CHAPTER V

EPISTEMOLOGY

As we have seen, the centre of Santayana's metaphysical problems is, in the main, the notion of essence. This very notion of essence is the key to his theory of knowledge as well. The present chapter undertakes to discuss Santayana's epistemological position in its varied aspects. To understand his epistemological position one must view it in the light of the general development of American realism from 1910 onwards.

I. Development of American Realism:

A. Neo-Realism:

In 1910 six American philosophers formed themselves into a group with a view to expounding a new kind of realistic philosophy. The group consisted of Perry, Holt, Marvin, Spaulding, Pitkin and Montague. Their cooperative work is entitled "The New Realism". They have cast their lot with the common man and maintained that objects are directly known except mainly on the point that while their position is scientific, that of the latter is unscientific. New Realism is, broadly speaking, a return to naive or natural realism. The neo-realist theory of knowledge stands as a criticism of the Lockian theory of knowledge. According to the latter, the external objects are known not directly but indirectly, through the ideas that are in the mind. This psychological argument, however, is not accepted by the new realists. Their view is that ideas cannot stand in the way of the knowledge of objects. The subject's having ideas of the object means
its having knowledge of it. Ideas do not constitute, according to them, a tertium quid between the percipient mind and the perceived object. Even the dichotomy of the two is called to question and mind sought to be resolved into objects.

The direct theory of knowledge of the new realists is developed into epistemological monism and realism. Holt and some other neo-realists regard knowledge as a response. The subject is what responds and the object is what is responded to. They hold that "the difference between subject and object of consciousness is not a difference of quality or substance, but a difference of office or place in configuration." With this assertion of the neo-realists the Cartesian dualism between mind and matter is overcome. Monism in epistemology is finally reached when they relentlessly hold that "the content of knowledge, that which lies in or before the mind when knowledge takes place, is numerically identical with the thing known." The object known and the object as it is are one and the same.

The epistemological monism of the neo-realists is supplied by their pan-objectivism. The idealists deny the external world in favour of consciousness, whereas with the new realists the pendulum swings to the other extreme, viz., the denial of consciousness in favour of the external world. They treat 'consciousness', 'thought' etc as natural phenomena belonging to the space-time world.

2. Ibid., p.34.
Moore's view that "consciousness and its objects are distinct existents" is rejected by Holt. Holt compares consciousness to light. Just as when we suppose that we see light we really see nothing but illuminated things, similarly when we think of consciousness we really have before us nothing but the objects known.

B. Critical Realism:

American realism does not stop with the neo-realistic theory. It develops further through an important phase, known as critical realism which is substantially different from neo-realism. In 1920 a volume of essays written by seven American philosophers, George Santayana being one of the partners, was published under the title Essays in Critical Realism. This volume is a co-operative study of the problem of knowledge. The names of the other six collaborators are Durant Drake, Arthur 0. Lovejoy, James B. Pratt, Arthur K. Rogers, Roy Wood Sellars and C.A. Strong.

The epistemological position of Santayana as a critical realist can best be brought out through the contrast of his group with the neo-realists. The contrast is well exhibited in the words of Sellars. "While the new realist holds that knowing is the givenness of the object, its literal presence to inspection, the critical realist regards knowledge more as interpreting of a selected and meant object by means of characters discriminated in the field of consciousness."

3. Ibid., p.371.
Critical realism, therefore, makes knowledge representative and symbolic. This is obviously a regression to Locke's representative theory of knowledge with various scientific technicalities brought to bear upon it.

The critical realist does not approve the new realist's epistemological monism and pan-objectivism. The neo-realist's pan-objectivist and a fortiori monistic contention is that everything whatsoever belongs to the objective or physical world. The so-called subjective phenomena, like dream objects, illusory appearances, etc are not due to the subjective stuff of fancy, but belong to the physical world as subsistents, not as existents. This is the view of most of the American neo-realists. There are some British neo-realists like Alexander who are of opinion that the so-called subjective phenomena belong to the physical world as dislocated parts of the physical objects. The words of Alexander can be cited here. "The world of illusion is the same as what we call the real world, but dislocated, its parts taken from their proper places and referred amiss. That dislocation is the mind's own work. Illusion is due to the intrusion of the mind's own idiosyncrasies into the apprehension of reality." Bereft of the subjective world the pan-objective position of the neo-realist boils down to epistemological monism as distinguished from epistemological dualism.

The critical realists cannot accept the neo-realist's position so far as epistemological monism and pan-objectivism are concerned. They argue that the

objectivity of physical objects cannot be assigned to the dream objects and illusory appearances, since subjective phenomena are private, instead of being public like ordinary physical objects. Again, the subjective phenomena do not obey the physical laws which are found in the objective world. Further, those who assert that subjective phenomena are the dislocated parts of the physical objects and that dislocation is the mind's own work cannot hold this view when they maintain the identity of the subjective and the objective, the mental and the physical. By emphasising the fact that dislocation is the mind's own work, they keep the mind in sharp contrast with the external object. Thus they come, perhaps, unconsciously, to accept dualism which they actually want not to treat with undue favour.

C. Bertrand Russell and Epistemological Monism of Neo-Realism:

Bertrand Russell, the English realist, was once a supporter of epistemological monism. He eliminates ideas as the tertium quid standing between a mind and its objects when he declares that "the faculty of being acquainted with things other than itself is the main characteristic of a mind", and that "acquaintance with objects essentially consists in a relation between the mind and something other than the mind; it is this that constitutes the mind's power of knowing things." S. Alexander also advocates monism in his theory of knowledge when he analyses all knowing into a relation of "togetherness" or "compresence" between a

mental act of apprehension and a non-mental thing.

The American realists like Perry and Holt reach the same 'monistic' effect in a different way. According to them, all knowing is a "specific reaction of the central nervous system", and knowledge is the peculiar complex of objects defined by that reaction. What a mind knows depends simply on what the nervous system at a given moment specifically reacts to. Here too there is no room for "ideas".

B. Russell's monistic position is abandoned in his An Outline of Philosophy (1927). In The Analysis of Mind (1921) he denies the distinction between sensation and sense-datum. Sensations and sense-data, according to him, are the same neutral entities or particulars which taken in one context form the subject-matter of psychology, and taken in another context form the subject-matter of physics. In An Outline of Philosophy he maintains this standpoint and denies the identity of the percept with the physical object. He says that a man's percepts are private to himself. The perception of an event is "a characteristic reaction which is present when the event occurs and not otherwise."

Russell's view with regard to perception and the physical world is clearly stated in the following lines.

"I take it that, when we have a percept, just what we perceive (if we avoid avoidable sources of error)."

8. R.B. Perry, Recent Philosophical Tendencies, chs. xii, xiii; E.B. Holt, Concept of Consciousness, ch.ix.
is an event occupying part of the region which, for physics, is occupied by the brain. In fact, perception gives us the most concrete knowledge we possess as to the stuff of our brains, not part of the stuff of tables and chairs, sun, moon, and stars. Suppose we are looking at a leaf, and we see a green patch. This patch is not out there where the leaf is, but is an event occupying a certain volume in our brains during the time that we see the leaf. Seeing the leaf consists in the existence in the region occupied by our brain, of a green patch causally connected with the leaf, or rather with a series of events emanating from the place in physical space where physics places the leaf."

The above statement establishes the causal theory of perception. The percept, viz., the green patch of the leaf occupies a certain volume in our brains when the leaf is seen by us. Instead of identifying the percept with the physical object Russell established a causal connection between the two. This dualistic position with regard to his theory of knowledge is still held in his recent work "My Philosophical Development".

D. Russell and Epistemological Dualism of Critical Realism:

The question is: Is, then, Russell an adherent of epistemological dualism which is advocated by the critical realist? Russell's theory is not that of the critical realist, and this will be evident from the latter's presentation of theory of knowledge. For the critical

10. Ibid., p.292.
realist knowledge is the result of the interrelation of three factors, viz., (1) a physical object, (2) the subject or the mental state and (3) a datum or essence. What we are directly acquainted with is the datum. The datum or the content of the perceiving mind serves as a mediator between the subject and the physical object. The identity between the perceived object (datum) and the physical object is denied by the critical realists, thus giving rise to epistemological dualism.

The epistemological dualism of the critical realists is not the one which is accepted by Russell. For Russell, as we have seen from his latest philosophical development, knowledge-situation consists of two factors, viz., the percept and the physical object. Another point of difference between the critical realist and Russell is that, while the former gives the datum a status independent of both the mental state and the physical object, in the latter's opinion, however, the percept or sensation is identical with sense-datum.

Regarding the nature of the datum with which epistemological enquiry starts, opinions vary among the critical realists themselves. Drake, Strong, Rogers and Santayana maintain that the datum which is given to the knower is not an existent, representing the object. But Sellars, Pratt and Lovejoy opine that "although what is given is a mere character-complex, it is in reality in toto the character of the mental state of the moment, and so is an existent, in spite of the fact that its existence is not given." Drake in his essay "The Approach to Critical Realism" 1920. p.4.
Realism" shows where lies the reason for the difference of their opinions. Let him be quoted here. 'Our difference of opinion consists in a divergent use of the terms "given", "datum", etc. Some of us speak of as "given" only those traits that are traits of the mental existent of the moment — traits, that is, that have actual, literal, psychological existence. The rest of us include in the term the traits apprehended as belonging to the object through the attitude, or reaction, of the organism. According to the latter usage......the datum is, qua datum, a mere essence, an imputed but not necessarily actual existent. It may or it may not have existence. It exists just to the extent in which it is, in fact, the nature either of the object known or of the cognitive state (mental existent) of the moment — an extent which varies from case to case. Meanwhile, according to the former usage, the datum has in toto a psychological existence, and may be spoken of as "mental content".

II. Santayana's place in the critical realist movement:

Santayana's place in the critical realist movement is an important one. Durant Drake, who wrote the preface of Essays in Critical Realism, gives "especial credit......to Professor Strong and Professor Santayana, who, though overseas during this entire period, have kept up a constant correspondence with the rest of us, and thus shared with their cis-Atlantic colleagues the fruits of their many years of consideration of the vexing problem we had chosen attack." Strong in turn acknowledges his indebtedness to

13. Ibid., p.21.
Santayana in the following words:

"I had long been convinced that cognition requires three categories for its adequate interpretation; the intermediate one - between subject and object - corresponding to the Kantian "phenomenon" or "appearance"...... but, in my efforts to conceive it clearly, I was continually falling off either into the category of "object" or into that of "psychic state". What was my relief when at last I heard Mr. Santayana explain his conception of "essence", and it dawned upon me that here was the absolutely correct description of the looked-for category."

Santayana's article Three Proofs of Realism is the clearest presentation of his critical realist point of view. His point of view as a critical realist is shown in his maintaining the transitiveness of knowledge. Knowledge instead of knowing itself aims at something beyond itself, the object; that is, knowledge must be transitive. In his psychological proof of realism Santayana argues against idealism, which denies the existence of "physical, metaphysical, or religious objects", on the simple ground that objects known are not independent of knowledge. Though it denies the claim of knowledge to be transitive with regard to the above-mentioned objects, yet it asserts the existence of mind and ideas apart from the knowledge of them. Thus by maintaining the transitiveness of knowledge within the psychological realm it verges upon the realist point of view.

Belief in time is "the purest and most radical

15. Ibid., p.224.
instance of realism." Transcendentalism or idealism, as it is diametrically opposite to realism, is reluctant to accept anything which is supported from the realistic point of view. Thus the transcendentalist must deny the reality of time. But Santayana shows that the transcendentalist cannot but accept the reality of time, since his "whole moral inspiration is notoriously bound up with the sense of time, progress, and evolution." Santayana thinks that we cannot do away with the belief in time which is "the soul of introspective psychology". Such a belief is indeed necessary for memory, rational action and hope.

Santayana, thus, through his clever attack upon idealism from different sides, proves and advocates realism. Realism is further proved by him when he adopts the realistic assumption that essences have a status independent of knowledge. They are not independent physically since existence is not attributed to them. Their reality is of a logical or aesthetic character which is immutable, indefeasible and inalienable. This character is, then, "intrinsic, essential, and contingent on nothing else, least of all, of course, on knowledge." The logical thought of or pure acquaintance with essence discovers its reality which is "ontologically far more necessary and fundamental than are physical things or pulses of feeling." Ideal contemplation, therefore, is realistic.

16. Ibid., p.176.
17. Ibid., p.176.
18. Ibid., p.177.
19. Ibid., p.182.
20. Ibid., p.182.
III. Santayana's Theory of Knowledge:

Santayana's epistemological position now becomes fairly intelligible. By defying idealism as a realist, he advocates dualism which results, again, in a representative and symbolic theory of knowledge. In his Scepticism and Animal Faith, where a whole chapter is devoted to epistemological discussion, his mind hovers between two motives, one directed to showing what knowledge is not, and the other to determining what knowledge is. Let us now proceed to treat of this point.

A. Intuition is not knowledge:

We have found (p. 34) how the sceptic arrives at the position which is a kind of timeless intuition of pure essence, having no reference to the external world of physical objects or change. The character of the essences does not, however, depend upon their being intuited. Intuition of essences which is held to be possible does not mean knowledge of them. The question is: Why is intuition of essence not to be called knowledge? Knowledge means acquaintance with what are existent: that is, we must know facts. Now, intuition of essences cannot be called knowledge, since essences are not facts and hence are devoid of existence. As Santayana observes, "So long as a knowledge is demanded that shall be intuition, the issue can only be laughter or despair; for if I attain intuition, I have only a phantom object,* and if I spurn that and turn to the facts,

*By 'phantom object' Santayana means 'essence'. As essences are divested of all existence, there can, therefore, be nothing but the fancied vision of them.
I have renounced intuition." He shows another reason as to why intuition of essence cannot be called knowledge. Knowledge consists in judgment. What is known is put in the subject-predicate relation. Intuition of essence or datum is not knowledge, since the intuited datum or essence, which stands for nothing else, cannot be expressed in the form of a judgment, although the experience due to intuition of essence becomes contemplative. Santayana points out, "... judgment is in abeyance; the datum stands for nothing else, and the experience attained is merely esthetic or contemplative."

It may here be noted that Santayana's use of the phrase 'intuition of essence' seems not to be justified on reasonable grounds. That intuition of essence is not possible has been elaborately shown in the criticism part (p.78) of the third chapter of this treatise. Essence and intuition, to take Santayana's own words, contradict themselves by their very nature. Essence is immaterial, while intuition is not so, since its organ lies in the material psyche. Again, intuition which is held to be existent cannot be the principle of beholding essence which is non-existent in character. Intuition and essence - the former belonging to the realm of existence and the latter having the realm of non-existence - cannot be brought under the single phrase "intuition of essence".

If Santayana claims the materiality of intuition, what is, then, possible as a logical conclusion is not intuition of essences, but intuition of things. But to him intuition of things is a 'contradiction in terms'. If intuition of things be taken for granted, all possible things, then, should be known immediately and directly. But this is not really the case. Hence intuition of things remains for ever an impossibility. A query may crop up here. When intuition of things is not possible directly, is it not possible indirectly? That is, can we not know things through their ideas of which we can have intuition or immediate awareness? Santayana answers here also that intuition of an idea is not knowledge, but it is mere contemplation. In a practical sense, therefore, intuition cannot be knowledge.

B. Intuition of essence and knowledge of existence:

Intuition of essence is not knowledge of existence; that is, it is not knowledge in the real or practical sense as has already been pointed out. But Santayana says that intuition of essence can also be called knowledge in a sense other than realistic. "Literal knowledge is acquaintance with essence, esthetic or logical intuition or construction, the object of which is purely ideal ...." Intuition of essence is also called 'sure' knowledge, since in it there is no room for error. Error arises in the case of predication. But essence transcends all predication,

24. Ibid., p.167.
25. Ibid., pp.170-171.
being divested of existence. "Any intuition gives knowledge of acquaintance with an essence, not subject to error, since the intuition chooses its object in the act of determining itself, and asserts no existence of that object." Intuition of essence or sure knowledge is immediate, since essences are directly apprehended. Again, it is intransitive, since an essence does not stand for anything.

Knowledge of existence is called real knowledge. Unlike sure knowledge, real knowledge is contingent, since it is concerned with matters of fact. Again, knowledge of existence is not direct; here things are known through the essences. This point will be discussed shortly. Further, unlike intuition of essence, knowledge of existence is transitive in the sense that it aims at something beyond itself, the self-existing object. The distinction between sure knowledge and real knowledge has been made in the following lines of Santayana. "We might almost say that sure knowledge being immediate and intransitive, is not real knowledge, while real knowledge, being transitive and adventurous, is never sure."

Santayana, however, points out that sure knowledge, though it is transitive, is transitive in the sense that the essences which intuition observes "are independent of it, not in existence (for they do not exist) but in character and identity, since whatever is true of any essence is true of it always, whether there be intuition of it or not." He also says that real knowledge or knowledge of

27. Ibid., p.432.
28. Ibid., p.433.
29. Ibid., p.433.
existence, though it is not absolutely 'sure' or evident, may contain the highest degree of evidence in the case of the immediate receding past.

C. Origin of knowledge:

Henceforward by knowledge we shall mean knowledge of existence only. The question with which we are confronted now is: How do we come to know objects? What is the origin of knowledge? The answer to this question is found in the two volumes of Santayana, first (a) in his *Reason in Common Sense* (1905) and then (b) in his *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (1923).

(a) In *Reason in Common Sense* Santayana shows how we can have an experience of a thing. He points out there that there are two prominent terms in human knowledge, ideas and things. He wants to say that ideas lead to the knowledge of things, concretion in discourse to concretion in existence. Now, what is meant by 'ideas'? Santayana seems not to be definite in answering to this. Ideas are sometimes called "ideal terms," sometimes called sensations rendered cognitive, and again at the same time called "essences." But in his later works, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and *The Realm of Essence*, he carefully distinguishes essences from ideas. Anyway, it seems that Santayana in his *Reason in Common Sense* takes ideas for essences. Now, let us come to the actual question: how do

31. Ibid., p.115.
32. Ibid., p.115.
we come to know things from ideas or essences? First of all, ideas are to be recognised as separate recurrent sensations. The "togetherness" of these sensations is next noted. Lastly, they are assigned a definite place and object which they may be said to constitute. Thus in man's discovery of the sun, the ideas of roundness, whiteness and heat were identified first as separate recurrent sensations, second as occurring together, whereupon the sun was marked out as a distinct external object.

(b) In Scepticism and Animal Faith Santayana comes into a more elaborate discussion of the problem of knowledge. He says that the psyche is integral with life. Hence to make life worth living what is necessary for the psyche is to adjust itself to the surrounding objects. The objects also in turn lay their effects upon the psyche. Knowledge serves as a name for these effects. What Santayana specially points out is that objects are not directly presented to the psyche. Otherwise, the psyche would have possessed direct or intuitive knowledge of them. That direct or intuitive knowledge of things is not possible is clearly shown (p. 134). Besides, to Santayana, intuitive knowledge is a contradiction in terms, since intuition and knowledge refer to two different realms, the former to the realm of essence and the latter to the realm of matter. Essences are intuited, but things are known. By discarding the possibility of the intuitive knowledge Santayana goes against the camps of both empirical and rationalistic philosophers who have accepted intuitive knowledge.

When, according to Santayana, objects are not directly presented to the psyche, the latter in order to adjust itself to them takes a leap—a leap of faith towards them. Thus in knowledge-situation the existence of the objects is posited by the faith of the animal psyche. But to posit the existence of the objects does not constitute knowledge of them. Unless the objects are described, knowledge of them cannot arise. Or, more simply, knowledge of things means description about them.

Now, is it possible for the psyche to describe things? The psyche, since it is unintelligent and unconscious as a part of matter (p.94), cannot do the function of describing which implies the presence of intelligence. Then other than the psyche there must be something which can do that epistemological function. The psyche, in its adaptations to the surrounding things, becomes intelligent and creates spirit. Spirit, though originating from the material psyche, is not matter. It is rather a function of matter. It is simple awareness or consciousness. Things are described not by the psyche, but by the conscious spirit.

The question, again, arises: how does spirit describe things? Here on this very point we verge upon essences which have some but important cognitive role to play. The essences appear in intuition by the category of spirit. The psyche produces intent in spirit in its attempt to adjust itself to the alien things, so that the spirit selects those essences by which the things encountered by the psyche can be described. Thus the spirit makes the pragmatic function

34. Ibid., p.166.
of physical sensibility possible. The role of essence in cognition is to provide the descriptive terms by which we think and speak about the objects encountered in action. Let us take an example which is not, of course, cited by Santayana. The existence of an object, say, a table, is posited by the animal psyche. The object which is encountered by the psyche must be described, if we want to have knowledge of it. The spirit performs that fair job by selecting those essences which are suitable for being descriptive terms of the object. The 'qualities sensed' of the present object or the apposite essences are, say, roundness and hardness. And the object (here, the table) is described by saying that it is hard and round. With this description of the table we get knowledge of it.

In any knowledge-situation, then, what play major roles are the psyche, the spirit, intent and essence. These are, so to speak, the conditions of knowledge. The psyche has a vital demand to act upon the surrounding things. The spirit which arises from the psyche fulfils that demand. But how? Through 'intent' and the essences. It is 'intent' which makes thought cognitive or practical. Intent cannot be finally explained and must be accepted as a mystery. It bridges the chasm between essence and external object, for by virtue of it thought becomes cognitive and practical. Intent is the stick by which the critical realist makes his second leap, the leap of faith. The essences which are selected by intent serve as apposite symbols by which the objects encountered by the psyche are described by the spirit.
D. Santayana's representative theory of knowledge as compared with that of Locke:

It is to be kept in mind that Santayana's representative theory of knowledge is not of the Lockian type. Locke holds that the object, itself remaining unknown to us, lays influence upon the knowing mind, giving rise thereby to an idea of itself. The mind knows the object through the idea of that object: that is, the mind, instead of knowing the presentation of the object, knows its representation. To Locke, then, ideas cannot be separated from objects; they are of the objects; their origin lies in the latter. But to Santayana, essences are not, like Locke's ideas, of the objects, but are for the objects. It means that objects are represented through essences which are, however, independent of the former. Thus when Locke pronounces that ideas are the representations of the objects, Santayana asserts that essences are not the representations of the objects. The former makes ideas dependent upon the objects, while the latter makes objects dependent upon essences, since essences are the only symbols through which objects can be represented.

We must note some points of difference, which are not less important, between Locke's Idea and Santayana's Essence. First, essence which is also called datum or 'bare appearance' is not particular, but universal. The datum (suppose, the appearance of a man) is not attached to any space and time, since it may appear in any number of instances without losing its identity. The universality of a datum or an essence is justified in this sense. Locke's Idea,
unlike Santayana's Essence, is, on the one hand, particular, since each idea is always of a particular object. Secondly, an idea belongs to the mind, but an essence, instead of necessarily belonging to the mind, has a realm of its own, which is neither mental nor physical. Thus an idea is subjective, while an essence is trans-subjective.

E. Indirect knowledge of essence:

Santayana, although he denies that intuition of essence can be knowledge, accepts, however, the indirect knowledge of essences. Suppose, I hear now a clap of thunder. Gradually the physical shock subsides, and silence is restored. It is not possible for me now to rehearse the exact pitch and volume of that sound. But when there is a second crash, I may say with assurance whether this crash is longer or louder than the former. Here I know the former crash, which is an essence, not intuitively, but through the memory of it. To quote from Santayana, "Thus even pure essences can become objects of intent and of tentative knowledge when they are not present in intuition but are approached and posited indirectly, as the essences given on another particular occasion or signified by some particular word." Here the occasion or the word is a natural fact. We know it at first, and from the fact we elicit the essence, although this elicitation takes place imaginatively. The occasion or the word is the sign by which the essence or essences are designated. And this designation about them is knowledge. "Whereas intuition,

which reveals an essence directly, is not knowledge, because it has no ulterior object, the designation of some essence by some sign does convey knowledge, to an intelligent pupil, of what that essence was. 36

F. Knowledge is belief:

What Santayana finally contends is that "knowledge is true belief." This statement implies two things: (1) first, there must be a belief - a belief in a world of events. The animal psyche cannot but believe in the existence of outer facts. This belief is native to it. (2) Secondly, belief which is encountered by the psyche about the objects must be true. We have seen (pp.138-139) that the objects which are believed to exist must be described by the spirit through the essences. When that description becomes appropriate or true, knowledge results.

Thus true belief by which is meant knowledge means 'appropriate description' of things believed to exist outside. It may be asked how description can be made appropriate. We know from Santayana that essences are the symbols or signs in the description of the natural world. Appropriate description depends upon the choosing of the right symbols, and to choose the right symbols what is necessary is to give prolonged attention to what actually occurs. Thus any essence is not suitable for describing a fact, although there may be many alternate essences to describe the same. Suppose, the moon that is believed to

36. Ibid., p.169.
37. Ibid., p.179.
exist is described by different persons. "Hooking at the moon, one man may call it simply a light in the sky; another, prone to dreaming awake, may call it a virgin goddess; a more observant person, remembering that this luminary is given to waxing and waning, may call it the crescent; and a fourth, a full-fledged astronomer, may say (taking the aesthetic essence before him merely for a sign) that it is an extinct and opaque spheroidal satellite of the earth, reflecting the light of the sun from a part of its surface." Thus we get different descriptions of the moon conveyed by different essences, viz., crescent, goddess, light or satellite. All the descriptions are not, of course, appropriate. Here some descriptions contain pictorial elements or infusion of reverie. But the description of the moon given by the astronomer is more appropriate than those given by others, since the "terms of astronomy...... are the fruit of a better focussed, more chastened, and more prolonged attention turned upon what actually occurs; that is, they are kept closer to animal faith".

G. Limit of knowledge:

There is a limit, Santayana opines, to our knowledge of existence. The object cannot be known completely. Complete knowledge of any thing means the knowledge of that thing in all its relations, natural and ideal. "The flower in the crannied wall would not need to reveal God and man to us by any mysterious sympathetic illumination; before we

38. Ibid., pp.176-177.
39. Ibid., pp.177-178.
could know all about it we should have had to explore for ourselves the whole universe in which it grows." But that is not possible, since it is difficult, first of all, to explore all the external relations and affinities which are relevant to the flower, and secondly, to discern its ideal relations in the realm of essence. Hence Santayana concludes that it is not possible for us to have a complete knowledge of any object. To have a complete knowledge of any fact, to know a thing in all its relations is to possess the truth of it. The nature of truth and its difference from opinion will be discussed shortly.

The Jains who are the Anekāntavādins in Indian philosophy also advocate, more or less, the same view. They maintain that every object has innumerable characters. It is not possible for imperfect beings like us to know a thing in all its aspects. Each person knows some characters of a thing from his own standpoint. Thus the knowledge of a thing is relative and not absolute. The Jains maintain that complete knowledge of a thing may be possessed only by an omniscient person (kevali).

H. What is Truth?

For every fact there is a standard comprehensive description which Santayana calls truth. What does he understand by a standard comprehensive description of any fact? To quote him, "A comprehensive description (of any fact) includes also all the radiations of that fact - I mean, all that perspective of the world of facts and of the

realm of essence which is obtained by taking this fact as a centre and viewing everything else only in relation with it. Thus truth about any fact is infinitely extended, and hence it is not possible for anyone to repeat it wholly. Although truth radiates from contingent fact and is descriptive of existence, it has no existence of its own.

The implied being of truth is its eternity. Truth is not an existence. It is an essence, and eternity belongs to essences only. But though truth is eternal in the sense of being non-existent, yet it is not timeless, since it is descriptive of existence. It is that segment of the realm of essence which comes to have the special dignity of being actualized in matter. And this segment of the realm of essence is called by Santayana the Realm of Truth.

(a) Truth and Opinion:

Truth which means the comprehensive description of any fact in all its relations cannot be identified with any opinion. An opinion contains a partial description of a fact from a particular perspective. Thus it has limitation in scope. Santayana speaks of true and false opinions. Opinions are true when they reiterate the part of the standard comprehensive description of the facts which they envisage. And opinions are false when they contradict the part of the truth about the facts which they consider. True opinions cannot express the truth of any fact in all its relations. What they do is to refer to different aspects of truth. To

42. Ibid., p.viii.
quote Santayana, ".....the truth is the field which various true opinions traverse in various directions, and no opinion itself."

Any true opinion, according to Santayana, is not the absolute truth, since by the latter is meant an all-inclusive and eternal system. If there were no absolute truth, the different views taken by the individuals would themselves be absolute. That various opinions or views are more or less correct and complementary to one another is due to the fact that they all refer to the same standard comprehensive description of the facts which they envisage.

(b) There are no necessary truths:

Santayana shows us that there is one absolute truth which gets a partial expression in so many true opinions. True opinions can be called partial truths or simply truths. Santayana's contention is that all truths are contingent since they are descriptive of 'contingent' existence. Consequently, there are no necessary truths. We may here briefly note how he establishes this bold contention of his.

1. It is a common conviction that mathematical propositions imply necessary truths. But Santayana asserts that 'necessity' and 'truth' do attach to mathematical propositions from different quarters. They are necessary, by virtue of the definitions given to their terms. A mathematical equation, say, 2 plus 2 = 4, makes explicit certain

43. Scepticism and Animal Faith, p.268.
essential relations between certain terms. Essential relations are all necessary, since they are based on the definitions given to those related terms. Now, this necessity belonging to mathematical science has nothing to do with truth if the terms it connects are not illustrated in existence. Unless mathematics is connected with truth, it remains a mere play of ideas. When the mathematical propositions become relevant to material facts, it is only in that relevance that they become true, or, in a serious sense, become knowledge. Thus mathematical truths are not due to the essential relations which exist in certain terms, but rather due to the remarkable and exact relevance of the mathematical terms to material facts. As the truth of mathematics is due to the exemplification of the terms in existence, it is, therefore, contingent.

2. We are confronted with an important proposition that God, or the most real of beings, necessarily exists. On Santayana's view, the existence of God is not a necessary truth. If the proposition that God exists is necessary, its terms can be only essences. In such a case no essence has any power to actualise itself in a fact. On the contrary, if the word 'God' be taken as a spiritual moral being exercising an actual power in the spatio-temporal world, His existence can be proved contingently, i.e., "by the evidence of these natural manifestations, not by dialectical reasoning upon the meanings of terms." 45

Thus Santayana attempts to establish his view that truth, being a radiation of existence, is contingent.

45. Ibid., p.10.
I. Validity of knowledge:

Santayana's discourse on the validity of knowledge deserves notice. In his article Three Proofs of Realism, he refers to some important conditions which, if fulfilled, would make knowledge valid. Those conditions are mainly two: (1) transcendence or transitiveness and (2) relevance. Knowledge, when it is both transitive and relevant, is valid. Knowledge is transitive in the sense that knowledge does not know itself, but aims at something beyond itself, viz., the self-existing object. The child crying for the moon points at it unmistakably. His bodily attitude, which is "his fixed gaze and outstretched arm", "identifies his object in itself, in its physical and historical setting". The object which he identifies is what is also identified by us, since his glances converge with ours. What is true in the case of human beings is applicable in the case of animals as well. Transitiveness is implied in the animal's knowledge of things, and this is evident from their "pursuing, touching, or recoiling from surrounding things". The "things known exist side by side with the animal they stimulate, and prior to the reaction and perception which they occasion."

But transitiveness alone is not sufficient to account for the validity of knowledge. It must be supplemented by relevance. Transitiveness and relevance are like the pans of a balance necessary to each other in order to bring forth valid knowledge. That knowledge is relevant

47. Ibid., p.172.
48. Ibid., p.172.
means that the essences which are directly present to the mind, resemble, at least in some respects, the object which knowledge aims at. Knowledge "could not be true knowledge unless, in its deliverance, it specified some of the qualities or relations which really belong to that object." Santayana indicates both transcendence and relevance of knowledge by giving an example of a portrait. "A portrait, to be a portrait, must be distinct from the sitter, and must at the same time somehow resemble or be referred to him." Transcendence implies that knowledge is not identical in existence with its object (as a portrait is not identical with the sitter). Thus knowledge becomes something new, "a fresh act". On the other hand, relevance shows that knowledge is identical with its object in essence (as the portrait and the sitter are the same person).

IV. Critical Reflection:

In any knowledge-situation the independent existence of the object should be maintained. Of course, there are some philosophers who are prone to assert the identity of knowledge and its object on the very ground that knowledge and the object are found to have an inseparable relation between them. But this should not be maintained. The fact that knowledge and the object are presented together is not a proof of their identity. Inseparable connection is different from identity. The identity of knowledge and the object snaps the very ground of maintaining the independent existence of the object. In that case cognition is

49. Ibid., p.165.
50. Ibid., p.165.
empty of content; the consciousness that there are no external things is empty. If it is said that actually there are no external things and that our consciousness of things as external is illusory, it may be asked, then, if there were nothing external, how can we have an illusion of externality? If there were no such thing as a snake at all, we did not have knowledge of it, we could not imagine it in the rope. Hence objects exist independent of knowledge. Santayana is right when he maintains that things transcend knowledge and thus have a status of their own.

It appears that Santayana is right when he points to relevance as one important condition of valid knowledge. The essence which the mind envisages must be relevant to the essence which actually belongs to the object perceived. Otherwise, knowledge would be invalid. But Santayana's contradictory words with regard to relevance lead us into an obscure position. He asserts that the qualities or relations which the mind attributes to the thing indicated are those of which some at least "really belong to that object." But this assertion of his is not quite compatible with his statement, "What that object is in its intrinsic and complete constitution will never be known by man." When the object remains unknown to us so far as its intrinsic nature is concerned, how is it possible to think of the object possessed of some of the qualities which the mind attributes to it? This, really, creates much confusion to anyone who seeks to be acquainted with Santayana's theory of knowledge. But confusion

51. Ibid., p.165.
52. Ibid., p.172.
and obscurity seem to be no more when Santayana's words are taken into the meaning more deeply. It is said that the object is intrinsically unknown to us. Naturally a difficulty may arise for us as regards whether the unknown object possesses any essence or essences, and we face another corresponding difficulty regarding relevance between the essences which the mind senses about the object and the ones which are actually possessed by the object. The above difficulties are met along the following lines.

The object may, "in its intrinsic and complete constitution", remain unknown to us; but that it possesses essence or essences is inferred from the fact that it exists. We may, however, be led to doubt, first about its existence, and secondly, about the embodiment of essence into matter or a thing. (1) Santayana shows clearly that the object exists, and the proof for its existence "is given in the fact that we can point to it." (2) There cannot be doubt about the embodiment of essence into matter. The essences which are embodied in matter are called eventual essences to which reference has already been made (p.107). Now, with the establishment of Santayana's thesis that the object has actually some essences as its forms, the problem of relevance seems to be solved.

V. Conclusion:

Before concluding this chapter, some more words are to be said regarding Santayana's theory of knowledge.

53. Ibid., p.172.
(1) Santayana, we have seen (pp. 134-135), distinguishes between pure or literal knowledge and discursive knowledge as determined by animal faith. The former kind of knowledge, where discursive thought has been overcome, is the pure immediate knowledge or intuition of the datum or essence denuded of all interpretation by animal faith and of all the particularity which characterizes its objects. Why does Santayana refer to the pure knowledge or intuition of essence? Probably, being conscious of the dogmatic positions regarding discursive knowledge as determined by animal faith, he seeks for the theoretical knowledge in the intuition of essence. But there also Santayana’s attitude is rather dogmatic. In pure immediate knowledge the subject and the object which are identified are emptied of all content or concreteness. In such a case it cannot be regarded as knowledge at all. Nor can it be a theory. As Antonio Banfi holds, "...an intuition deprived of all faith, as Santayana says, and deprived of every existential position and activity of the ego – an essence which is neither mere logical form nor mere sensible quality and implies no relation to the world of objects – may be conceivable as position in a dialectic of thought, but cannot be recognized as feature in an experience of knowledge." 54

If intuition of essence be not knowledge or a "feature in an experience of knowledge", then it can be regarded as mere aesthetic contemplation, and Santayana himself also admits this. But what is most surprising is that intuition of essence cannot be accepted as mere aesthetic

54. The Philosophy of George Santayana, ed. by Schilpp, p.487.
experience. Aesthetic experience is compared with empirical experience on the ground that the former is, while the latter is not, free from the objective determinations and connections. But is aesthetic experience truly free from all objective determinations? Does it not conform to a law of constitution? Really it implies a construction according to connections on which depend the universality and individuality peculiarly characteristic of aesthetic image. Thus aesthetic experience, though not empirical experience, is not totally free from objective determination. Intuition of essence which is held to be divested of objective determinations and connections cannot be aesthetic experience.

In regarding intuition of essence at one time as pure immediate knowledge and at another time as aesthetic contemplation, though it can be neither as we have just seen, Santayana develops a dogmatic position in his theory of knowledge.

(2) In the case of discursive knowledge or knowledge of existence what are essential are the two leaps, viz., the leap of intuition and the leap of faith. The leap of intuition is made "from the state of the living organism to the consciousness of some essence." This leap is the primary stage of knowledge. The second stage of knowledge consists in "the leap of faith and of action". It is made "from the symbol actually given in sense or in thought to some ulterior existing object."

The first leap which is the leap of intuition

56. Ibid., p.183.
lands us in the realm of the ideal. Essences which are intuited have no existence. Now, the question is: How do we come from the ideal realm to the physical realm? How from the acquaintance of essence do we come to know physical objects?

By the leap of faith, Santayana answers. But this leap, like the leap of intuition, is not ideal; on the other hand, it is realistic. If this leap be realistic, the symbols or essences from which the leap is taken must also be real. Now, if symbols were real, there would be nothing to leap to mechanistically, and if symbols are not real, there would be nothing to leap from mechanistically. Since Santayana denies thought a mechanistic character, this leap must be ideal. As a result, the physical object can never be reached. The end of the knowledge-process is, then, the essence which has an ideal existence.

(3) Moreover, there seems to be no logical connection between the two leaps. The leap of intuition is made "from the state of the living organism to the consciousness of some essence." In this leap what happens is a change of one state of organism into another. Thus a continuity is marked here. In such a continuous process the sudden transition from a symbol to an external object appears rather unexpected. In conclusion, let it be observed that Santayana as a critical realist is not 'critical' enough in developing his theory of knowledge.