I. Introduction:

Two foregoing chapters engaged our attention to Santayana's aesthetics. His theory of art has not been expounded so far, but the discussion of his aesthetics will remain incomplete if his theory of art be not explained. Santayana assigns to art a very high place in The Life of Reason. In Reason in Art, the volume four of The Life of Reason, he supplies us with much data of art. The reader of the volume referred to discovers in his treatment a concreteness of details frequently missed in the other volumes. Here Santayana shows how art founded on automatic self-expression develops into what is called fine art. Of the fine arts music and poetry deserve special mention. But he does not confine art to the sphere of fine art only. Art is widened to include most of man's creative effort, and thus it cannot be independent of the moral values which govern life and promote happiness. We are accustomed to think that art is for art's sake. But Santayana thinks that art is for life's sake. He insists upon the intimacy between art and life.

II. The nature of art:

A. Art is purposive:

Instinctive adaptation and spontaneous action, Santayana considers the material source and condition for the existence of art. He thinks that art springs from instinct, and yet it is not a return to instinct. It is a function which is purposive as well as rational. "If the
birds" says he, "in building nests felt the utility of what they do, they would be practising an art; and for the instinct to be called rational it would even suffice that their traditional purpose and method should become conscious occasionally." A useful and automatic instinctive activity becomes art when it is supervened by purpose and conscious expression.

B. Art is practical:

According to Santayana, art by which is meant a creative process is practical and useful. It is the most complete embodiment of reason, and the expression of mind in matter. By such expression the outer world is remodelled and moulded "into sympathy with inner values". Art cannot lie hidden in the mind. It is always a rational expression, a progress "bettering the conditions of existence." The aesthetic value which is possessed by some works of art is one of the satisfactions which art offers to human nature as a whole.

III. Types of Artistic Process: Fine art and Servile art.

Santayana has mentioned two types of the artistic process, viz., (a) the aesthetic process of art and (b) the non-aesthetic process of art. The first is called fine or liberal art, and the second servile art. Fine art is an operation which one undertakes for its own sake. Such art has an intrinsic or aesthetic value.

2. Ibid., p.15.
3. Ibid., p.15.
Servile art is an operation which is not its own end, that is, which is not performed for its own sake, and which is undertaken as an instrumentality for some ulterior purpose. To put it simply, servile art has an instrumental or extrinsic value which is non-aesthetic in character.

The disadvantage of servile art

Santayana has shown that the cultivation of servile art suffers from a disadvantage. Industrial or mechanical art illustrates what is called servile art. Industrial art and its products are to be estimated by the ultimate interests they subserve. A man who practises industrial or mechanical art only indulges himself into a mere physical drifting. His occupation becomes sordid, instrumental and justified only externally. Industrial arts are indispensable no doubt, since they support a person's practical life, but if they occupy human attention in toto, they are definitely "pure burdens" for those who, as rational creatures, should vindicate their prerogative to spiritual freedom.

Harmony between servile and fine arts

What Santayana wishes to do is to bring harmony between fine art and servile art. Servile art makes the ground easy for the cultivation of fine art. An advantage which accrues to servile art lies in the diminution of toil, for such diminution of toil in the mechanical field serves as an opportunity for employing energies in other fields, so that the total accomplishment may be greater. Servile

4. Ibid., p.23.
operation, since it is a non-aesthetic process; is menial; but if it be accompanied by the ideal representation of ends pursued, it becomes an anagram of spiritual freedom. Fine art, for its existence, needs the material conditions provided by the servile process of art. To separate the aesthetic element from the non-aesthetic ones in a fine art is not practically possible. "The rose's grace", says Santayana, "could more easily be plucked from its petals than the beauty of art from its subject, occasion, and use."

Thus according to Santayana, servile art and fine art do not sub tend to each other. They are rather two stages of art, one being subservient to the other. Let Santayana speak here. "Art has accordingly two stages: one mechanical or industrial, in which untoward matter is better prepared, or impeding media are overcome; the other liberal, in which perfectly fit matter is appropriated to ideal uses and endowed with a direct spiritual function." Servile art prepares matter and makes it useful. And matter thus prepared is used by fine art to serve some ideal function.

IV. Fine art:

Santayana maintains that initially action remains always spontaneous and automatic. It is also, in its initial phase, tentative. By experiment certain tendencies are fortified and others are cancelled. As a result, habit and wisdom are formed. Then action remains no longer spontaneous. It is accompanied and guided by foresight. It

5. Ibid., p.17.
6. Ibid., p.27.
becomes purposive and is expressed consciously. In other words, it becomes a rational function, and that is art.

Fine art lies midway between two extremes. At one extreme lies spontaneous action and at the other extreme pure utility. Spontaneous action leads to art when it is performed rationally. An art like dance originates when automatic self-expression gives way to conscious and rationally disciplined actions. Again, any utilitarian activity is not art, but "utility leads to art when its vehicle acquires intrinsic value and becomes expressive." A servile art like war is utilitarian, since it is externally justified. But "out of the pomp and circumstance of war fine arts may arise - music, armoury, heraldry, and eloquence."

A. Music:

Santayana pays great tribute to pure music as a fine art. "Pure music is pure art." It is an ideal world of forms, and more vital in their emotional content. The rhythm of music gives it a superior emotional power.

Barbaric and Modern Music

Santayana sees no difference between barbaric musicians and modern musicians. Barbaric music is nothing but loud and unceasing cry. Barbaric musicians are too much carried away by their performance, "all are performers, and the crowd is only a stimulus that keeps every one dancing

8. Ibid., p.30.
9. Ibid., p.42.
and howling in emulation." What is suggested by the primitive art of music is only "performance". That music has an inherent value is not recognised by barbaric practice. Modern art of music, Santayana maintains, does not improve much in comparison to barbaric art of music. Only "instead of vague custom we have schools, and instead of swaying multitudes academic example". A modern musician indulges himself in so many suggestions and in the tumult of production. But Santayana thinks that this is sheer wastefulness. The practice of music lies in an ideal function which it subserves, and not in any external suggestion.

The transcendental aspect of music

Music, abstracting itself extremely from material trammels, creates a new realm of form by its entire spontaneity. When we are carried in such a realm, we are simply impassioned by its musical form. Music, since it is an ethereal art, is not confined to mortal obligations. In it there are "no imperious needs calling us back to reality."

Its affinity to life

Santayana says that "expression is never art while it remains expressive to no purpose." Music, since it is an art, is expressive of a purpose. It "interests humanity most when it is wedded to human events." The alliance between human life and music becomes possible only

10. Ibid., p.39.
11. Ibid., p.39.
12. Ibid., p.44.
through the emotions aroused by both. The absence of music is followed by the absence of emotion. If music breaks in upon us when we remain busy in other activities, we may remain inattentive to it or we may be swayed into the realm of sound and enjoy the ideal musical form. Music helps to arouse from our animal heart many a suppressed feeling and by such arousal we are led into an ideal world of forms from which we do not, for the nonce, feel any imperious urge to come back to reality. Thus music as an art elevates our experience and makes life better.

B. Poetry:

Three requirements of great poetry

Santayana's dealing with poetry as a fine art proves his deep understanding of this art. Great poetry, according to him, must have three requirements. First, it should have a perfectly determinate form. The images invoked must form a picture. The recognition of sounds should be according to definite rhythmic schemes. Secondly, with the formal beauty of great poetry is to be added its material beauty. Its material elements are sounds, words and images. In any great poetry sounds are melodious and musical, words are rich and suggestive, and images are graphic and stimulating. Each of these three material elements should be presented in a determinate form. Thirdly, a significant world outlook should be expressed by great poetry. Great poetry is always rational. Reason is universal in its outlook. Rational or philosophical poetry "would present in
graphic images the total efficacy of real things." Such a poetry is deeply rooted in human experience. It presents a meaningful interpretation of both the human condition and the cosmic scene.

Is rational poetry a fine art?

The last requirement of great poetry, then, consists in the formulation of a metaphysics that will account for experience itself. Now, to formulate such a metaphysics it has to undergo a kind of laborious and discursive thinking which is reserved for intellect rather than for imagination. Should we, then, call such poetry a work of fine art when we know that fine art must take an imaginative flight?

We can seek the answer to this question from some portions of Santayana's "Three Philosophical Poets". He maintains that "if we think of philosophy as an investigation into truth, or as reasoning upon truths, there is nothing in philosophy akin to poetry." But he insists that philosophical or rational poetry is possible, since the vision of philosophy may be poetic and imaginative. Discursive reasoning and investigation which we find in philosophy are "only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end", but ultimately they may be led into intuition which is "a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth." And he says, "Such contemplation is

15. Reason in Art, p. 80.
17. Ibid., pp. 10-11.
18. Ibid., p. 11.
imaginative .... A philosopher who attains it is, for the moment, a poet; and a poet who turns his practised and passionate imagination on the order of all things, or on anything in the light of the whole, is for that moment a philosopher."  

Great poetry vs. greatest poetry

The above three requirements suffice to define great poetry, but not greatest poetry. Santayana says that Goethe, Lucretius and Dante are great poets, but they are not greatest ones. They are great poets, since each of them expresses, in beautiful and determinate form, a large and penetrating vision. But each is limited in his outlook. One's intuition is to be supplemented by the intuitions of the other two if greatest poetry is to be brought into existence.

Santayana holds, "Goethe is the poet of life; Lucretius the poet of nature; Dante the poet of salvation." Goethe portrays a world that is constituted by human feelings and ideas. But his vision should be combined with that of Lucretius who has an insight into the substance of things. But neither Goethe nor Lucretius possesses that insight which is supplied by Dante. Dante understands the life of contemplation and spiritual harmony. The harmony of these three intuitions can give rise to the greatest poetry. The greatest poet, according to Santayana, is he who understands the inner substance of things, appreciates

19. Ibid., p.11.
20. Ibid., p.204.
the textural wealth of experience and possesses the vision of the good and the contemplation of perfection.

Santayana's final statement of poetry

We should not take the above view of Santayana as his final statement of poetry. An article called "On My Friendly Critics" written by Santayana was published in the Journal of Philosophy seven years after Three Philosophical Poets appeared. In that article he recants his view that "the noblest poetry also must express the moral burden of life and must be rich in wisdom." He now finds "quite sufficient perfection in poetry, like that of the Chinese and Arabians, without much philosophic scope, in mere grace and feeling and music and cloud-castles and frolic."

Answer to Santayana's statement

But Santayana is mistaken when he maintains in the above-said article that philosophic scope is unnecessary for the noblest poetry. To say that a work of art contains philosophic scope does not amount to saying that it has a literal truth value. "Lying is a privilege of poets", says Santayana. A poet indulges in a fanciful fiction. But that fiction should be taken as a device for communicating to us an imaginative interpretation of the everyday world. The poet's interpretation of life may be

22. Ibid.
23. Ibid.
24. Reason in Art, p.73.
erroneous from the scientific or metaphysical standpoint. But still a philosophic scope remains for a poet to render an imaginative interpretation of life. It should be remembered in this connection that poetry, in order to be a fine art, should contain philosophic scope and with it the emotional appeal and sensuous attraction.

V. Plastic art:

Plastic arts grow from man's plastic impulses which are spontaneous and expressive. A man, who depends on things for his experience, changes these by his automatic impulse so that there is every possibility that his welfare should be promoted by his action. Now, the change brought in the things by the impulse fortifies that impulse, and as a result a reactive habit is formed, and the act is done with foreknowledge of its benefits. Thus the plastic impulse becomes art. Plastic art, says Santayana, may be constructive or representative.

A. Constructive art:

Constructive art is illustrated in decoration. If a man happens, by the movement of his hand, to turn a flowering branch into a garland, and if the new form given to the object interests him, then he will have discovered a decorative art. His plastic impulse, which brings a change in the environment in this way, being fortified by the new discovery, tends to repeat that action. If the same plastic impulse remains operative, it will be attended with knowledge and criticism of its happy results. Santayana says, "Self-criticism, being a second incipient
artistic impulse .... may to some extent modify the next performance."

Decoration is an independent art. It is to be practised for its own sake, "in obedience to elementary plastic instincts." Again, it is fundamental in design, since it lends sensuous impression by its unique structural effect.

Cases where plastic construction faces obstruction

Plastic art develops if the plastic impulse admits anything new. There are specific cases where art cannot make progress. One such case is conservatism. Primitive art is conservative. The idol of the primitive artist "must be the self-same hereditary stock, or at least it must have the old sanctified rigidity and stare." Art cannot also make its progress in a society which contains an inert custom. In a Christian society Christian architecture is determined by an inert custom, that is, a fancy of building churches in the shape of a cross. Builders here cannot conceive any alternative to that convention. Customs prevailing in society are the "debris of old perceptions which choke all fresh perception in the soul." In such a situation plastic construction becomes impossible.

B. Representative art:

This type of art emerges, when the plastic impulse does not construct anything new, but reproduces or

26. Ibid., p.94.
27. Ibid., p.85.
28. Ibid., p.88.
imitates a form which is decorative in itself. What is to be noted is that representation or imitation does not mean a literal repetition of the object. In an imitative art the copy is not primary. Here what is fundamental is the reproduction of a form in a new medium, giving it a different function. Santayana maintains, "Imitation is far more than similarity ....... It has a representative and intellectual value because in reproducing the forms of things it reproduces them in a fresh substance to a new purpose." Thus imitative art has its progress, since reproduction of a form of thing is made for a new purpose.

As an example of representative art Santayana refers to sculpture. This type of plastic art not only reproduces the material form which is interesting but also renders it an ideal expression. The sculptor has a task to harmonize the attitudes momentarily achieved or vaguely imagined. Again, sculpture is to depend on its model. The model must be refined, if "the statue is to be ideal, i.e., if it is to express the possible motions and vital character of its subject".

VI. Critical Review:

Santayana is right in defining art as a rational function. Art is not sheer self-expression. It is a conscious activity which offers satisfaction to human nature as a whole. The definition of art as rational includes within it the notion of "artistic criticism". Artistic

29. Ibid., p.103.
30. Ibid., p.107.
criticism means the varied interpretation by the artist of what he has done. He goes through the process of artistic criticism when he interprets whether the work of art carries significance, maintains its relation with other effects, draws praise from the audience. On the basis of such interpretation the artist will be satisfied or dissatisfied with his product. Artistic criticism the artist cannot ignore, since it enables him to undergo a more perfect performance. As Santayana says, "Self-criticism ...... may to some extent modify the next performance." 31

According to Santayana, art is for the sake of life. By cherishing such a view he goes against those who advocate art for art's sake. Indeed, he keeps his view as a challenge to the view held by the rival party. Santayana asserts that art is not a separable sphere of human activity, it does not escape life and does not create realms of beauty fancy-free. It is his credit that he makes art an organic part of the sumtotal of life.

Santayana maintains that though artistic activity, which consists in imposing an ideal form upon matter, is preoccupied with imagination, its concern is wholesome, since it fashions facts according to ideal preferences; it "alters the material conditions of sentience so that sentience becomes at once more delightful and more significant." 32 Thus art is an achievement, a step forward toward the goal of rational living. "What nature does with

31. Ibid., p.85.
32. Ibid., p.155.
existence, art does with appearance. In our concrete experience we meet life with misery and unhappiness, with rivalry and vanity. But art fancies a world in which we find a picture of rational living and where life instead of being mixed with unhappiness and rivalry is united with peace and equanimity. As Santayana says, "Art supplies constantly to contemplation what nature seldom affords in concrete experience - the union of life and peace."

Santayana's theory of art has some disadvantages which are so grave that it loses its glory to a great extent. They are stated below.

(a) The distinction Santayana draws between servile art and fine art cannot be maintained. He says that fine art is, while servile art is not, intrinsically valuable. And what is intrinsically valuable is not instrumental to any other thing. Our contention against Santayana is that servile art, like fine art, may be intrinsically valuable, and fine art, like servile art, may be instrumental.

We have already noted (pp.167-168) that any satisfying experience may be intrinsically valuable. Fine art, being a most complete embodiment of reason, gives satisfaction to human nature as a whole, and hence contains an intrinsic value. Servile art, Santayana says, is instrumental and justified only externally. It prepares matter and makes it fit so that the fine artist can use it for some ideal function. Then Santayana says that servile

33. Ibid., p.119.
34. Ibid., p.119.
art prepares matter, he by no means precludes the possibility of its being enjoyable. Since the servile process of art satisfies by virtue of its function as an instrument, it has intrinsic value. Again, fine art, like servile art, is instrumental. Santayana says clearly that art is "the best instrument of happiness." As instrumental, the process of fine art, like that of servile art, may be intrinsically valuable at least to the extent that it satisfies by virtue of its utility. Thus we see that both fine and servile arts are instrumental. And since both satisfy by virtue of their function as instruments, they may be intrinsically valuable. Thus the Santayanian distinction between fine and servile arts stands meaningless. The distinction, however, becomes meaningful if the two are made to differ in the degree of instrumentality. Fine art is less instrumental than servile art.

(b) Santayana observes that art consists in imposing an ideal form upon matter. We find him saying, "Art needs to find a material relatively formless which its business is to shape; and this initial formlessness in matter is essential to art's existence." Art, then, according to him, gives a propitious form to matter. Suppose, the sculptor faces an unhewn block of marble, and his rational function as an artist will be to bestow a propitious form to that marble. The ideal which he will impose upon the formless matter is a character or quality which he

35. Ibid., p.155.
has previously experienced or which he has imagined. Thus, the ideal serves as a conscious and determinate end according to which the sculptor will proceed to chisel the marble. And then we can expect an exact resemblance between the final product and the ideal according to which it is produced.

But the conclusion that is reached can be hardly maintained. In both representational and non-representational art, the exact similarity between the production and the ideal according to which it is produced is rarely attained. The artist may be inspired by what he has seen or imagined. But that seen or imagined thing can rarely serve as a conscious and definite end which is to be embodied or reproduced. Sometimes the artist's work can hardly resemble what he has already experienced. This is possible since the artist works with an attitude which is called "artistic criticism". His production is not the embodiment of any prior ideal. It is rather the culmination of an experimental process in which judgment and satisfaction or dissatisfaction lead to further experimentation, which is judged and modified, and then again judged and modified, and so on until the artist stops working and finds himself most satisfied.

(c) We can once again quote from Reason in Art the portion where Santayana refers to the two stages of art. He says, "Art has accordingly two stages: one mechanical or industrial, in which untoward matter is better prepared, or impeding media are overcome; the other liberal.
in which perfectly fit matter is appropriated to ideal
uses and endowed with a direct spiritual function." Thus
a distinction has been made between the phase in which
the artist prepares matter and the one in which he uses
it for an ideal function.

But such a distinction is not tenable. Let us
consider the function of the sculptor facing an unhewn
block of marble. The sculptor as a fine artist has an
ideal function, viz., to chisel the facial features in the
marble. The preliminary function, viz., to render the mar­
ble an attractive texture by cutting it down to a manage­
able size and by polishing or cleaning it, is performed by
the servile or industrial art. Santayana will say that
this servile operation is instrumental to the above­
mentioned ideal function. But this contention of Santayana
cannot be maintained. What is the true function of the
artist? Definitely to produce an object that will satisfy
in every respect. If the production of the sculptor is to
be most satisfying, what he should do is to give not only
a certain outline but also an attractive texture to the
marble. If he only chisels the facial features upon a mar­
ble having an ugly texture, surely this ideal function will
not give a total satisfaction. Marble with a certain texture
is not instrumental to marble with a certain outline. On the
other hand, both are instrumental to a total effect that the
artist wants to attain.

37. Reason in Art, p.27.