-

cal constructions. It arises by a confusion of those Realms of Being which it is my *special care to distinguish*. It is neither physical speculation nor pure logic nor honest literature, but (as in the treatise of Aristotle first called by that name) a hybrid of the three, *materialising* ideal entities, *turning* harmonies into forces, and *dissolving natural things into terms of discourse* [Santayana (1955), p. vii].

[1923] The animal mind treats its data as facts, or as signs of facts, but the animal mind is full of the rashest presumptions, *positing* time, change, a particular station *in the midst of events* yielding a particular perspective of those events, and the flux of all nature precipitating that experience at that place. *None of these posited objects is a datum in which a sceptic could rest*. Indeed, existence or fact, in the sense which I give to these words, cannot be a datum at all, because existence involves external relations and actual (not merely specious) flux: whereas, however complex a datum may be, with no matter what perspectives opening within it, it must be embraced in a single stroke of apperception, and nothing outside it can belong to it at all. [...] The point is, in this task of criticism, to discard every belief that is a belief merely; and the belief in existence, in the nature of the case, can be a belief only. The datum is an idea, a *description*; I may contemplate it without belief; but *when I assert that such a thing exists I am hypostatizing this datum*, placing it in presumptive relations which are not internal to it, and worshipping it as an *idol* or *thing*. Neither its existence nor mine nor that of my belief can be given in any datum. These things are incidents involved in that order of nature which I have thrown over; *they are no part of what remains before me* [Santayana (1955), pp. 34-5].

[1923] When nature was still regarded as a single animal, this confusion extended to science as a whole, and *tinctured* the observation of nature with some *suggestion* of how a being that so acts *must* be minded, and what thoughts and sentiments must animate it. Such myths cannot be true; not because nature or its parts may not be animate in fact, but because there is no vital analogy between the cosmos and the human organism; so that if nature is animate as a whole, or in her minute or gigantic cycles, animation there is sure not to resemble human discourse, which is all we can *attribute* to her. Myth and natural theology are accordingly fabulous essentially and irremediably [Santayana (1955), p. 252].

[1927] At first the impetuous philosopher, seeing the world in so many places flowering into beauty, may *confuse* his physics with a subjective or teleological reference to the beautiful, thereby turning this essence, which marks a

spiritual consummation, into *a material power*: or, if he is not an enthusiast, he may dwell so much on the instinctive and pleasant bonds which attach men to what they call beautiful, that he may *bury the essence of the beautiful altogether under heavy descriptions of the occasions on which perhaps it appears* [Santayana (1974), p. 8].

[1927] It is for this reason that minds fundamentally *without loyalties*, and incapable or fearful of knowing themselves, pursue subjects like the history of art or of culture. The illusion that they are interested in things beautiful or noble accompanies their *purely material* investigations, and they trace the genesis of every school of life without understanding the life of any, like eunuchs studying the physiology of love.

The first *precaution*, therefore, which the description of a removed essence imposes is *to discount the method of approach*, the position and habit of the observer. He must beware of repeating here the error common and excusable in the perception of things, that of hypostatizing symbols and hastily identifying views with the objects viewed [Santayana (1974), p. 69].

[1927] When one essence *is said to include* another, an identification has taken *in discourse* (cursiva de S.) between an element in the inclusive essence and the whole of the included one; but no essence can *be* (cursiva de S.) another, so that in this identification (which is the first principle and condition of reasoning) there is something non-logical, not to say absurd. We may say, and must say, if we discourse on the subject at all, that pure Being includes unity and that unity includes pure Being; yet if pure Being were a part of pure unity, unity would not be one; and if unity were a part of pure Being, pure Being would not be pure. *It is language and thought that create this confusion* by giving the same names, “being” or “unity”, to essences not in themselves identical; because the being included in unity is not the individual essence of pure Being: the nature of essence is pluralistic and excludes pantheism. So the unity included in pure Being is not the individual essence of unity, but an inseparable pervasive and unique something found in pure Being by human intuition and *identified* abusively, *but inevitably*, with the essence of unity when inspected apart. Identification is approximate only, and therefore inclusion is fictitious [Santayana (1974), p. 88].

[1927] The British and German schools in which it had been my fate to be educated, were themselves obscurely rooted in religious confusions. For three hundred years they had hardly been able to distinguish the universe or



the realm of essence from the vapours of animal feeling [Santayana (1974), p. 168].

[1930] I could not stomach that way (of W. James) of speaking about truth; and the continual *substitution* of human psychology — normal madness, in my view — for the universe, in which man is but one distracted and befuddled animal, seemed to me a confused remnant of idealism, and not serious. [...] Experience of indetermination was no proof of indeterminism; and when James proceeded *to turn* immediate experience *into* ultimate physics, his thought seemed to me to lose itself in words or in confused superstitions [Santayana (1971), pp. 15-6].

[1936] A self-indulgent faith sets up its casual myths and rashly clings them as to literal truths; while a self-indulgent scepticism pretends to escape all dogma, forgetting its own presuppositions. [...] Without forgetting or disowning anything, myth might then be corrected by disillusion, and scepticism by sincerity. So transformed, my earliest affections can survive in my latest [Santayana (1971), p. 30].

[1950] So, too, a philosophy that has touched bottom and has once stripped itself naked, by either a through scepticism or a fearless self-scrutiny, when it again gathers its forces together to face the world, will not stint the imagination. Regenerate judgement can never be so crude as to mistake appearance for reality or *the human moral world for the universe* [Santayana (1964), p. viii].

*Departamento de Humanidades  
Escuela de Artes y Oficios  
Los Sitios, 5, E-50001-Zaragoza*

#### NOTAS

<sup>1</sup> El presente artículo constituye el argumento central de la segunda parte de la Tesis Doctoral que el autor intenta elaborar.

<sup>2</sup> Los textos van ordenados por orden cronológico en función de su fecha de aparición. Las cursivas y negritas están añadidas, excepto cuando se especifica lo contrario entre paréntesis.

## REFERENCIAS BIBLIOGRÁFICAS

- SANTAYANA, G. (1926), *Winds of Doctrine. Studies in Contemporary Opinion*, Nueva York, Charles Scribner's Son.
- (1954), *The Life of Reason or The Phases of Human Progress*, (edición en un volumen), Londres, Constable.
- (1955), *Scepticism and Animal Faith. Introduction to a System of Philosophy*, Nueva York, Dover Publication.
- (1964) "Author's Preface", en Cardiff, I. D. (ed.), *The Wisdom of George Santayana*, Nueva York, Philosophical Library.
- (1971), "A General Confession", en Shilpp, P. A. *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, La Salle, Open Court, pp. 1-30.
- (1974), *The Realm of Essence. Book first of 'Realms of Being'*, Wesport, Greenwood Press.
- (1988), *The Sense of Beauty*, Cambridge, Mass., y Londres, MIT Press.
- (1989), *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, Cambridge y Londres, MIT Press.
- (1993), *La tradición gentil en la Filosofía Americana*, (texto bilingüe), León, Universidad de León.