Santayana’s marginalia from Immanuel Kant’s
*Kritik der Reinen Vernunft*

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Walter Abell  
*Representation and Form: A Study of Aesthetic Values in Representational Art*  

[In his preface, Abell acknowledges “a debt of gratitude to Professor Santayana,” who has influenced his point of view.]

Harold Acton  
*Memoirs of an Aesthete*  

[Acton quotes Santayana on pp. 384–85.]

“Life is compelled to flow, and things must either flow with it, or like Lot’s wife, in the petrified gesture of refusal, remain to mock their own hope.”

1 *Soliloquies in England* (Scribner’s, 1922), 16.

Antoine Adam  
*Le Vrai Verlaine: essai psychanalytique*  

1 p 16, marked

||A mother’s love is necessary, but a father’s less so. The absence of a father is a catastrophe, for a son needs a father’s example. Thus lacking a father for a model, and|| brought up by a very tender mother, Baudelaire was a woman.

[A significant marking in light of Santayana’s cold relationship to his mother and his warmer regard for his father.]

2 p 16, marked

[Virtually the same comment as 1 p 16 above on Verlaine.]

3 p 36, marked

||Adam has shown how Verlaine could be obsessed by a woman’s body and at the same time homosexual or heterosexual.||

4 pp 63–64, marked

||Regarding Verlaine’s two mistresses, Philomène Boudin and Eugenie Krantz: in the Odes in honor of Philomène, she betrays him, tells him of her lapses, and they weep together.|| Verlaine has religious admiration for this dirty woman, a wounded Amazon in her flagrant indiscretions.

5 p 103, underlined and translated

||An image of the sea describes the mother,|| *Herrlich wie am ersten Tag.*

Also Childe Harold

1 *As lovely as on the first day.*
6 p 105, marked

[Verlaine’s irony:]

It is ambiguous, it cannot be simple, spontaneous, natural. At base it is dual. One part of his being tries to live, to love, and to believe. But a quite different part refuses to follow, and objectively observes efforts it knows to be in vain.

You see the end before the beginning.

7 p 108

||A despairing letter from Verlaine to his wife tries nevertheless to reassure her. Such phrases attest to Verlaine’s obscure awareness [conscience] of being determined by exterior forces, superior to his will.||

Is there anyone who is not?

8 p 113

||It is universally accepted that the great artist is he who creates. The entirely healthy man does not have to create, because reality is given to him all complete. He sees it, and he lives it. He does not dream of re-ordering it.||

N.B.

9 p 119

||The theory of art as healing to wounds or illness: Dostoievsky’s epilepsy and his use of it in The Idiot.||

No art would ensue if there were no positive gifts. The conflict only renders the result more tragic.

James Adam

The Religious Teachers of Greece


Conrad Aiken

The Kid


Conrad Aiken

The Divine Pilgrim


[Aiken writes two explanatory prefaces to his verse.]

1 p 41

Spirit understands all but connives at nothing
Witness but not accomplice—
Confusion of transcendental spirit—equally ready for every possible world of fancy, and the human psyche which
has a specific nature, sensuous and rational, which it must respect or else go mad with pain or contradiction—which is the “divine” pilgrim.

2 p 101

[In the preface to “The House of Dust”:

||Implicit is the theory|| that in the evolution of man’s consciousness, ever widening and deepening and subtilizing his awareness, and in his dedication of himself to this supreme task, man possesses all that he could possibly require in the way of a religious credo: when the half-gods go, the gods arrive: he can, if he only will, become divine.

[After “divine”:] dreaming.

[In margin:] N.B. not clarifying or making truer.


[Useful to Santayana for the Etonian passages in The Last Puritan.]


1 p 53 marked

||A quartet of Beethoven becomes clearer year by year, for the analyses of generations ensure that future glory.||

Rot

2 p 113

||The idea that the dead pray for the living derives from the notion of dead heroes as wiser and better than the living.||

This is true only virtually: it is not historical.

3 p 147

||Alain finds a kind of dualism in Pascal, no meeting of object and idea.||

This is the travers' of Alain. He doesn’t see the harmony of mind with its ground in objects.

1 Shortcoming.

4 p 162

||One can aid others only through self-government, and only so.||

Quaker?
Alain [E. A. Chartier]  
*Le Citoyen contre les pouvoirs*  

Alain [E. A. Chartier]  
*Les Idées et les âges*  

[Two surviving marginalia; others were erased.]

1 p 216 marked  
||Liberty is hidden|| *in the center of obedience, governing the inferior order instead of troubling it.*  

[Santayana agreed with that in *Dominations and Powers* (written over a period of forty years).]

Alain [E. A. Chartier]  
*Propos de politique*  

[Virtually all Santayana’s comments on Alain’s politics underlie his extreme conservatism of the 1930s and duplicate views found in his letters of the period.]

1 pp 12–13  
||Strong government displeases; weak but sufficient government pleases the citizen.||  
**Bad government the only salvation.**

2 p 14  
||Alain’s citizen who wants few controls, but limited, weak government.||  
**This citizen is a ready-made unit, with ready-made interests.**  
**Are they “necessary”?**

3 p 115  
||Alain writes about the nature of tyranny, then turns to the Dreyfus affair:||  
*Those who tyrannized over Dreyfus showed an impudent scorn for the judgment of the majority.*  
**N.B. Paradise of anarchy**

4 p 128  
||Alain debates Right versus Left with respect to Pilate, and to Dreyfus, using the phrase,|| *héros de l’intelligence.*  
**Alain thinks only the Left can breathe the air of truth because he has never conceived any but common pleasures.**  
**He has a vulgar heart.**
You confuse disillusion with disloyalty. The truth will never
give you a desire: how then should it take away your loy-
alty? It would be too cynical to say that the truth discour-
aged all pursuit of the good.

The marginalia on pages 115 and 128 are two of only three references to the
Dreyfus affair known to me in all Santayana’s writings. (See also marginalia
in Bergson, Les Deux sources de la morale et de la religion, 36 p 75.)

5 p 131

[On Comte’s idea of order in society:]

Sound positivism: but look out for the sensualism that will
slip in.

6 p 134

[Concerning Rodin’s bronze, “The Thinker”:]

||Erase the inscription Thinker, write in Slave, and no one would be sur-
prised.|| It is the slave who thinks, and the master who plays.

This is plain falsehood: but you mean that the true thinker
respects matter and art, and speaks by their leave.

7 p 134

Thought awakens brighter from a hard bed.

This is eloquent: but consider the artisan philosophers Socrates,
Spinoza, and then the aristocrats Plato, Buddha, Descartes.
More soundness in the humble, but no more thought.

8 p 207, underlined

[Alain quotes Stendhal:]

“La nation s’enivre de gloire; adieu la liberté!”

What couldn’t a Parisian do under Napoleon (I or III)?

The nation is drunk on glory; farewell liberty!

9 p 252

The people is king; the general will is the law; and the general law is infallible,
because it implies that what is imposed on one is imposed on all […] but the gen-
eral will expresses itself in all justice in the moment of the vote.

The ideal would be a daily vote in the agora by acclamation.

10 p 254

[On the absence of radicals in Europe:]

[…] they are scorned, but they supply to politics a necessary ballast. A radical is one
who is highly sceptical, he believes in nothing, and he is certain that no matter how
agreeable a belief may be, it involves complete injustice and all possible evil.

Quote. Paradise of anarchy.

[Again.]
11 p 290

Alain would have rustics in wooden shoes to supervise the work of government agents.

This idea is fantastic: a chorus of censors instead of a pack of agents and arrivistes.

12 p 339

In brief, the State is not a mystical being; its core is earth and rock.

Yes: this is half the truth. There is moral unity to be considered also.

Alain [E. A. Chartier]  

Propos de littérature  

1 p 31

How great writers use metaphor. The purpose of comparison is to rule our thoughts, to cause them to march, in some fashion, in step with the world.

There is relief—not comic relief, but relief in the indifference and hugeness of the background tragedy here: the march of things beyond.

2 p 167

[Of La Fontaine’s vanity:]  

The master is too fond of himself.

Thought must know its vanity, in order to be just and free.

3 p 200

[About Stendhal’s La Chartreuse de Parme:]  

Alain says that Stendhal is a republican of the most dangerous species. But observe the misery; he doesn’t please the republicans at all? Whom then?

Il n’aime pas la beaute, ni physique ni morale. He’s a cad.

1 He doesn’t love beauty, neither physical nor moral.

4 p 254

Proust’s death deprived us of two or three unique volumes.

Why print this obituary error?

5 p 256

All men are capable of monstrosity, depending on the occasion and leadership.

This is a question of degree. All monstrosities are not equally present or potential in everybody: but circumstances develop them. There are physically effeminate men;
there are masculine men fond of boys. Question of early fixture, taste, opportunity, contagion, etc.

[This is one of Santayana’s rare comments about homosexuality.]

6 p 298

||In Tolstoi’s Anna Karenina, Alain sees love depicted as romantic passion, a terrifying natural force, as in The Odyssey.||

Penetrating analysis

[Ironic underlining?]

Alain [E. A. Chartier] Histoire de mes pensées


1 p 14

||Alain describes how his mind works.||

Self-indulgence in accepting intuitions as decisions.

2 pp 79–80, marked

[Alain on his own literary style:]

I believed thus that I was entering into the great family of writers who really owe their success to a mixture of genres, to a certain refusal to place on one side boring and difficult ideas, and on the other, easy gossip.

[The mark is significant for Santayana’s own conception of literary style.]

3 p 98

||Alain cannot prevent himself from hunting out the most varied occasions on which to say something.||

Alas!

4 p 109, marked

[About attempts to describe the world:]

[…] cette transparence du monde qui aussitôt nous fait libres et heureux. C’est pourtant un monde sans espérance, c’est un monde qu’on ne peut pas prier.¹

[Although Santayana only marked this lovely passage, it precisely reflects his own despairing serenity.]

¹That transparency of the world which at once makes us free and happy. Moreover it is a world without hope, a world that one cannot pray for.

5 pp 132–33

||There is a contradiction in Kant’s account of what the mind is and how it functions.||

Yes: but do you understand what you are saying?
In its development, Marxism has produced neither a doctrine of liberty, nor a doctrine of Humanity, nor a doctrine of war.  

“Marx is a naturalist: are you? That capital H is suspicious.”

“Prose-poetry, and the relationship between words and art. Idea matters in a poem, but the art of speaking and writing is always dominated by the law of improvisation, which does not let us judge that which is already in place; thus it is we speak. The signs the body makes do not exist for us, but for those to whom we speak. One must express before one knows what one expresses [...].

[Alain quotes Comte:]  
“In reproaching love for being blind, often we forget that hatred is better and in an often disastrous degree.”  

Cf. King Edward and Mrs. Simpson¹

¹Edward VIII, who renounced the British throne to marry the divorced American commoner, Mrs. Simpson, in 1936.

||Alain translates Hegel’s term, “Geist” as “l’esprit de la terre.”||

Erdgeist¹ is good for Hegel’s Geist.  

¹“Erdgeist” or earth-spirit, occurs in Goethe’s Faust.

The conclusion of his chapter on Descartes, in which Alain writes of the relationship between skepticism and belief.||

By doubting all you can entertain all.

[Santayana’s note at the very end of the chapter on Descartes.]  

End of R. of T.¹

¹Realm of Truth.

The love of truth is involved in all the passions and is so much of each as settles the mind.
Alain [E. A. Chartier]  
*Les Dieux*  

1 p 10, underlined  
La vérité […] nous trompe sur nous-mêmes;² […]  
i.e. in normal thinking we do not realize the medium.  
¹The truth deceives us in ourselves.

2 p 45  
||Memory of infancy disappears.||  
re memory: i.e. the past has no interest in itself. It is used up in producing present assurance.

3 p 47, underlined  
[Only one example of Santayana’s constant insistence on precision in diction.]  
||Concerning “recovering” the past. One must invent a dialectic of childhood, otherwise called the steps of forgetfulness,|| de l’oubli, qui est la substance des rêves,¹ […]  
[At “substance”:] differentia  
**Why not take pains to say what you mean?**  
¹… forgetfulness, which is the substance of dreams.

4 p 79  
||Alain discusses perception.||  
**Has he read Scep. and An. F.?²***  
¹Scepticism and Animal Faith.

5 p 86  
[In section on “Work”:]  
**He who fails to bite on the world ignores the world.**  
Work may mean material process, derivation of one event materially from another. In that case, work = dynamic reality. Die Wirklichkeit = das Wirken.¹  
¹Reality = activity.

6 p 116  
The occult, that friend of religions, never makes an appearance. […] One may fully understand that children at play never have visions.  
**The interior disposition in mystics is the reality and visions of little moment.**  
[Santayana was deeply interested in the “interior disposition” of mystics; see his marginalia to *Aphorismes de Saint Jean de la Croix*, among several other sources.]
Motors run, men make motors; we must return to the mark of the human upon the machine. There is nothing of the occult in these matters. It all comes back to a circle of works, according to the law of equivalence, and again to its fuites always explicable according to changes in adjacent conditions.

This is a curious bit of stupidity. Due to Marx?

Exceptions [?].

The “miracle” of industrial and agricultural processes, which when administered with thought, show that the miracle will be harbored in man and be named courage.

This is one of the fanatical delusions of the day. Why encourage it?

The myths, or religion, simply are as they are.

Correcting religion = knowing nothing of religion.

Divine power expires when there is no consent to it. Nothing makes the slave believe. The slave can think, however, and cause animals to speak.

This is a psychologist’s fallacy. No power ignores that which it controls: but all real control is physical. The slave, like the demagogue, cannot be ignored as a physical force. Mais ce qu’il pense n’intéresse personne.

But what he thinks interests no one.

Alain elaborates on the position of the slave.

This is forced because the slave, like the domestic animal, may be very sympathetically considered. There is no vacuum, unless the slave has no slave-mind and no rebellious mind. The former would organize him within society; the latter would class him as a public enemy.


The doctrine of grace. Faith in the reality of grace does not guarantee it, but it is liberating.

Is this more than a contorted way of saying that spirit energizes spiritually, and is content with that?
Concerning belief in the mythology of the Holy Ghost, of the trinity itself: this doctrine is not supinely to be accepted, but to re-make,|| sous la loi de liberté et d’amour1 […]

i.e. sincerity. The very acceptance of dictation from God, i.e.

from within.

1… according to the law of liberty and love.
The whole life of British politics is action and reaction between Ministry and the Parliament. Amery identifies Bagehot as his source for this, and adds that one might almost say to-day between the Ministry and the Opposition, for it is the latter upon which has devolved most of the original critical function of Parliament.

which ought to be personal & competent, instead of partisan and ignorant.

Montesquieu went astray in treating the division between the executive and legislative functions as natural checks on each other.

But appropriated in the U.S.

Our system is one of democracy, but of democracy by consent, and not by delegation, of government of the people, for the people, with, but not by, the people.

Amery discusses the concept of responsibility.

Responsibility in the sense of allegiance to one’s own conscience.

Members of Parliament are no mere delegates of their constituents, but, as Burke pointed out, representatives of the nation, responsible, in the last resort, to their own conscience. Honour preserved.

The dangers of party organization; its power outside Parliament: using Parliament merely as an instrument for carrying through policies shaped without reference to it.

As now in Italy
[Alleged to approve of Mussolini’s Fascism, Santayana here strongly implies criticism.]
mistaken for villains; the society in which they move is vain. But what seemed a pit of despair became a hill of hope.

rot 2 p 23, underlined
[Proust] took the anguish of his mind and body, with the moments of bliss, and through the alchemy of art left nothing but beauty.

not again 3 p 30
Anything not art, or not redeemed by a touch of art, was death—though [Proust] called it life.

not intellectually 4 p 35
||We are indebted to Proust’s art for our comprehension of Françoise (the family’s servant).||

It is your nonsense only that supposes that “art” is the only interesting emotion.

5 p 42
||Proust, unlike Schopenhauer, devoted his art|| to preventing the transcendence of personality.

? Not to exhibiting it, and so to transcend it?

6 p 69, marked
Mr. Santayana is not ready, like Croce, to accept identification of form and expression implicit in Proust, but does admit that expression (association) “can give images the same hold upon our attention which might be secured by a fortunate form or splendid material.” ||Further, that Santayana had read and liked “nearly all” of A la recherche du temps perdu.|| He added: “I was interested to find toward the last that he also had the idea of essences. It is impossible that he should have got it from me, but he had hit on the same thing.”


7 p 69, underlined and marked
If it was the same thing, then Mr. Santayana indirectly, at least, admitted relations in essences, for relations are the quintessence of essence for Proust. Yet Proust thinks of essences as somehow rising above the relativity and change in which they are discovered—as shadowing forth an eternal reality behind all process.

identities [sic] are the essence. Do you call ideality a relation?

[No further markings. Ames had called on Santayana in Rome in preparation for his book.]
The marginalia is in Santayana’s hand of c. 1902. Several of the marginalia not included here are paraphrases of text for study, minor corrections in diction, and quibbles about Hammond’s Greek.

1 p xx–xxi, underlined

[Hammond’s introduction:]

||Aristotle regards vegetable and animal life as virtually the same; while sensation, movement, and conceptual thought show the development of the vital principle found in plants. [...] It is, however, a distinctly marked stage that nature makes in the development of the vital principle when sensation is exceeded and rational thought is reached. This new phenomenon is confined to man, and is the last stage in the evolution of ἀτάκτης. Soul is, therefore, in the opinion of Aristotle, the unity in which the principles of life, sense-perception, and thought are embraced.

**Bad language:** Soul is a term for the principle of life and all its functions in any animal.

2 p xxxvi, underlined

[Concerning organs of perception:]

To make a further use of Aristotle’s terminology, the organ assimilates the significance or form of a thing without its matter.

**But not into its substance:** it assimilates the form by producing an idea of it. This is the final cause of the assimilation, its “unmoved mover.”

3 p xlviii, top

[Section on “Sensation”:]

{There are but two important philosophers in these matters: Aristotle and Spinoza. Aristotle must be corrected by Spinoza on the subject of the relations of mind and body: Spinoza must be supplemented by Aristotle on all moral subjects. The double aspect and the unmoved mover must be combined.}

4 p xlviii

No animal can exist without touch, and only animals can possess it. As it is necessary to animal life, any stimulus sufficiently excessive to destroy it, destroys not only the organ, as in the other senses, but life itself.
This would suggest an interesting restatement in terms of the unmoved mover. No animal can exist without tactile reactions: no being having such exists without producing the consciousness of its situation. Interplay of forces is the basis of significant life. When your action is widely adjusted, your consciousness is widely intelligent.

5 p lxviii, marked
Aristotle, like Plato, developed his ethical doctrines in the closest connection with his psychological theories. His conception of the moral will and its function is determined largely by his theory of the practical reason. In his analysis of the elements of consciousness, he finds only what we should call ideational and affective elements. There is no reference to any third conative element.

In which he is of course profoundly right. Will is an emotion with or at an idea.

6 p lxviii
Desire, as Aristotle employs it, is not a purely pathic or affective element. Feeling as such (theoretically) is completely passive,—mere enjoyment of the pleasant or mere suffering of the painful.

The painful = a feeling repelled. The pleasant = a feeling welcomed.

7 p lxxiv, marked
[On “Creative Reason”:] In the interpretation of Averroës, although the reason is immortal, individuality ceases with death; for differences in individuals are due to differences in their accumulated sensible images and phantasmata—in the content of their experience. Rational activity, as such, is universally the same, and it is only this universal, non-individual principle of reason that persists after death. All individuals are alike in participating in one rational life, and they are different in so far as reason has a different mass of images to illumine. The principle of individuation is in plastic matter, not in generic form, and reason is related to sensible images as form is related to matter.

Good
[Rare praise.]

8 p lxxx, marked
||The Reason has no bodily organ.|| Reason, then, confers on a potentially rational world its actually rational existence; and, moreover, in thinking the actually rational, it thinks itself.

N.B.
9 p lxxxvi, marked

The sum of sense-data constitutes the potentiality of reason, *i.e.* it constitutes the passive reason, while their construction into actual rational significance constitutes the activity of creative reason; the real content is given in the former, the formal content in the latter. The content, therefore, of the *sensus communis* regarded as rational potentiality is the νοῦς παθητικός;¹ the power which converts this potentiality into actual rational forms or meanings is the νοῦς ποιητικός.²

[From “The content, therefore,” to the end of the passage:]

**N.B.**

¹*Mind of the senses.*
²*Mind of action.*

[Pages 37–120, those which contain Santayana’s markings, treat Aristotle’s *De Anima.*]

10 p 39, marked

[Book I, chapter V, “Definition of the Soul.”]

[…] it is evident that knowledge does not belong to the soul in virtue of its composition out of the elements, neither is it right or true to say that it is moved.

**Conclusion of the whole book.**

11 p 54

[Santayana’s enlightening summary:]

**Dialectical psychology.** Sensation, being pleasant or painful, produces desire.

12 p 60, marked

[Book II, chapter IV, “Principle of Nutrition.”]

[…] the growth of fire is indeterminate so long as there is material to burn; on the other hand, in all bodies developed in nature there is a limit and significance to size and growth. These attributes ([of limit and significance])¹ belong to soul, not to fire, to reason rather than to matter.

**Good illustration of bad physics.**

¹The parentheses and brackets are actually in the text to denote words inserted by the translator.

13 p 62

[Santayana summarizes and comments:]

**Assimilation of food by the soul to the body, through heat.**

{Soul is the instinct of self-preservation; of race preservation, etc}

14 p 66–67

[Book II, chapter V, on sense-perception:]
Aristotle defines three stages in the acquisition of knowledge, from potentiality to actuality.

**education, drawing out, like Socrates.**

15 p 67

Sense-perception in the new-born as a species of knowledge. Active sensation is used in a way similar to active thinking. There is, however, this difference, that the objects which produce sensation are external, [...]. The reason for this is that active sense-perception refers to particular things, while scientific knowledge refers to the universal. These universals, however, are, in a certain sense, in the mind itself. Therefore it is in one’s power to think when one wills, but to experience sense-perception is not thus in one’s power; for a sensible object must first be present.

Yet this is more definite, richer, more permanent, more unmistakable than any existence.

16 p 106

Animals experience sensation, not reflexion. Neither is thought, in which right and wrong are determined, *i.e.* right in the sense of practical judgment, scientific knowledge and true opinion, and wrong in the sense of the opposite of these,—thought in this signification is not identical with sensation.

**Perception not opinion. Cf Theaetetus. Sensation always true of the sensible.**

17 p 107

[Aristotle on the psychology of imagination:] If imagination means the power whereby what we call a phantasm is awakened in us, and if our use of language here is not merely metaphorical, then imagination is one of those faculties or mental forces in us by virtue of which we judge and are capable of truth and error.

**Imagination not sense, usually false, not inevitably present when sense exists, sometimes present without it when sense is absent.**

18 p 107, marked

Again, sensations are always true, while imaginations are for the most part false.

19 p 113, marked

[Book III, chapter IV, “Theory of Reason.”]

The nature of thought is exclusively potentiality. What we call reason in the soul (by reason I mean the instrument by which the soul thinks and forms conceptions) is, prior to the exercise of thought, no reality at all.
Pure Kant. The categories are not existences: if they were they would have to be material organs, for the existent condition of anything is material.

20 p 121, marked
A predication, as e.g. an affirmation, asserts something of something else, and is in every instance either true or false. This does not apply to the mind always, but when the mind asserts what a thing is in its essential nature and not what attaches to something as a predicate, then it is true.

Pure dialectic.

21 p 159, marked
[“On the Senses,” chapter III.]
[Of color, and diaphanous bodies such as water:]
Colour is the limit of transparency. {These definitions, even when good, are not physical: they are definitions of “concretions in discourse”. Things cannot be defined, they must be decomposed or derived from their causes.} [†]

22 p 197
[“On Memory,” chapter I.]
[…] all memory is associated with time. Therefore, only those creatures that have perception of time, have memory, and memory attaches to that organ [the heart] whereby time is perceived.

Memory is here pregnantly and transcendentally understood. For an animal might profit by past experience which it did not, in this pregnant sense, remember or know to be past. Cf. the conscience.

23 p 200, marked
[On the psychology of memory and images:]
[…] the question arises whether one remembers the impression or the thing from which the impression was derived.

24 p 200, underlined
[…] the animal in a picture is both animal and a copy, and both of these are one and the same thing; but the mode of existence in the two instances is different, and it is possible to regard this picture both in the sense of animal and in the sense of image, and so it is with the image within us: we must regard it both as something in itself and as the image of something else.

Here is the point: the logical energy which makes the image significant is the essence of memory as distinguished from imagination.