

GEORGE SANTAYANA'S VIEW
OF THE HIGHEST GOOD IN MYSTICISM*

(The Highest Good as a Potential and Not an Actual
Good for Santayana in Plato's Ideal State, Dante's Para-
dise, and James Hilton's Shangri - La)

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(The Life and the Works of George Santayana)

George Santayana was born of Spanish parents at Madrid on

* Works considered in this essay are the following: WORKS OF SANTAYANA: *Scepticism and Animal Faith*; Introduction to a System of Philosophy. New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1955.—*The Realms of Being*, 4 Bks.: *The Realm of Essence*: Book First of Realms of being. London: Constable and Co., 1928.—*The Realm of Matter*; Book second of Realms of Being. London: Constable and Co., 1930. — *The Realm of Truth*; Book third of Realms of Being. London: Constable and Co., 1937. — *The Realm of Spirit*; Book Fourth of Realms of Being. New York; Scribner's Sons, 1940. — *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957. — *Three Philosophical Poets*; Lucretius, Dante, Goethe. Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954. — *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911. — *Reason in Religion*; Volume Three of the Life of Reason. New York, N.Y.: Collier Books, 1962. — *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man*; A Critical Essay. New York: C. Scribner's Sons. 1946. — *Persons and Places*; The Background of My Life. New York: Scribner's Sons, vol. 1 (1944) and vol. 2 (1945). OTHER WORKS: Philip Blair Rice, *The Philosophy of Santayana*; ed. by Arthur Schilpp. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1940, 2nd vol. — Milton Karl Munitz, *The Moral Philosophy of Santayana*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939.—Will Durant, *Outlines of Philosophy*; Plato to Russell. London: Ernest Benn Ltd, 1962 (George Santayana, pp. 418-434).—Will Durant, *The Pleasures of Philosophy*; 8th ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965.—Ronald B. Levinson, «George Santayana» in *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Crowell Collier and Macmillan, Inc., 1967, vol.

December 16, 1863 and he was baptized a Roman Catholic¹. His father brought him to America in 1872. At first he was established in Boston, where he attended the Latin School, and then he went to Cambridge and entered Harvard University. Though he listened to the great teachers in philosophy, William James and Josiah Royce, the chief influences on the formation of his own philosophical thought came from Plato, Aristotle, Lucretius, and Spinoza.

After receiving his B.A. from Harvard in 1886, he spent two years in travel and study aboard. Returning to Harvard, he took his Ph. D. in 1889 and began his very successful career as teacher in the department of philosophy. He taught until 1912 and became one of the best professors of philosophy at Harvard. «Those who remember him in the classroom will remember him as a spirit solemn, sweet, and withdrawn,.. whose rich voice flowed evenly, in cadences smooth and balanced as a liturgy: whose periods had the intricate perfection of a poem and the import of a prophesy...»².

Though he became, as we said, a very successful professor in the oldest university of the United States, «he was not quite content with

20, pp. 419-420.— Sarah Watson Emery, «George Santayana» in *Encyclopedia International*. New York: Grolier, 1967, vol. 16, p. 175.—*Dictionary of Philosophy*; ed. by D.D. Runes. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co, 1958.— John E. Bentley, *Philosophy, An Outline History*; revised edition. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1958.—Plato, *The Dialogues of Plato*; tr. by B. Jowett. New York: Random House, 1937 (Cf. Phaedo, Republic, Critias, Timaeus).— Dante, *Divine Comedy*; tr. by D. F. Sayers. Edinburg: The Penguin Classics, R. and R. Clark Ltd.— Thomas Aquinas, *Selected Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*; ed. by the Rev. Father M.C. D'Arcy. New York: E.P. Dutton and Co, Inc., 1950.— Spinoza, *Selections*; ed. by John Wild. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958.— S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy*; tr. by D. F. Swenson. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958.— James Hilton, *Lost Horizon*. London: Pan Books Ltd, 1953.—Erich Maria Remarque, *All Quiet on the Western Front* (Im Westen Nichts Neues). New York, 1959 — Burt Todd, «Honeymoon in Shangri-La» in *Look*, vol. 19, No. 13, June 28, 1955, pp. 62-69.— Bill Rose, «How Christianity Came to Remote Shangri-La» in *Oakland Tribune*, January 15, 1961, p. 26.— René von Neversky-Wojkowitz, *Where the Gods Are Mountains*; Three Years Among the People of the Himalayas; tr. from the German by Michael Bullock. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1956.— *Current Biography*. New York, N. Y.: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1942.

1. The main source for Santayana's life is his own autobiography, *Persons and Places*; The Background of My Life. New York: Scribner's Sons, vol. 1 (1944) and vol. 2 (1945).

2. Horace Kallen in *The Journal of Philosophy*, September 29, 1921; vol. 18, p. 534 (From Will Durant, *Outlines of Philosophy*; Plato to Russell. London: Ernest Benn, Ltd, 1962, p. 418).

the country of his choice; his soul... suffered from the noisy haste of American city-life...»³. So, in 1912 Santayana retired from teaching and crossed the Atlantic with no intention to return. He preferred instead of being a professor to become a «wandering scholar». He started to wander from Spain to France and from there to England, searching for the real truth which became the subject of his *Realm of Truth*⁴. Finally, he went to the «eternal dignity» of Rome, and spent his last years in a Catholic convent, where he died on September 26, 1952.

In his whole life Santayana remained alone. Someone who knew him says: «Santayana had a natural preference for solitude»⁵. For this reason, he never married, being absorbed by all his thought in the speculative life. He himself says: «The goal of speculative thinking is none other than to live as much as may be in the eternal, and to absorb and to be absorbed in the truth»⁶.

However, he was not only a real philosopher but a real poet, too⁷. According to Will Durant, «he was poet first, and philosopher afterward»⁸. Besides his poems and sonnets, his philosophical works are distinguished by their beautiful style so that they constitute poetry in prose. As W. Durant remarks, «hardly since Plato had phrased itself so beautifully; here were words full of a novel tang, phrases of delicate texture, perfumed with subtlety and barbed with satiric wit; the poet spoke in these luxuriant metaphors, the artist in these chiselled paragraphs. It was good to find a man who could feel at once the lure of beauty and the call of truth»⁹.

Though Santayana called himself an «American writer» and became an American by the circumstances of his mother's first marriage,

3. W. Durant, op. cit., p. 418-419.

4. According to Santayana's definition, «truth is all things seen under the form of eternity» (*The Realm of Truth: Book Third of Realms of Being*. London: Constable and Co., 1937, p. vi). He further distinguishes the wholeness of the truth from the parts of the truth» (Ibid., p. 40).

5. Margaret Münsterberg in *The American Mercury*, January 1924, p. 69 (From W. Durant, op. cit., p. 434).

6. *Reason in Common Sense*. New York, 1911, p. 28 (Durant, op. cit., p. 433).

7. Philip Blair Rice in his essay, *The Philosopher as a Poet and Critic*, says the following about Santayana: «He is the only philosopher by vocation, at least in modern times, who has come close to achieving excellence as a poet» (*The Philosophy of Santayana*; ed. by Arthur Schilpp. Evanston and Chicago: Northwestern University, 1940, vol. 2, p. 9).

8. Durant, op. cit., p. 419.

9. Durant, op. cit., p. 419.

he never became an American citizen. In spite of forty years of life in the United States, «the American environment», according to Ronald B. Levinson, «never claimed him, and he remained an ironical alien observer of the American scene»¹⁰. Anyhow, he is known as an American philosopher and poet, and, consequently, as an American writer.

Except the works of poetry, like those of *Sonnets, and Other Poems* (1894), *Lucifer, a Theological Tragedy* (1899), *The Hermit of Carmel, and Other Poems* (1901), *Poems* (1923), and of one satirical novel: *The Last Puritan* (1936), he wrote many other works of literary criticism and strict philosophy. We cite here in chronological order the most important of them: *Sense of Beauty* (1896); *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (1900); *The Life of Reason* (1905-1906), 5 vols. (*Reason in Common Sense, Reason in Society, Reason in Religion, Reason in Art, Reason in Science*); *Winds of Doctrine* (1913); *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1915); *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920); *Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (1920); *Essays in Critical Realism* (1921); *Soliloquies in England* (1922); *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923); *Dialogues in Limbo* (1926); *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (1927); *Turns of Thought in American Philosophy* (1933); *Realms of Being* (1927-1940), 4 vols. (*Realm of Essence, Realm of Matter, Realm of Truth, Realm of Spirit*); *Persons and Places: The Background of My Life* (1944, 1945), 2 vols.; *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man* (1946).

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

(Pure Being and the Good; Essence and Existence)

This essay is based in the main on George Santayana's distinction between essence and existence. Essence, according to him, merely *is*¹¹, it is «inert and non-existent»¹², while «existence involves external relations and actual (not merely specious) flux»¹³ which «flux is itself abso-

10. Ronald B. Levinson, «George Santayana» in *Collier's Encyclopedia*, Crowell Collier and Macmillan, Inc., 1967, vol. 20, p. 419. *

11. George Santayana, *The Realm of Essence*; Book First of *Realms of Being*. London: Constable and Co., 1928, p. 23.

12. G. Santayana, *The Realm of Matter*; Book second of *Realms of Being*. London: Constable and Co., 1930, p. 84.

13. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. New York; Dover Publications, Inc., 1955, p. 34; see also pp. 42, 48.

lute and the seat of existence»¹⁴. According to this distinction, then, pure Being, as «the common character of all essences»¹⁵, refers to the *Realm of Essence*¹⁶ which does not exist; and Good, on the other hand, as something actual and existent in Santayana, refers to the *Realm of Spirit*¹⁷ which exists. Good, therefore, as existent is separated by him from pure Being as non-existent.

In opposition to Santayana who separates Good from pure Being, in Christian Mysticism and Brahmanism, Good is identical with pure Being which as God or Brahma constitutes in them the highest or the supreme Good. But such a Good, as identical with a non-existent being, i.e. pure Being, does not exist for Santayana¹⁸; and not only in Brahmanism and Christian Mysticism in which «it is with God only that union is good»¹⁹, but also in Plato who in his *Republic* separates the Good from God²⁰. For this reason, though Santayana, like Plato, separates the Good from God, we cannot say that he agrees with him.

I

PLATO'S IDEAL STATE AND DANTE'S PARADISE

(Examples of Philosophical and Christian Mysticism)

1. The Good in Plato's *Republic*

The Good which Plato describes in the *Republic* as the aim of the ideal State does not exist for Santayana, nor is the ideal State itself

14. *The Realm of Matter*, p. 85.

15. G. Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*. New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957, p. 263.

16. Santayana treats mainly of pure Being in Ch. IV of this realm which is the first one of the Realms of Being.

17. Santayana treats mainly of Good in Ch. IX of this realm which is the last one (fourth in order) of the Realms of Being.

18. *The Realm of Spirit*; Book Fourth of Realms of Being. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1940, p. 221.

19. *Ibid.*, p. 220.

20. Later, in *Timaeus*, one of his last dialogues, Plato identified the Good with God.

in reality but a «utopia» which in Greek (οὐ τόπος)²¹ means «without place», that is, non-existent²². The ideal State, of which the justice is based on the Good, lays only in the mind of Plato; it is an Idea. This State could exist in reality, if the narration of Critias about the sunken Atlantis (Ἀτλαντὶς) in which Plato wishes to picture «the ideal State», the Athenian commonwealth, «which is supposed to have existed many centuries ago, and to have waged a victorious war with the people of Atlantis»²³, were true.

But, the question is : Did Atlantis and therefore the Athenian State exist in reality?

Though several historians put Atlantis, as Plato does, «within the columns of Heracles»²⁴, between Portugal and Morocco where the Atlas Mountains are today; others put it in the Atlantic Ocean, which, for this reason, bears its name, or in the Mediterranean Sea, or in India, etc; and some of them, like Rudbeck and Bailly, placed it further in the Arctic Ocean or towards Spitzberg, t o t h i s day—even after the search in the sea around the Greek island of Thira—, they have not discovered a real trace of the lost civilization of Atlantis. For this reason, the critics during the last years ceased to give attention to this unsolved problem²⁵.

So, the most likely view is that Atlantis never existed. It is only a myth like those which Plato uses to express some ideas which cannot be explained in ordinary language. In this case, for example, by the myth of Atlantis Plato wishes to symbolize the ideal State of the individual rather than of society. The relation of the individual to the state and the parallelism of the three elements of the soul (λογιστικὸν=rational, θυμικὸν or θυμοειδὲς = spirited, ἐπιθυμητικὸν = appetitive) with the three classes of society (βουλευτικὸν=rulers, ἐπικουρικὸν=guardians,

21. Claude and Paul Augé erroneously consider the word «utopia» of Latin origin rather than of Greek (*Nouveau Petit Larousse*. Paris: Librairie Larousse, 1955, p. 1063).

22. A whole literature about Utopia appeared after Plato's *Republic*, as for example, the following: Sir Thomas More, *Nova insula Utopia*, Tommaso Campanella, *Civitas Solis*, Francis Bacon, *Nova Atlantis*, Cabet, *Voyage en Icarie*, Bellamy, *Looking Backward*, and Morelly's and Fourier's similar works.

23. B. Jowett, *The Works of Plato*. New York, N.Y.: Tudor Publishing Co., vol. 4, p. 364.

24. *Timaeus*, 24e (See B. Jowett's translation, p. 370).

25. Albert Rivaud says the following about this: «La critique moderne s'est peu à peu désintéressée de ce problème insoluble» (Platon, *Œuvres complètes*, tome X; *Timée-Critias*. édition «Le belles lettres», Paris 1949, p. 29).

χρηματιστικόν=laborers)²⁶ is sufficient to show the truth that the character of the ideal State is esoteric and mystical.

When Glaucon asked Socrates: «When the ideal State would be realized»²⁷, Socrates said: «Until philosophers are kings... then only will this our State have a possibility of life and behold the light of day»²⁸. Similar to this case is that of Christ Who, when asked by the Pharisees, «When the kingdom of God should come», He answered them and said: «The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or lo there! for behold, the kingdom of God is within you»²⁹.

Considering Socrates' answer: «Until philosophers are kings» in relation to Christ's words, we can say that the ideal State will be realized when reason, that is, the highest element of the soul to which the philosophers correspond, according to Plato, will become the king, that is, the ruler who will control the desires and the passions constituting the lowest element, the appetitive element of the soul. This is what Plato teaches in the ninth book of the *Republic*: «Reason should be the guide of pleasure»³⁰ which in the language of St. Paul means that the pleasures and the desires (the law in our members) must be dominated by reason (the law in our mind)³¹. This reason (*νοῦς*) or rational element, which, according to the teaching of Plato in the *Timaeus*, is «the Acropolis (*Ἀκρόπολις*) of the body»³², is the only «immortal» element in opposition to the two lower «mortal» elements of the soul³³. It came straight from the hands of God Himself³⁴ and, for this reason, the rational element (reason) must become the king of the soul. In other words, the

26. *Republic*, Bk. IV, 440-441a.

27. *Ib.*, Bk. V, 471c.

28. *Ib.*, Bk.V, 473 d-e (See *The Dialogues of Plato*; tr. by B. Jewett. New York: Random House, 1937, vol. 1, p. 737).

29. Luke XVII, 20-21.

30. *Republic*, Bk. IX, 586d-e.

31. Rom. VII, 23. By the English word «mind» is translated the Greek word «νοῦς» (*τῷ νόμῳ τοῦ νοῦς μου*).

32. *Timaeus*, 70a.

33. *Ibid.*, 69c. According to this teaching of the *Timaeus*, the three elements of the soul are separable and only the reason is immortal in opposition to the teaching of the *Phaedo* in which they constitute a unity and are immortal.

34. As such the reason is the most divine (*θειότατον*) and the most sacred (*εἰρώτατον*) of all (*Timaeus*, 45a), and also the head which is the habitation of the reason (*Ib.*, 44d).

ideal State of Plato is not in our exterior world, «do here! or, lo there!» but like «the kingdom of God [it] is within us»³⁵.

2. Santayana's Realism Contrasted to Plato's Idealism

However, the Good as the ultimate aim in the ideal State of Plato who, according to Santayana, «seems to have reached extremes of asceticism and mystic abstraction, which made him the precursor of the Cynics and the monks»³⁶, is not identical with God. And, on this point Santayana, who separates also Good from God, could agree with Plato, but not in the acceptance of the Good itself, because he accepts that the Platonic Good, though independent from God, is non-existent and as such it is in fact a union with God.

Santayana, referring to the Platonic Good says the following: «This Good, as we learn ultimately, is harmony, to be established by the perfect definition and mutual adjustment of all natural functions, both in the individual and in State ... That harmony, that rational Good, which seemed so abstract a conception in argument and so cold and repressive a Utopia in political philosophy, appeals visibly to the heart in everything young and beautiful and positively transports the soul in moments of religious rapture. The Good, then, is not merely a harmony to be established or approached in the economy of nature; it is an influence to be felt, an inner transformation to the experienced, a beatific vision and union with God... Even that union with God, more often talked of than experienced, need not be an illusion; because the universe has, at each moment, and in its total career, a particular form, with which everything that exists must needs be in an actual harmony: and nothing forbids some sense of this harmony to resound occasionally in a particular soul, and to overcome it»³⁷.

So, though we find «in Plato the classic meaning of the Good»³⁸, Santayana disagrees with him because this Good is unrealized not only in the state as a social harmony but also in the individual as a mystical

35. About this interpretation of Plato's ideal State see also what B. Jowett says in his introduction to the *Republic* (*The Works of Plato*, vol. 1, pp. 8-9).

36. About this characterization which Santayana applies rather to «Socrates, in whose mouth Plato puts his views», see *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 215.

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 216, 217.

38. *Ibid.*, p. 215.

union; this Good is a Utopian Good, non-existent, because as a harmony «both in the individual and in the state» it is not «an actual harmony». «Actual good», says Santayana, «which can only be a consummation, a smile suddenly breaking out on the face of nature, or some great gift of fortune to the heart, here is magically materialized into a fantastic moment, not a good realized but a new set of conditions imposed upon the spirit. The Good, falsely petrified, is inverted into a power, limiting the possibilities of the Good; a power here bribing us to accept something not perfect, there forbidding us to love and to praise the inalienably beautiful. But fortunately we were only dreaming. This inverted universe is in fact indiscoverable and non-existent; those revealed histories were fables, contrived for the sake of their moral»³⁹.

Such a fable, for example, must be for Santayana that of the ideal State in the *Republic* in which the characterization: «the good is not essence»⁴⁰ may have for him a certain ontological meaning only. But this characterization is doubtful and its interpretation must be understood as epistemological rather than ontological. However, for Santayana not only the idea of the Good which for Plato himself is «non-essence» but all the Platonic ideas which are «essences» do not exist, since Santayana does not identify, like Plato, essence with existence. And, from this point of view, according to Santayana, «the Platonic system is mythological: if taken literally and dogmatically, it can seem to cold reason nothing but a gratuitous fiction, as all systems of religion or metaphysics necessarily seem to the outsider»⁴¹.

The contradiction, therefore, between Santayana and Plato in the acceptance of the Good lies in the difference between Realism and Idealism. A greater difference however exists between Realism and Christian Mysticism since Mysticism does not only not separate the Good from God but neither both Good and God from pure Being.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 221-222.

40. By this expression B. Jowett translates (see *The Dialogues of Plato*, vol. 1, p. 770) the Greek words: *ὄν οὐσίας ὄντος τοῦ ἀγαθοῦ*. In the sequence the Greek text cites also: *ἐπέκεινα τῆς οὐσίας* (*Republic*, Bk. VI, 509b) which means «beyond essence» or rather «beyond being», since the distinction between essence and existence appears in later years. Thus, Plato's complete sentence has as follows in English translation: «The good is not essence, but beyond essence».

41. Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, p. 237.

3. The Good as Love in Dante (Santayana's Naturalism Contrasted to Dante's Supernaturalism)

To show the difference between Santayana and Christian Mysticism we refer to an example similar to that of the ideal State to which we referred in the case of philosophical Mysticism. This is the Empire and the City in Dante's *Divine Comedy* which presents really many similarities to the Platonic State of the *Republic*. As the *Republic* (*Πολιτεία*) emerged from the civil war of the Greek States in Plato's times, in the same manner the *Divine Comedy* resulted from the conflict between the two political parties contemporary with Dante: the Guelfs and the Ghibellines. And, as the ideal State of the *Republic* is a biography and state (*βίος καὶ πολιτεία*) of the human soul in general which rises from its passions and desires (appetitive element) to reason (the rule of the philosopher-king) which leads up to the heavenly Justice and the highest Good, in the same manner the *Divine Comedy* is an autobiography of Dante who rises from the political passions and the City and Empire of Dis in Hell to Grace, Justice and Charity as they are represented in the delightful figure of Beatrice who leads the poet before God, the Prime Love (*primus Amor*)⁴², to be united with Him in Paradise. As Dorothy L. Sayers says, «the poem (the story of a vision of Hell, Purgatory, and Paradise, and the story of the Lover who has to adventure through the Underworld to find his lost Lady) is an allegory of the Way to God—to that union of our wills with the Universal Will in which every creature finds its true self and its true being»⁴³.

But, this mystical union of the soul with God Who is the highest Good for man, «the revelation of God to man», according to Santayana, «suggests the doctrine that the goal of life is the very bosom of God; not any finite form of existence, however excellent, but a complete absorption and disappearance in the Godhead. So the Neoplatonists had thought, from whom all this heavenly landscape is borrowed; and the reservations that Christian orthodoxy requires have not always remained present to the minds of Christian mystics and poets. Dante broaches this very point in the memorable interview he has with the spirit of Piccarda, in the

42. *Paradiso*, Canto XXXII: 142.

43. Dante, *Divine Comedy*, I: Hell; tr. by D. L. Sayers. Edinburg: The Penguin Classics, R. and R. Clark Ltd, pp. 19,49.

third canto of the *Paradiso...*». «Dante, however, for this very reason, may be expected to remain the supreme poet of the supernatural, the unrivalled exponent after Plato»⁴⁴.

II

JAMES HILTON'S STATE OF PEACE IN SHANGRI-LA (An Example of Christian and Indian Mysticism)

1. The Good in J. Hilton's *Lost Horizon*

Not only the Good in a heavenly Paradise of Dante like that of the union with the ideas in a «celestial sphere», according to the Platonic myth, but also the Good in every earthly Paradise like that of the Garden of Eden in which «we invoke only an animal placidity»⁴⁵ does not cease to be a fable for Santayana, something non-existent.

The Paradise which the romantic and the idealist writers describe in their books as a place of absolute peace and happiness is simply an endeavour of man to liberate himself from the distraction and difficulties of this life, hoping to find at least in his imagination what he lost in reality, the Garden of Eden, Milton's «Paradise Lost», though neither this Paradise, as we said, could ever exist in past or future, according to Santayana. «The myths about a paradise, past or future», he says, «are transparent parables, expressing the rare, transporting, ecstatic quality that distinguishes the culminating moments of natural life from its endless difficulties, hardships, and embroiled hopes»⁴⁶.

Such a mythical and imaginary Paradise could be, for example, according to Santayana, that of Shangri-La in James Hilton's *Lost Horizon*⁴⁷ to which we refer here as a representative but utopian Good in a combination of Christian and Indian Mysticism.

Shangri-La is the name of an ancient Buddhist lamasery in the valley of the Blue Moon, a distant and isolated place in the Moun-

44. Santayana, *Three Philosophical Poets* (Lucretius, Dante, Goethe). Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co., 1954, pp. 115, 122.

45. *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 182.

46. *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 183.

47. First published 1933 by Macmillan and Co. Ltd.

tains of Tibet. In 1734, when a Capuchin missionary, Father Perrault, came here, he transformed this lamasery into a Christian monastery and organized the small community of the Buddhists who lived in this valley as an ideal State. So, Father Perrault became the High Lama of Shangri-La⁴⁸. As the years passed the Father «at the age of ninety-eight began to study the Buddhist writings that had been left at Shangri-La by its previous occupants, and his intention was then to devote the rest of his life to the composition of a book attacking Buddhism from the standpoint of orthodoxy. He actually finished this task, but the attack was very gentle, for he had by that time reached the round figure of a century — an age at which even the keenest acrimonies are apt to fade»⁴⁹. But, though he had become so old, «his mind remained so extraordinarily clear that he even embarked upon a study of certain mystic practises that the Indians call *Yoga*»⁵⁰.

The object of these practises, as known, is the gaining of «peace of mind»⁵¹ which is also the ideal of Shangri-La whose chief characteristic is tranquillity. The dream and the vision of Father Perrault is to make now Shangri-La a cradle of civilization of «meek men» who, according to the Christian ethic, «shall inherit the earth» when war has destroyed the world and «the strong have devoured each other»⁵².

To this quiet place, then, an idealistic Englishman, Hugh Conway, the main hero of the book, indignant and exhausted by the war of *Im Westen Nichts Neues*⁵³ in which he had been wounded mentally,

48. James Hilton, *Lost Horizon*. London: Pan-Books Ltd, 1953 pp. 108ff.

49. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.

50. *Ibid.*, p. 112.

51. *Yoga* (Skr. «yoking»): Restraining of the mind, or, in Patanjali's phrase: *cutta vitti mirodha*, disciplining the activity of consciousness. The object of this universally recommended practise in India is the gaining of peace of mind and a deeper insight into the nature of reality (*Dictionary of Philosophy*; edited by D. D. Runes. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1958, pp. 341-342.

52. *Lost Horizon*, p. 128. Comp. Matthew V,5

53. This is the German title of the most famous war book *All Quiet on the Western Front* written by the German-French writer Erich Maria Remarque who «was forced to serve as a soldier in the German army and actually lived through the hell he describes so vividly in *All Quiet on the Western Front*» (See the edition of Crest Books, New York, 1959, p. 1). I name the First World War as the war of *Im Westen Nichts Neues* because this book, in which by this title the writer describes in the most cruel and realistic manner the «trench warfare», is considered by the critics as «the greatest war book that has yet been written» (See the several opinions of the critics on the back cover), and, for this reason, I find it the most representative book of the war of 1914-1918. Considering, on the other hand, the peaceful intentions

and, for this reason, could be labelled «1914-1918»⁵⁴, escapes from the disorder, which the war had brought on the world, in order to find peace of mind⁵⁵. Charmed by the peacefulness of the valley which like «a deep unrippled pool matched the peace of his own thoughts»⁵⁶, Conway stayed there for a while. But, after a short time he returned to the world from which he had come, and, then, entering reality again, Shangri-La became for him a «Lost Horizon». However, the nostalgia of Shangri-La gives him no peace. He is constantly reminded that he must return. Hence, Conway starts his wanderings in search of Shangri-La, the «Lost Horizon». But, our question, the question with which the writer also ends his book is: «Will he ever find it?». This depends, of course, on another question, does Shangri-La exist in reality or is it simply in the imagination of an excited man because of the war, of a man who is not sane because though Conway «came through the war without a scratch, the scratches were there — on the inside»⁵⁷.

that the writer shows in this book, we can understand then why J. Hilton refers to it with its original title as one among the books of Shangri-La's library (*Lost Horizon*, p. 90). The main hero of Remarque's book, who «fell in October, 1918, on a day that was so quiet and still on the whole front, that the army report confined itself to the single sentence: All quiet on the Western Front» (op. cit., p. 175), relives in the person of Conway, the main hero of Hilton's book, who in the same year «had grown to hate the perils of trench warfare in France» (op. cit., p. 27); but with one difference: The «unknown hero» of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, after he had suffered the most terrible things in the war, found at last peace in death. These are the words with which the tragic story ends: «He had fallen forward and lay on the earth as though sleeping. Turning him over one saw that he could not have suffered long; his face had an expression of calm, as though almost glad the end had come» (p. 175). In opposition to this kind of peace attained in death only, Conway's «love of quietness, contemplation, and being alone» (p. 32) is satisfied in the preservation of life which is the characteristic of Shangri-La (p. 134, 159, 179). However, in spite of this difference which derives from the different backgrounds, the one story takes place in the distraction of the war of 1914-1918, the other in the quiet Valley of Blue Moon, both stories agree in their insistence upon expressing the deepest desire of man for peace of mind so that one thinks that the one story is the continuation of the other.

54. *Lost Horizon*, p. 126.

55. In the *Saturday Review of Literature*, in an article, trying to analyze the great success of *Lost Horizon*, appeared the following about the author of this book: «Mr. Hilton gave the public, many of whose authors were engrossed with the class struggle, a glimpse of escape into philosophical reflection, a sight of a man who made peace and quiet in his own mind, and the public, rose to meet him» (*Current Biography*. New York, N.Y.: The H. W. Wilson Co., 1942, p. 373).

56. *Lost Horizon*, p. 128.

57. *Ibid.*, p. 182.

2. Reality or Utopia? (Is Shangri-La an Existent or a Non-Existent Good?)

If we exclude the case that Conway is not of sound mind, and suppose that Shangri-La exists, then, where must we search for it? In some place other than Tibet where the writer himself puts it? But if in Tibet, in exactly what spot of Tibet because these mountains are so high and so extensive. Does Shangri-La, for example, exist in the highest mountains of Tibet, the Himalayas, and just in the Ha Valley of Bhutan in the eastern Himalayas, the isolated kingdom of Druk Gyalpo Jigme Wang-chuk, where Burt and Susie Todd of Pittsburg, Pa., during their honeymoon found a tranquillity now rare in the world?⁵⁸ Or, does Shangri-La exist on the opposite side of the Himalayas, in a grassy valley of the western Himalayas, where the tribe of Houtza lives today, the men who, according to the conjectures of some scientists, come from the Greeks (descendants of Alexander the Great) and who until today enjoy perfect health without ever knowing in their life any serious disease?⁵⁹

Unfortunately, neither the tranquility of the Ha Valley nor the perfect health of the tribe of Houtza are like the peace of the Valley of Blue Moon or the longevity and preservation of youth which is the natural consequence of the peace of soul in the body of the inhabitants of Shangri-La⁶⁰. Therefore, Shangri-La is neither in Bhutan or in the

58. The Todds went to the Ha Valley immediately after their marriage on June 5, 1954 and they left in October. On their visit there the *Look* magazine (vol. 19, No. 13, June 28, 1955, pp. 62-69) wrote an article by the title: «Honeymoon in Shangri-La». «Now», as the magazine informed us at the end of its article, «the Todds are working on their book, *Land of the Thunder Dragon*». About the «Land of Dragons» (which the Bhutanese call *Drugyu*) René von Nebesky-Wojkowitz, who visited the Himalayan state of Bhutan in 1950, wrote also in his book, *Wo Berge Goetter Sind (Where the Gods Are Mountains; Three Years among the People of the Himalayas*, translated from the German by Michael Bullock, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, ch. X), first published in Great Britain 1956, characterizing it as «one of the most inaccessible territories in the world, a realm that has been visited by only a dozen Europeans in the twelve centuries of its history and has far more right to the title of The Forbidden Kingdom than Tibet, its northern neighbour» (Ibid., p. 162).

59. Professor Ralph Wirher, famous Swiss physician, ethnologist, and explorer, visited the Hutzas of Himalayas and, studying them, he wrote a whole book the Greek translation of which was published in the Greek newspaper *Acropolis*, April, 17, 1955ff.; see also the article about them in Greek weekly magazine *Tahydromos*, September 24, 1955, p. 9.

60. This preservation of youth made Shangri-La as if it «were indeed a living essence, distilled from the magic of the ages and miraculously preserved against time and death» (*Lost Horizon*, p. 138).

valley of Houtza or in any other place of the Himalayas and Tibet. Then, if Shangri-La does not exist in Tibet, where its inventor places it, is there any hope of discovering this Paradise in any other place on earth? Where must we search to find it? in some place which bears that name, such as the remote Baliem Valley in Duch New Guinea, known as Shangri-La⁶¹, or in some other place by the same name? But in which exactly? in the virgin forests of Africa or in the endless desert of Sahara? in the frozen regions of the Arctic or in those of the Antarctic? in the exotic islands of the Pacific or in the paradisiacal gardens of Babylon? in the Promised Land or in the Land of Wonders? in the Teasure Island or in the Island of Solomon? in the bowels of the earth or in the depths of the sea? Where, at last, must we go to search for Shangri-La? Alas! Wherever we went, wherever we wandered, wherever we searched, we could not find it; until, finally, exhausted and in despair, we fell down with no hope of this chimerical place.

But, Shangri-La is not a chimerical place!...

There is Shangri-La for which we are looking so desperately. There is this place where we can live quietly and happily far from the noise of the war machines and the uproar of the world; but the manner, in which Shangri-La exists, is different from the existence of other places because, like Plato's ideal State, Shangri-La, too, exists not in a realistic but in a mystical manner, not in our exterior but in our interior world. As the kingdom of God it is within us, within Conway in whom Shangri-La exists «in microcosm»⁶², within everyone of us. But, though it exists we can not see it because wild snow storms of our passions blind us, thick clouds of our materialism hide it from our eyes. So, we lose sight of this place. For this reason, if we want to see Shangri-La, it is necessary, as it was for the hero Conway, that we endeavour, in spite of the wild elements of nature, to climb the mountains and then behind the clouds we will see this place appear before our eyes like «a land-locked harbour» of calm in the midst of the wild tempests of life⁶³.

Such a place of peace of mind is Shangri-La.

61. Bill Rose, «How Christianity Came to Remote Shangri-La» in *Oakland Tribune*, Jan. 15, 1964, p. 26.

62. Conway knew «that his mind dwelt in a world of its own, Shangri-La in microcosm...» (*Lost Horizon*, p. 173).

63. *Ibid.*, p. 67.

3. The Peace of the Indians, a Potential Good for Santayana

The peace of mind, which is the ideal of Shangri-La and of the Indians in general, is not an actual but a potential Good for Santayana. «The Indians sometimes», he says in his *Apologia Pro Mente Sua*, «identify that final peace, which is an ideal, with a longing to be merged in primal substance, which is an ultimated potentiality; and here I cannot follow them, because, the peace of the sea is treacherous, and potentiality is not an ideal, but a blind commitment»⁶⁴.

Peace in Santayana is something actual; it derives from the union with this world which exists; it is a harmony between our interior and exterior world. Therefore, the peace (harmony) in Santayana is not potential, that is, a union with pure Being which does not exist, and from which, for this reason, he separates the Good which, in opposition to pure Being, is actual and exists. Pure Being and Good in the Mystics and the Indians are identical, but in Santayana they are not, though they might also be, since he accepts the same goal as the Mystics, that is, Union, which *Union* or *Good* can not be better expressed than by pure Being which, according to the definition of Santayana himself, is «the common character of all essences», that is, that which unites in itself all essences because «its essence includes all essences»⁶⁵. But the question is that all these essences, every essence in general, do not exist for him. For this reason, pure Being can not express the Good in his philosophy.

The Good, in order to be a really good, must exist. And such a Good, according to Santayana is only the «Union» as «a moral unanimity or fellowship with the life of all substances»⁶⁶. It is the union within man himself (inner integrity)⁶⁷ and of man with *other man* (union with the world) by charity⁶⁸. It is not therefore with God or pure Being, that is, with all essences, but with man or the world, that is, with all substances since «man», according to his definition, «is a *substance*, because his human and his personal essence have become forms of substance in him»⁶⁹. This «Union of course is of *spirit*» which spirit is «a natural manifestation

64. See *The Philosophy of G. Santayana* (The Library of Living Philosophers), vol. II, p. 569.

65. G. Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, p. 263.

66. *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 220.

67. *Ibid.*, p. 225.

68. *Ibid.*, p. 226-229, 234.

69. *The Realm of Matter*, p. 27.

of substance in man»⁷⁰. And, since, according to Santayana's definition, «substance is the manifestation of essence into existence»⁷¹, the Good, that is, the Union of the spirit with substances, is something which exists.

CONCLUSION

(Santayana's Dualism: Materialism and Mysticism)

Santayana's rejection of the Highest Good in the cases of Plato's Ideal State, Dante's Paradise and James Hilton's Shangri-La is based on his opinion about pure Being as a potential or non-existent Good. The conclusion of his investigation is: Since essence does not exist, then pure Being as including all essences does not exist, too. His axiology, therefore, of the Highest Good in relation to pure Being depends on his distinction between essence and existence.

Essence and existence which were identical for the Greek philosophers were distinguished in later years for the first time by the Scholastics. In his famous distinction between essence and existence Thomas Aquinas makes the separation between the form itself and the existence of the form. The form or essence of «man», for example, is different from the existence of a particular man existing in place and time. The essence of «man» does not involve existence. Only «in God essence or quiddity is not distinct from his existence» because «existence and essence in God are the same»⁷². So, though the distinction between essence and existence is valid for everything, it is not for God. He is an exception in the general rule because in his nature *essentia involvit existentiam*. This principle of the Scholastics, which is also a principle of Spinoza⁷³ and Kier-

70. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

71. *Ibid.*, p. 14, 27. Substance in Santayana's philosophy is the passage or, to use his own word, the «medium» (*Ibid.*, p. 14) between, essence and existence. His conception of substance is like that of Aristotle. As he himself writes about the Greek philosopher, he «gave the name of substance to compound natural things actually existing» so that «substance is the principle of individualism and exclusion, the condition of existence, succession and rivalry amongst natural things» (*Ibid.*, p. 20).

72. Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles* (See *Selected Writings of St. Thomas Aquinas*; ed. by the Rev. Father M.C.D' Arcy. New York: E. P. Dutton and Co., Inc., 1950, p. 119).

73. *Ethics*, Pt. I, Prop. XX (See *Spinoza Selections*; ed. by John Wild. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1958 p. 118).

kegaard⁷⁴ in newer philosophy, is based on the acceptance that every being derives its existence from God and only God from His very own self since He is the first cause of all things.

Santayana does not accept that God or pure Being, which includes all essences, is the source of everything. In God's place he puts *Matter* since «matter», in his view, «is the principle of existence»⁷⁵. It is «properly a name for the actual substance of the natural world, whatever that substance may be»⁷⁶. From this point of view, as Santayana accepts, he is an atheist, a materialist. In the introduction to his philosophical system he says: «In natural philosophy I am a decided materialist—apparently the only one living»⁷⁷. «God», for him, «conceived merely as a power, would become *identical with matter*, the omnificent substance and force of everything»⁷⁸. Matter, therefore, «is symbolized under the name of God»⁷⁹ since God is «a mythological name for the universal power and operation of matter»⁸⁰.

But, though, according to Santayana's materialism, everything depends on matter for its existence, on the other hand, «essence» is central in his philosophy and in the philosophy of Critical realism in general, to which he belongs, being also a naturalist. He accepts that reality revealed by consciousness proclaims itself an infinity of essences subsisting in and by themselves⁸¹. These essences, like Plato's Ideas, are eternal and unchangeable. So, besides the Realm of Matter, there is also the Realm of Essence. Between them Santayana puts the Realm of Spirit, since spirit, according to him, springs in its origin from matter and rests

74. S. Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments or a Fragment of Philosophy*; tr. by D. F. Swenson, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1958, p. 32.

75. *The Realm of Matter*, p. v.

76. *Ibid.*, p. 140.

77. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, p. vii.

78. *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 284.

79. *The Realm of Matter*, p. 205.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 171. See also Santayana's *Persons and Places*, pp. 128-129 where he talks of God as a myth in reference to *The Realms of Being*. Santayana interprets religion in general in terms of mythology; and this is the main subject of his book, *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1911) where he considers religion as identical with poetry (p. v); and also of his another book: *Reason in Religion* (Volume Three of the Life of Reason. New York, N.Y.: Collier Books, 1962, cf. pp. 39-51).

81. John E. Bentley, *Philosophy, An Outline History*; revised edition. Ames, Iowa: Littlefield, Adams and Co., 1958, p. 144.

in its outlook in essences⁸², endeavouring for the attainment of its intrinsic ideal, which is represented by the idea of Christ⁸³, that is, the Good in its *supreme* and *absolute* form⁸⁴.

This dualistic portion of the spirit, or these two interpretations of «the spiritual life», as M. K. Munitz says in the case of Santayana⁸⁵, makes him to divide the mass of mankind into two classes, «the Sancho Pansas who have a sense for reality, but no ideals, and the Don Quixotes with a sense for ideals, but mad»⁸⁶. This division, of course, can not concern only two different classes or men, but also one and the same man. And such exactly is Santayana's case. He is at the same time Sancho Pansa and Don Quixote. This dualism exists in his life itself. As a philosopher he is a realist and materialist, but as a poet (and we must not forget that he is poet first, and philosopher afterward) he is an idealist and a mystic. He himself says that in our daily life we must be so realists as idealists, too⁸⁷. His idealism makes him to confess: «Without any prudence to be religious or mystical I find myself daily in that case»⁸⁸. So, in spite of his materialism, he remained in all his life a Roman Catholic since «his concern for the church was aesthetic rather than philosophic-al»⁸⁹. He considered the Virgin Mary, as Heine did, the «fairest flower of poesy». As a wit has put it, Santayana believes that there is no God, and that Mary is his mother⁹⁰.

However, as a philosopher Santayana has lost his faith in God. So, as a poet, on the other hand, he is «a romantic mourner» who mourns for his «dead faith»⁹¹. At Oxford, far from his birth-place⁹², he describes

82. *The Realm of Spirit*, p. 49.

83. *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man, A Critical Essay*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1946, p. 253.

84. *Ibid.*, p. 252.

85. Milton Karl Munitz, *The Moral Philosophy of Santayana*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1939, p. 87ff.

86. *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, p. vi.

87. *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, p. 192 (From W. Durant's book, op. cit., p. 421).

88. *The Realm of Essence*, p. 156.

89. Sarah Watson Emery, «George Santayana» in *Encyclopedia International* New York: Grolier, 1967, vol. 16, p. 175.

90. Will Durant, op. cit., p. 427.

91. Will Durant, *The Pleasures of Philosophy*; 8th ed. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1965, p. 386.

92. As we said, in 1912 Santayana left the United States and wandered in several countries of Europe till he was established in England for a long time.

himself as an exile from the lost Paradise of his childhood, from spirit's celestial realm:

Exile that I am,
Exile not only from the wind-swept moor,
Where Guadarrama lifts his purple crest,
But from the spirit's realm celestial, sure,
Goal of all hope, and vision of the best⁹³.

93. From Will Durant, *Outlines of Philosophy*, p. 425.