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The Life of Imagination: Santayana on Disenchantment

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Abstract

Santayana's early philosophy and drama contained a concept of modern disenchantment parallel to that of Weber's renowned theory. For Santayana, it was the belief in the causal agency of the mind that becomes disenchanted, analogously to the belief in gods and magic. This article situates the theme of the death of God in modern writings from Jean Paul to the end of the long nineteenth century. As a special case of mental agency, Santayana's analysis of the acts of writing and artistic creation is compared with the theory of Overmind in the poet H. Doolittle, a twentieth century attempt at re-enchantment. The psychological analysis of writing points to a perspective on Santayana's critique of modern philosophy as a form of literary psychology.

Keywords: George Santayana, Hilda Doolittle, literary psychology, hypostasis, death of God, Max Weber

Resumen

La filosofía y la obra dramática de Santayana contienen un concepto de desencantamiento moderno en paralelo a la celebrada teoría de Weber. En Santayana, la creencia en la mente como agencia causal quedó sujeta al desencanto, igual que la creencia en los dioses y en la magia. Este artículo sitúa el tema de la muerte de Dios en la época moderna, desde Jean Paul hasta el fin del largo siglo XIX. Como un caso específico de la agencia

mental, el análisis santayaniano de los actos de escritura y la creación artística se compara con la teoría de la *Overmind* , de la poetisa H. Doolittle, un intento de reencantamiento en siglo XX. El análisis psicológico de la escritura apunta a una perspectiva sobre la crítica santayaniana de la filosofía moderna como una forma de psicología literaria.

Palabras clave: George Santayana, Hilda Doolittle, psicología literaria, hipóstasis, muerte de Dios, Max Weber

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Yet the absence of the imagination had
Itself to be imagined.
Wallace Stevens

What is the relation of the epigraph taken from Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (ἡ γὰρ νοῦ ἐνέργεια ζωή) to *The Life of Reason*? Santayana multifariously glosses "life of reason" throughout *Reason in Common Sense*. In Chapter I, reason is a better form given to a lifeform's pursuit of durable interests, subduing a flux of forces; the Volume concludes "the progressive organisation of irrational impulses makes a rational life" [Santayana (2011), pp. 29, 175]. However, it is unclear that the overall picture accords with Aristotle's statement; in Book Lambda, it is part of an argument that says since *intellect's actuality is alive*, and God is that actuality, God lives (*Metaphysics* 1072b). Santayana's extraction humanizes the point by removing it from the theology this section of Aristotle's work is. More significantly, it invites, though does not expressly demand, readers to understand "reason" as *nous energeia*, an activity or actualization rather than a power or faculty. However, the compound *life of reason*, as Santayana develops it, takes on the sense of a ratio of balance and harmonization among ideals, interests, and instinctual impulses constituting a life. Reason is a state of being existing between an ensemble of activities rather than a particular activity like thinking. In the Aristo-

telian framework, it would be more like a balance containing moments of *phronesis* and *poiesis* rather than only the *nous* (or *theoria*, with which *nous* is tightly aligned in *Metaphysics* 1072b). As intellect, *nous* is too narrow a focus for the life of reason.

Arendt points out that the Homeric *noos* "encompasse[d] all mental activities" whereas for philosophers it was intimately connected to divinity and immortality: "By using his *nous* and by withdrawing mentally from all perishable things, man assimilates himself to the divine" [Arendt (1978), I, p. 136]. *Nous* may be exercised wordlessly —unlike *logos*, its translation into speech [*idem*, I, p. 137]. Theoretic spectatorship, not practice, was its philosophical role [*idem*, I, p. 139]. It might then seem that *nous* is a poor candidate for interpreting *reason*, or vice versa. Yet godlike thought does find a place in Santayana's philosophy: "For in all life, even in all existence, there is a divine affinity, which in spirit becomes actual vision, living hypostasis of some ideal form" [Santayana (1969), p. 286]. (Lachs and Lachs forego dating the text, which they indicate is written in "a very old hand" [*idem*, p. 283].) Arendt may have overstated the consensus among Greeks and overstated the onto-theological character of *nous*; yet spirit rather than reason is a more closely corresponding concept in Santayana's oeuvre.

This paper's purpose is to throw a side light on *Reason in Common Sense* with the aim of elucidating the extent to which the life of reason is as much, or more, a function of living imagination as it is of reason. The focus is the role, or lack thereof, of causal agency of the mind. My goal is not to argue for or against causal attributions involving mental states or to propose that anyone ought or ought not maintain the concept of causality generally. It is rather to suggest that the positions Santayana conveys on this score are contingent and ambivalent and that they could be rethought within a still broadly Santayanic perspective. The first section sketches an incongruous picture of causality that can be found within *Reason in Common Sense*. The second section situates that text and *Lucifer: A Theological Tragedy* in relation to a long wave of theorization about the

disenchanting processes of modernity. The third section points to the roles played by the term *hypostasis* in Santayana's writings and considers how imagination of causes may underlie ordinary practical life and legal responsibility. The fourth section explores the applicability of Santayana's account of consciousness to the quasi-mystical poetics of H. D., Hilda Doolittle. I conclude with methodological considerations about literary history in close contact with the notion of literary psychology in Santayana's later thought.

A Problem Concerning Causation

One marginal-indentation remark in *Reason in Common Sense* asserts, of consciousness, "Its worthlessness as a cause [...]" [Santayana (2011), p. 130]. Such remarks either summarize the argument to "carry along the thought over the details," or instead serve as commentary "throwing a side light on the subject" (letter to Scribner's Sons, 25 May 1904) [Santayana (2001a), p 265]. If Chapter IX's summaries, such as the starkly asserted "worthlessness," carry readers over details, they risk overlooking an important tension. Before concluding that "the material efficacy which may be attributed to [thought] is the proper efficacy of matter—an efficacy which matter would doubtless claim if we knew enough of its secret mechanism" [Santayana (2011), p. 133], he admits what seems to be the exact antithesis:

> Even if an atomic mechanism suffices to mark the concatenation of everything in nature, including the mind, it cannot rob what it abstracts from of its natural weight and reality: a thread that may suffice to hold the pearls together is not the whole cause of the necklace. [...] Since natural connection is merely a principle of arrangement by which the contiguities of things may be described and inferred, *there is no difficulty in admitting consciousness and all its works into the web and woof of nature*. Each psychic episode would be heralded by its material antecedents; its transformations would be subject to mechanical laws,

> which would also preside over the further transition from thought into its material expression. [*idem*, p. 132 italics added]

Notwithstanding the vertigo that may accompany the swing from "mind" to "consciousness" to "thought," it seems that Santayana is countenancing some sort of causal role for them.

The unexplicated image of the necklace is emblematic of the Aristotelian fourfold account of *aitia*, causal explanation in *Metaphysics* 1013a-1014a. In the analogy, the "thread" could be construed as a material cause of the necklace, while explaining its being a thread is to give its formal cause, as would be to describe the shapes, measurements, arrangement of the thread and pearls; whereas the thread's function within the necklace is a question of final cause, as would be the cosmetic purpose of the necklace. As for the efficient cause of the necklace, this would have been identified by Aristotle as the artisan or the act of jewelry-making. Santayana's amalgam in the later passage of two of the four traditional causal terms into one concept of "material efficacy" suggests he meant for the thread's load-bearing role to stand for the mechanism that physics could describe. Regardless of what the pearls might be (wisdom?), and whatever else would comprise the "whole cause," the point appears to be that physical explanation is not the whole of causality. The text says an atomic mechanism does not exhaust mind's "reality": does this include the possibility of its reality *qua* cause? Incorporating consciousness into the texture of nature —as the italicized portion of the above block quotation depicts— might merely be to posit it as what other philosophers call an epiphenomenon.[1] However, the rest of the quote can be read otherwise. Thought transitions to its material expression. Consciousness's works express *it* in the material; it is not merely the case that the material is expressed in consciousness. A chiasmus upon the terms of expected epiphenomenalism is complete: the material antecedents here are "herald[s]," whereas two paragraphs before, the "conscious will" was a mere sign [Santayana (2011), p. 131].

The passage, seeming to admit a causal agency of mind, is not characteristic of later Santayana and seem at odds with the rest of Chapter IX. That is precisely the point: the tension is there within the text. I argue it reflects a broader conflict which *The Life of Reason* and earlier works describe, and that Santayana's election to follow one of the alternatives is symptomatic of a modernization process he otherwise laments. He diagnoses an "atrophy" of imagination regarding religion that has befallen those beholden to the dominance of a modern scientific worldview [Santayana (2011), p. 75]. Carried to an extreme, the socio-cultural, moral imagination of causal agency likewise retreats; technological science usurps a monopoly over a concept "cause" that science (when still natural philosophy) borrowed from practical life and now, with sublime ingratitude, consigns to obsolescence.

Kerr-Lawson argues that the fact that causation plays little role in Santayana's ultimate ontology, even as regards the realm of matter, can be attributed to a thesis that the idea of cause is replaced by mathematics in advanced science; this is tantamount, as regards the discourse of causal attributions, to abandoning the human scale [Kerr-Lawson (2005) pp. 31-32]. Mathematization of the universe is, tendentially, a reduction of all causes to a subtype of formal cause, in Aristotelian terms. In terms of the project of the earlier Santayana, it represents a sort of retreat of imagination from a specific topic of its deployment —agency of the mind. It may furthermore represent a displacement of imagination from one hypostasis to another —from mind to matter and thence to number . . . Whether this fate is an unreasonable deployment of reasoning, rending imagination, depends on the role causal concepts play in the organization of ideals and passions, the possibility of which depends on nature. Such concepts *are* a role played by imagination. Not only crafting concepts, but constructing moral worlds, requires imagination to enact the "dramatisations or abstractions" of experience [Santayana (2011), p. 56].

The Terror and the Grandeur

Santayana called Lengyel's sonnet paean "faultless, in form and substance" and though "too exalted to represent my whole person [...] true to what I should like to survive me of myself" (letter to Cornel Lengyel, 8 December 1949) [Santayana (2008), p. 215]. Its depiction of the philosopher as a "Far voyager in the realm of disenchantment, / cartographer of countries of the mind, / late messenger from the golden age of Hellas, / ironic dreamer, skeptic saint, glad seer" [Lengyel (1989), p. 24] combines figures of Enlightenment and Renaissance with a temperate post-Romantic optimism. The term disenchantment was well chosen.

"[S]incere reason [...] disillusioned on the subject of Christianity" is how Santayana, the better part of a decade after composing his wildly ambitious five-act verse drama, characterized his tragic hero [Santayana (1989), p. 22]. The fallen angel and the messenger god from another world-picture become doomed lovers in a "monstrous comedy" though, as the subtitle indicates, it is also a *theological tragedy* [Santayana (1899), p. 42]. Soon after meeting Lucifer in the latter's frozen, desolate mountaintop retreat, in Act I, Hermes sings of how he "doth [...] / Enchant this desert whither first he came" and explains that "music is a slumber of the soul / That rests from thinking" [*idem*, p. 27]. The phrase recalls Aristotle's treatise on the soul, its claim that whereas nonhuman animals often are guided by imagination, *phantasia,* humans are so led only when passion or illness or sleep obscures their intellect (*Peri Psyches* 429a). Lucifer, fallen in love with the Greek god, is himself enchanted and behaves, as Mephistopheles observes, like a "rapt poet" dreaming among nymphs, fauns, and naiads [Santayana (1899), p. 41]. Lucifer's pleasure is temporary; even before his officers in hell rebel, and depose him, he announces the fundamental "scorn of being" of his nihilating form of rationalism and advises his minions: "Let us forget redemption and not keep / Our hearts enchanted by a hope so vain." [*idem*, p. 75]. Christianity, classical myth, romantic beauty, all are modes of enchantment.

A few years prior to Lengyel's tribute to the "far voyager," Gerth and Mills published a translation of Max Weber's "Science as a Vocation" address —dating from the conclusion of the First World War— wherein *Entzauberung* was rendered as "disenchantment," though if it were calqued, it could have been translated as "demagicization" or something similar.[2] Weber's theme is the role of science as an intellectual pursuit within a broader multi-century social process of rationalization. With the scientific-oriented technology, it appears that "[o]ne need no longer have recourse to magical means in order to master or implore the spirits, as did the savage, for whom such mysterious powers existed. Technical means and calculations perform the service" [Weber (1946), p 139]. The disenchantment of the world "has continued to exist in Occidental culture for millennia" and is a feature of the "'progress' to which science belongs" —but this process of disenchantment is invoked to mark a specific interpretive sociological claim. Late Weber and early Santayana both contrast a figure of the "savage" in their accounts of progress, though Weber's account is more ambivalent about progress as an idea and less than congratulatory to Western civilization. Santayana's savage is perpetually childlike, one of "those who cannot remember the past" and so is condemned to repetition [Santayana (2011), p. 172]. Weber's savage "knows incomparably more about his tools" than the modern man riding the streetcar does of his own, and the human living in pre-modern conditions has a less dubitable understanding of the social institutions through which he lives than modern social scientists have of theirs [Weber (1946), p. 139]. Disenchantment is the correlate of a faith "that one can, *in principle*, master all things by calculation" (*ibid.*, italics added) Such an article of faith is, however, itself a re-enchantment. Santayana for his part did not ascribe to that particular article of faith; the process of natural scientific description and explanation of the universe, in principle, has no terminus though, in fact, it will terminate before exhausting the inexhaustible resources of matter and essence. Progress, on the other hand, being more finite than in Weber's conception,

is easier attained and lost. After the stage of maturity, where proper adaptiveness and retentiveness allow "fuller satisfaction" and "true progress," humans undergo a decline: a "hard shell" —an overly rigid repetition of the past— "far from protecting the vital principle, condemns it to die down slowly and be gradually chilled" [Santayana (2011), p. 172]. This metaphor of the hard shell is another intersection of the paths of thought of the Spanish-American poet-philosopher and the German sociologist.

In 1904-05, Weber published his first magnum opus, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,* within months of Santayana's. Weber called the rigidification and constraints of the technically-developed economic order a *stahlhartes Gehäuse*, or steel-hard shell; Parson's 1930 English translation changed the image to an "iron cage" and, accordingly, the affinity with the metaphor employed near the end of *Life of Reason* Volume 1 was illegible (Weber [1930], p. 181). The corresponding ideas' relation is roughly as follows: the scope covered by Santayana's metaphor is wider, applying beyond the spheres of political economy that Weber was directly describing; yet the dynamic of counter-purposiveness is present in both. Again, the process appears unidirectional and inexorable in the Weberian narrative, whereas the inevitable dissolution of the entity in question is the implied end for Santayana's drama of remembering.

Multiple names exist for what is, in most respects, the same concept: *disillusion* in Santayana's reading of his own play; *disenchantment*; the end of the imagination [Stevens (1978), p. 502]. We may add another term to this intentional community: *despoetisação*, the de-poeticization of the world, defined in 1883 by the Brazilian Tobias Barreto, a poet, critic, jurist, and philosopher [Barreto (1892), p. 442]. Influenced by German jurisprudence and natural philosophy, as well as French literature, Barreto helped created the so-called School of Recife, arguing that juridical theory be stripped of metaphysical elements and that the study of law see it as a socio-cultural anthropological artifact; the post-romantic irony being that he argued this in exquisitely poetic fashion. It was a literary defense of

an imagined science. Unlike his contemporaries who analyzed the consequences of the death of God, Barreto declaimed, not without humor, the banality of God and of common ideals: "Deus é... *chapa*" [Barreto (1903), p. 101]. God is a cliché, or so he versified in 1880, adding the self-undermining reflection: "A propria *chapa* já tornou-se *chapa!*" This posits an amusing but only superficial paradox that the word deployed figuratively to describe a certain less-than-creatively-living use of words has been literalized, its creativity dead, its usage undead. On another level, the subtly distinct point seems to be that the act of identifying clichés is itself clichéd. The stance of disillusionment is tedious. Lucifer is weary and endlessly miserable; his flight through the world is a fight against the void. [Santayana (1899), pp. 137 and 186]. Disenchantment becomes self-disenchanting.

The denotations among all these terms for disenchantment may more or less agree though the connotations differ. At first glance, disillusionment seems a good whereas de-poeticization, for all but the most strict of Platonists and the most boring of businessmen, cannot be a good. Disenchantment is somewhat neutral. Enchantment, after all, can be salutary, a beautiful *chanson.* For Marianne Moore, even during WWII, the mind was an enchanting and enchanted thing, a power of enchantment. In one of the *Adagia*, written around the same time, Wallace Stevens found that, if the mind was "the most terrible force in the world," it nonetheless was the only force that can save us from terror [Stevens (1957), pp. 173-4] He added immediately, not erasing the previous formula but complicating it internally: what made the mind the most terrible force was precisely that it was the only thing that could defend us from itself. Transforming this into a bold and vaguely Hobbesian interpretation of intellectual history, he posits it as the grounding thought of the modern world. Stevens' conundrum of mental terror and Moore's observations are not incompatible logically, although their affective colorations and methods of impulse do clash. Moore's conclusion that "Unconfusion submits / its confusion to proof"

[Moore (1943)] seems more like Santayanic sanity. Stevens' depiction of the modern mind is a secular counterpart to Christ's allegation, addressed to Lucifer, that the latter is "thine own tyrant, to thyself unkind, / thou chafest at the limits of thy own wit" [Santayana (1899), p. 132].

The pathos of superlative terror that Stevens, with detachment, ascribes to the modern mind is found in an agonizing mode in one of Kierkegaard's 1848 *Christian Discourses,* X 175-177, near the beginning of the section called "Thoughts That Wound From Behind—For Upbuilding." (The passage is X:175-177 in the Danish critical edition.) The most horrifying thing in the world, Kierkegaard tells his reader, is that humans crucified God —more terrible, at any rate, than the troubles and calamities that typical parishioners flee by attending church, seeking comfort [Kierkegaard (1997), pp. 172-173]. Kierkegaard's ambush: what one encounters, taking seriously the crucifixion, is a thought more terrifying than those worldly concerns. What is more, the event of Christ's crucifixion is not remembered, it is made present, and the worshipper does not sympathetically spectate but is involved in the event as its perpetrator. Addressing his reader —and it is well to note that this work is signed in his own name— the author informs them that they are "accomplices in guilt!" [*ibid.,* p. 174]. He anticipates by decades the tale of the unacknowledged murder of God in that other great 19th century antiphilosopher, Nietzsche. Kierkegaard plays the role of the Madman, only without the bathos of the grotesque; God's decomposition yields, for Nietzsche's persona, a stench [Nietzsche (2001), §125]. For both, the key aspect of the idea is not that God is dead, but that "we" killed him. For Kierkegaard, the radical guilt is a condition through which grace is possible.

Both Kierkegaard's plea for humility and Nietzsche's bathetic account of the bad news of God's death would seem pious by comparison to the nightmare of the absence of God in Jean Paul's *Siebenkäs*, if the dream is separated from the comic narrative and from the dizzying disclaimer in which it is embedded. For in the

"Flower Piece" called "The Dead Christ Proclaims That There Is No God," a resurrected Christ informs the resurrected dead that there is no God. Jesus had performed an exhaustive survey of the cosmos: "I have traversed the worlds, I have risen to the suns, with the milky ways I have passed athwart the great waste spaces of the sky; there is no God" [Richter (1897), p. 263]. Seeking to find the gaze of God the Father, he reports "And when I looked up to the boundless universe for the Divine eye, behold, it glared at me from out a socket, empty and bottomless." [*Ibid*.] The dreamer sees the end of nature, as a "great serpent of eternity" crushes worlds and "shatter[s] the fabric of the universe to countless atoms" whereupon he awakens and, relieved it is only a dream, draws the quaint moral that his "soul [...] could still worship God" [*idem,* p. 265]. The harmony of nature is felt with renewed joy. It is difficult to assess the sincerity of this result because, unmistakably, the brief idyll is a rather weak poetic expression in contrast with the sublime horror of the dream.

The narrator of Richter's nightmare is a helpless, horrified spectator of the self-destruction of Christianity. *Lucifer*, in contrast, stages the battle between religious systems or worldviews as a life or death dramatic struggle between angels, devils, deities, a *theomachia*. Lucifer dwells at the crossing of three conflicts: his own rebellion against the Christian heaven constitutes an enduringly tormenting rupture; his own subjects in hell, whom he despises, overthrow him; and he serves as a mediating agent, on behalf of his beloved Hermes, between the Olympian gods and the Christian order of heaven, leading ultimately to the demise of the Greek gods. He prophesizes, further, the eventual mortality of the supposed everlasting kingdom. Lucifer makes a dramatic exit at the end of Act IV, addressing Christ:

> In midst of battles islanded in peace,
> And firm beneath the ruins of the sky,
> I live by truth, as ye by falsehood die.

> The wreck of worlds is my supreme release,
> The death of gods mine immortality.
> [Santayana (1899), p. 142]

Their conflict however is not so much resolved as suspended before the curtain ends the dream. As figures of a steadfast Christian imagination and its dissolution, Santayana's play divides into the persons of Christ and Lucifer the attributes that, in Richter's story, appear in the one forlorn Christ.

That Christ, in turn, was a figure of the atheist Enlightenment astronomer, who also makes a brief cameo in *The Life of Reason*. The passage bears quoting at length for it incorporates all of our themes:

> That the unification of nature is eventual and theoretical is a point useful to remember: else the relation of the natural world to poetry, metaphysics, and religion will never become intelligible. *Lalande, or whoever it was, who searched the heavens with his telescope and could find no God, would not have found the human mind if he had searched the brain with a microscope*. Yet God existed in man's apprehension long before mathematics or even, perhaps, before the vault of heaven; for the objectification of the whole mind, with its passions and motives, naturally precedes that abstraction by which the idea of a material world is drawn from the chaos of experience, an abstraction which culminates in such atomic and astronomical theories as science is now familiar with. [Santayana (2011), p. 75, italics added]

Santayana proceeds to argue that the very attempt to locate God among the stars represents the "atrophy [...] of the imaginative faculty" [*ibid.*]. But what of the analogue of the search for God, the search for the mind? Is not Santayana's claim that volition is undiscoverable an instance of the errant quest to find the mind under a microscope? He reflects on the act of writing: "My hand, guided by I know not what machinery, is at this moment adding syllable to

syllable upon this paper, to the general fulfilment, perhaps, of my felt intent, yet giving that intent an articulation wholly unforeseen, and often disappointing" [*idem*, p. 131]. This shows "the magical, involuntary nature of life" [*ibid.*].

Causal Attribution as Hypostasis

Suppose a chemist shows up late to the laboratory and tells her colleague "I forgot my laptop charger so I decided to return home to retrieve it, which caused me to get stuck in rush-hour traffic." This statement invokes two mental acts —forgetting and decision— that are part of an explanation that, we might say, is a hybrid of reasons and causes, a mix of motives and physical events. Remove these pieces and the explanation collapses. Santayana's naturalistic philosophy wants something like a regulative fiction: that one could under favorably ideal conditions of investigation, discern a sequence purely in the *material flux* that would dispense with the usefulness of mental concepts. This accounting is merely counterfactual: we don't know much about it, as the "cerebral labyrinth" is completely unknown [Santayana (1969), p. 188]. Though less inaccessible, the complexity of processes converging to result in specific traffic conditions may be practically infeasible to collect and analyze. For practical purposes, the dramatic, human-scale explanation that the chemist gives of her experience is not deficient epistemically or unduly magical; it is appropriate to circumstances.

Nor are such accounts limited to ordinary speech. "Cause" plays many highly specific roles in legal discourse, from "cause of action" to doctrines of causation; it is no exaggeration to say that concepts using *causa* were more developed in Roman law for centuries before the natural scientific uses came to predominate the modern imagination. Investigating that intertwining conceptual history of science and jurisprudence exceeds the scope of this paper; one current example of tort law can suffice.

California Civil Code §1714(a) reads in part:

Everyone is responsible, not only for the result of his or her willful acts, but also for an injury occasioned to another by his or her want of ordinary care or skill in the management of his or her property or person[...]

One might surmise that, with "occasioned," the legislature has deftly accommodated objections from Malebrancheans and Santayanaists alike. But no; §3333 measures damages by "the detriment proximately caused" by a breach of the duty of care. The judiciary, for its part, construes negligence thusly:

The elements of a cause of action for negligence are well established. They are "(a) a legal duty to use due care; (b) a breach of such legal duty; [and] (c) the breach is the proximate or legal *cause* of the resulting injury. [*Ladd v. County of San Mateo* (1996) 12 Cal.4th 913, 917, internal quotation marks omitted, italics added].

What counts as *due care* is what a "reasonably prudent person" in similar circumstances would do. [*Coyle v. Historic Mission Inn Corp.* (2018) 24 Cal.App.5th 627, 643, internal citation omitted]. The factfinder must attribute a mental state – reasonableness or lack thereof – as component of the conduct causing injury. Standard jury instructions pose the requisite that "negligence was a substantial factor in causing" the harm [CACI No. 400 (2020)]. Should Santayanaists in a jury pool be dismissed – for cause! – from a jury hearing such a case?

Attributing causes is a special instance of hypostatization. Though contemptuous of the hypostases found in Bergson's vitalism and Russell's theory of the good [Santayana (1913), pp. 94 and 154], Santayana validates hypostasis as a legitimate, indispensable method in *Reason in Common Sense*:

As the hypostasis of some terms in experience is sanctioned by reason, when the objects so fixed and externalised can serve as causes and ex-

> planations for the order of events, so the criticism which tends to retract that hypostasis is sanctioned by reason when the hypostasis has exceeded its function [...]. [Santayana (2011), p. 79]

Such posited causes are "concretions in existence" [Santayana (2011), p. 103]. Whether mental states acting in causal roles are justified by reason boils down to whether such attributions are consistent with a harmonized life, whether the drama they enact furthers a life in harmony with its natural and social milieu. Whether that obtains cannot be determined *a priori* nor settled by a casual introspection; we are not compelled by philosophy to abandon causal agency of the mind. Nor by science. Imagination, Lalande *also* claimed, goes further than the most powerful telescope and sees a new multitude of worlds [Lalande (1771) p. 454].

Thought and Vision in H. D.

A curious corroboration of Santayana's account of written composition in *Reason in Common Sense* can be found in the poet Hilda Doolittle's posthumously published *Notes on Thought and Vision*, written in July 1919, still recovering from influenza and an anxious childbirth the previous winter [Augustine (2014) ¶4]. She posits that the creativity of scientists, artists, and philosophers manifests in an "over-mind" [H. D. (2019), p. 17]. At first glance, her mystical poetics might seem at odds with Santayana's thought but on closer inspection some points of agreement are striking. The three "states or manifestations of life: body, mind, over-mind" [*ibid.*] can be analogized to the initial division of realms of being in Chapter V of *Reason in Common Sense*, respectively, "nature, sense, and spirit" [Santayana (2011), p. 81].

Concerning Emerson, Santayana asked "Did he know what he meant by Spirit or the 'Over-Soul'? Could he say what he understood by the terms, so constantly on his lips, Nature, Law, God, Benefit, or Beauty?" and immediately answered these rhetorical questions "[h]e

could not" [Santayana (1990), p. 131]. H. D. for her part knew what she meant by "over-mind" and tried to articulate it visually.

> That over-mind seems a cap, like water, transparent, fluid yet with definite body, contained in a definite space. It is like a closed sea-plant, jelly-fish or anemone.
>
> Into that over-mind, thoughts pass and are visible like fish swimming under clear water. [H. D. (2019), p. 18]

She refers to this as a "jelly-fish metaphor" but the point to notice is that the metaphor (or simile) is not the vision itself, but merely the description of it as like a jelly-fish; the image is intricate, mobile as fish-like thoughts are swimming "in" and past the jelly-fish. That thoughts are visual she means, as it were, literally. We might call it a hallucinatory experience or simply a *vision*. "The swing from normal consciousness to abnormal consciousness," i.e. over-mind, she reports, "is accompanied by grinding discomfort of mental agony." [*ibid.*]. As Santayana's spirit is grounded in matter, the poet's over-mind, figured as a jelly-fish, has "feelers" or tentacles reaching "down and through the body" that stand "in the same relation to the nervous system as the over-mind to the brain or intellect" [*idem,* pp. 18-19]. Moreover, there are "super-feelings" that "extend out and about us, as the long, floating tentacles of the jelly-fish reach out and about him" [*ibid.*].

The jelly-fish cap is idiosyncratic and episodic. At other times, she visualizes the over-mind as centered on her womb, instead of before her forehead [*ibid.*]. Symbolizations in cult traditions, she claims, represent the over-mind as a serpent [*idem,* p. 34]. However, the world disclosed by over-mind, also called the "over-conscious mind," is not individualized [*ibid*.]. Great artworks, like a painting by Leonardo Da Vinci, afford access to a sort of collective world of spirit. "The *Madonna of the Rocks* is not a picture. It is a window. We look through a window into the world of pure over-mind." [*idem,* p. 18]. She answers the question of how the jelly-fish appearance of

over-mind relates to the world of over-mind, that is, how the individual consciousness accesses the over-conscious world. Her answer is: through art, the artist realizes that world [*idem,* p. 34]. The pronouns in the lines about *super-feelings* are instructive: the over-mind is referred to in third-person singular and the feelings extend around "us." Whereas the jelly-fish cap appears, she writes in first-person singular, over "my head." The individual's vision connects with collective affects. Imagination is a passionate experience unifying subjective and intersubjective dimensions with objectifications at various levels.

Wittgensteinians might object that H. D. must be suffering from a delusion requiring philosophical therapy; for if meanings are not pictures in the head, they also are not swimming directly in front of the head. To which the no less Wittgensteinian retort may be offered: the poet is forging a new use for her words as well as trying to situate her language game as a continuation of the forms of life of ancient Greek mystery cults [*idem*, pp. 26-27]. As it turns out, she did seek a sort of therapy but not for that reason. In the early 1930s, she was psychoanalyzed by Freud [Augustine (2014), ¶11]. According to the poet's account of the sessions, their roles are almost swapped. The analysand herself analyzed her jelly-fish vision as a fantastic return to the womb, which interpretation Freud approved [*ibid*.]. Freud, on the other hand, sounds the literate mystic; "majic is poetry, poetry is majic" she recalls Freud having declared, transcribing his equation into her idiosyncratic spelling [Friedman (2002), p. 482].

Santayana, no devotee of Eleusinian mysteries and, at most, guarded in his reception of modern poetry, nevertheless has some affinity to H. D.'s *Notes.* In that same passage in Chapter IX of *Reason in Common Sense,* he writes that attention "watches eagerly the images bubbling up in the living mind and the processes evolving there" [Santayana (2011), p. 132]. Before that bubbling occurs,

> The thoughts to be expressed simmer half-consciously in my brain. I feel their burden and tendency without seeing their form, until the

mechanical train of impulsive association, started by the perusal of what precedes or by the accidental emergence of some new idea lights the fuse and precipitates the phrases. [*idem*, p. 131-132]

Santayana's bubbles of thought are H. D.'s fish, the "living mind" the individual over-mind. Going further, we might speculate that the realm of spirit and the world of the over-conscious are equivalent concepts.

In "Imagination," a paper included in the posthumous *Physical Order and Moral Liberty* collection, the phenomenology of the creative process is revisited; this time the subject is drawing and the description more lyrically vivid. "I find myself," —notice mental agency is denied— "pencil in hand, reproducing with a motion the curve of these trees and clouds, bringing them (though in a qualified form, with the unconscious bias of my temperament, and with my sign upon them) in material shape again before me" [Santayana (1969), p. 192]. The shapes appear "again" because the narrator is drawing a remembered scene. The drawing the hand seems to automatically produce is "no copy of the image actually flickering in my mind's eye" like a "fugitive ghos[t]" [*idem*, p. 191-192]. Rather the drawing is a "tentative, surprising creation of the hand, far more complex and true than that unseizable image" [*idem*, p. 192]. The process is speculatively accounted for without attributing agency to the mind; instead there is a mimetic "sensitive body": "the trees and clouds soaked my body in their subtle but manifold emanations, and bent and predisposed it to random imitative reactions" [*ibid.*]. Randomness, surely, is not apt here. He continues: "to this bodily *enacting* of the objects before me, this mimicry of my environment by my whole organism, original perception, later imagination, poetic emotion and artistic impulse were all incidental" [*ibid.*]. Such a radical receptivity to the environing world of things, of humans, and of non-human animals is ascribed by H. D. to da Vinci and to Jesus, as she imagined "the Galilean":

> He looked at the blue grass-lily and the red-brown sand-lily that grew under the sheltered hot sand-banks in the southern winter, for hours and hours. If he closed his eyes, he saw every vein and fleck of blue or vermillion. He would breathe in the fragrance with the wind and the salt. [H. D. (2019), p. 25]

Jesus, in H. D., has become like Richter's dreamer, awakened from the nightmare to the beauty of the sunny day.

Both H. D.'s and Santayana's phenomenologies of art are literary psychology. Each is so in two senses: analyses of acts of literature, etc., the method of analysis itself is literary.

The Kitchen-maid's Metaphysic

In the Preface to *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, Santayana distinguishes his project from metaphysics: neither his ontology as a whole system nor his natural philosophy of materialism are "metaphysics" [Santayana (1923), p. vii]. Then, he distinguishes, within the realm of matter, at least two levels: the ultimate constitution of the universe that conceptions of scientists aim to discover, on the one hand, and the "gross objects that fill the world," on the other, some of which are the things encountered in ordinary experience, like billiard-balls [*idem*, p. viii]. He disclaims knowledge of what "matter is in itself" [*idem*, p. vii], thereby admitting that natural philosophy's categories (principal among them, *matter)* are not themselves members of the realm of matter. Calling "matter" this unknown substance or flux or structure is akin to calling one's "acquaintances Smith and Jones without knowing their secrets" [*idem,* p. viii]. In terms of *Reason in Common Sense*, we could designate this operation a second-order concretion in discourse; like the proper name "Venice," the term *matter* has a spiritual status; the description of the realm of matter is itself spiritual. Viewed from the vantage point of spirit, the identification of the realm of matter *qua realm* is "embodied spirit": matter has "become poetical and achieved a sort

of personality" [Santayana (2011), p. 111 footnote]. The process of naming, as a higher-order concretion in discourse, is this: "sensuous experience is solidified into logical terms, these into ideas of things, and these, recast and smelted again in imagination, into forms of spirit" [*ibid.*]. If, as I claim, the category *matter* for the natural philosopher —as for our chemist, when she isn't speaking in molecular formulae and numerical percentages— is an example of that process, its recognition requires imagination. Though one must be careful not to confuse this with the claim that the material constituents and their internal structure are a mere product of the imagination. This distinction, after all, is what Santayana urges apropos of the *idea* of nature in his 1922 Preface to *The Life of Reason*. This stance of natural philosophy, not itself science but not unfriendly to science, Santayana would prefer not to call metaphysics, but he acknowledges sarcastically "if belief in the existence of hidden parts and movements in nature be metaphysics, then the kitchen-maid is a metaphysician whenever she peels a potato" [Santayana (1923), p. viii]. Peeling a potato involves the agent in practical presuppositions about the continuity and structure of the objects. We may read the point, however, non-sarcastically. As Santayana had just described, Aristotle did various things in the texts compiled and called —by later scholars in antiquity— *Metaphysics*; but not all of what he wrote therein was the sort of confusion of levels Santayana describes as "materialising ideal entities, turning harmonies into forces, and dissolving natural things into terms of discourse" [Santayana (1923), p. vii]. The analysis of *aitia* —or causal explanation— in Book Delta, for instance, is an exemplary effort at conceptual analysis; Aristotle lists common uses of the word, reflects on the semantic relations between some of these uses, and groups them into irreducibly distinct senses. Aristotle's logical treatment of concepts like cause, necessity, unity, being, or nature (*physis* as a word and concept) can be distinguished from —and thereby understood or critiqued independently of— what he subsequently proceeds to do with such concepts in arguing for his doctrines of God or doctrines

about natural things and processes. The word for those doctrines, was not *metaphysics*; they were considered *theology* and *physics*, respectively. So, the kitchen-maid need not be worried by being called a metaphysician. It is those who employ the word in the "mocking literary sense" [*ibid.*] who are purveying confusion, for they are committing a *petitio principii.* Whether, in peeling a potato, one concentrates on nothing but the task at hand, or one simultaneously speculates about love as the final cause of the universe, it is rather unfair to presume in advance that such thinking is false and confused. Even in the case of the non-speculative, pragmatic peeler, her action on things can be analyzed in terms of the Aristotelian causes: the matter and form of the potato, the *telos* of her action and its instruments, and the kitchen-maid herself as efficient cause. That the person doing an action is herself a cause, in the sense of the originator of motion or a change, is stated of sculptors, of builders, of physicians in *Metaphysics* 1013b-1014a. At this stage of the inquiry, Aristotle is not making a speculative claim about nature's secrets, he is simply describing ordinary meanings of *aitia*. We could say, then, that the kitchen-maid's conduct implicitly has a metaphysical structure, which means simply that the practical modalities of her activity are, in relevant respects, no different from the features of some of the activities described in *Metaphysics*. The long-term trend in modern thought of restricting "cause" to a much narrower range of uses is, in this respect, more speculatively domineering than Aristotelianism.[3]

In *Scepticism*'s "Literary Psychology" chapter, Santayana writes that the "whole of British and German philosophy is only literature" [Santayana (1923), p. 254]. Surely this statement is unfair to literature – and too generous to the philosophers. At their best, composed artfully, philosophical texts are literature: be they the zero-degree dramatic dialogues of Plato or the economical concision of a treatise by Aristotle or the freely reflective style of a Senecan epistle, not to mention the philosophical poets like Lucretius whom Santayana analyzes elsewhere. The dismissive "only," taken in the sense

of "merely," serves rather to puncture the pretension of much of the philosophical tradition – established by Plato, the self-hating poet – that philosophy and literature are opposed. In "hypostatis[ing] an imagined experience" [*idem*, 255] into a purported item of general validity for scientific psychology, the empiricists and romantic idealists erred not in using imagination but in their claim to scientificity. That the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, for instance, should be construed as either a kind of epic or novel has since been argued by both Hyppolite and Rorty, neither of whom considered it a disparagement [Rorty (2008), p. 102; Hyppolite (1971)]. Where Santayana, perhaps, disagrees is in suggesting – *apropos* of that other genre of literary psychology, historical interpretation beyond recording and assembling documentation – that being true is incompatible with being "invented" [Santayana (1923), p. 253].

The treatment accorded *myth* in the "Literary Psychology" chapter differs subtly from that in one of the "Causation" papers – preparatory, but discarded, drafts for *The Realms of Being*, as explained by Lachs and Lachs [Santayana (1969), p. 21]. An architect's "own work of building is represented in his mind by some vague symbol, perhaps only by the bitter word 'labour'; as if fire were represented only by the fire-fiend, or the wind by the god Notus" [Santayana (1969), p. 33]. However, "mythical or verbal symbols" even though not a knowledge of fundamental physics, "mark an advance in knowledge" by discerning "important moral units" [Santayana (1969), p. 33]. The act of building, as understood through the imagination of the architect, has a moral unity in the sense that it enables practical life. Architecture, the most scientific of the ancient fine arts, is aligned by Santayana with myth; but regardless, "science and mythology [...] are not enemies, though they may be rivals" [Santayana (1969), p. 34]. Myth in this context has to be understood broadly, effectively including humanizing narratives of all sorts. In *Scepticism*, instead, myth is construed narrowly when he laments myth's extinction, alongside observing theology's discrediting, which he does not lament [Santayana (1923), p. 253]. For the

moderns, history takes the place of myth – that is, of myth in the narrow sense –whenever history becomes "an essay in dramatic art," as he says it is in "most historians" [*ibid.*]. In the broader sense of myth articulated in the "Causation" paper, historiography cannot *not* be myth. The making manifest of knowing, or "display of inquiry" in Godley's translation of ἱστορίης ἀπόδεξις in the proemium of Herodotus, is the historian's task. The *apódeixis* of the historian is prior to that of the logician, and the historians too build their edifice on the ground of "aboriginal wonder, in itself philosophical" [Arendt (1978), I, p. 137]. In addition to the glory of human deeds – and, we must add, their disasters – what is presented as history includes *causes* in more than one sense, including the various ways one could construe "cause of war" in the expression αἰτίην ἐπολέμησαν in the proemium to *Histories*. All history may be literary psychology, but it is singular narratives themselves that must be assessed for their truth, not the genre.

Even the natural sciences, so long as they remain practiced by humans, and not robots and AI, cannot dispense with relying on narratives at a basic level. To recur to the example of the chemist sketched above: without comprehending a whole host of socially transmitted meanings about her work's place in the socio-cultural scheme of things, and without possessing the more or less taken-for-granted, personal knowledge of her own experience —which, if expressed, would comprise an autobiographical narrative however fragmentary or sketchy— she would not know where she was heading to when she got into her car to go to work, or who she was, including what her profession was and what expectations constitute it. The scientist only reaches the laboratory by relying on a "moral geography [which] is compacted of myths" [Santayana (1969), p. 30]. Moral geography, literary psychology, myth: names for human culture. Not only is it the case that science and myth are not enemies; more fundamentally, science depends on myth in an ineliminable fashion. This is not to be confused with nature depending on myth; neither has nature in itself any need of science or any other human

confections. What is untenable from a Santayanic naturalistic perspective is scientism. When a modern thinker longs to be a Newton of the mind or demands that philosophy become *strenge Wissenschaft*, such desires are not rooted in science but in a fantastic illusion of science.

The purpose of *The Life of Reason* as its subtitle indicates, is to trace *The Phases of Human Progress.* Volume One demonstrates that any notion of *progress* is relative to an ideal, itself a construction rooted in the interests and irrational impulses of the life that creates it. If that ideal is pursued in a rational way, harmonized with other ideals and with the environing world, the life oriented to that ideal will be rational. His moderating response, to the immodesty of the 19th century's consecration of the name of progress, was to relativize it. In contrast, Baudelaire, a "caustic critic of modernity" [Scott (2017), p. 2], writing in the middle of that century, saw the very idea of progress as a grotesque fatuity, an "obscure lantern" that cast darkness on liberty at the same time as delivering the soul (*l'âme*) from responsibility [Baudelaire (1976), p. 580]. It was "the progressive diminution of the soul and the domination of matter" [*idem,* p. 1388]. Santayana's philosophy of spirit is designed to rescue the soul from the diminution of which Baudelaire warned, but from the domination of matter there is no real deliverance.

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Notes

[1] Regarding the later ontology, Kerr-Lawson writes: "agency occurs only in the realm of matter. Moments of spirit are generated by the psyche located in that realm [...]. Santayana could be called [an] epiphenomenalist, although he didn't like the term" [Kerr-Lawson (2005), p. 28]. He disliked the term not because spirit was positioned as "epi" but because the ambiguous term "phenomenon" risks reducing material conditions (body, object), in radical empir-

icist fashion, to mere aspects of consciousness (letter to Kallen, 7 April 1913) [Santayana (2001b), p. 127].

[2] Eu Chin Chua writes that it "literally means 'de-magic-ation'" and "connotes the breaking of a magic spell" [Chua (2015)].

[3] The translation of *aitia* varies in Santayana's own draft translation of the Metaphysics, produced around the turn-of-the-century. Sometimes he uses "cause"; for the key passage in Book Delta, however, he uses "explanation" [Hurt (undated), pp. 369-380]. In a subsequent dialogue of the 1920s, "The Secret of Aristotle," a fictionalized Avicenna (whose views do not accord with those of the real Avicenna) argues that each form of *aitia* be construed as a principle of interpretation and that the only true cause is a "radical instability in existence" [Santayana (1925), p. 184]. For the (nonfictionalized, historical) medieval philosopher, instead, the ultimate cause was the necessary existent, that is, Allah. Whereas Santayana's conception leads to that of a thoroughly contingent cosmos, Avicenna's was of a cosmos stabilized by the necessitation and necessity of the divine principle.

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