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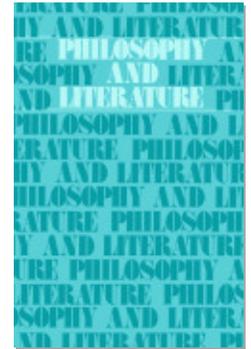
Enemies of Poetry (review)

Harry J. Carroll

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Although she deals with naturalism and transcendentalism, she does not relate naturalism to the view that all begins in chaos, as James claimed of experience, with seeds developing vital patterns. Nor does she relate naturalism to the alternative position, called by Santayana "dialectical," that order is eternal; that is, that there must be a principle prior to becoming, as Royce argued. Hughson has ignored the usual history of American philosophy on the ground that Santayana was first a poet and then a philosopher who had been a poet, though one might object to this on the ground that Santayana had written an excellent philosophical treatise, *Lotze's System of Philosophy*, just prior to the 1890s. The key to understanding Santayana, she argues, is that he experienced conversion (metanoia). That is, his "Catholic" stress on the free contemplative spirit followed from his disillusionment with naturalism.

According to Hughson, Santayana's philosophy springs from the necessity for cultural and for personal order; but the modes of ordering diverge sharply. In *The Sense of Beauty*, we read of two ways to harmony, one "to unify all the given elements, [resulting] in the beautiful; the other to reject all recalcitrant elements, [resulting] in the sublime." Although Santayana's ideal culture is inclusive, his personal life was one of exclusion. Nature has a place in it for all sorts of life. Santayana personally had a place only for thought and art, and he renounced the world.

There is a puzzle in Santayana, sometimes identified by the alleged inconsistency of his naturalism and his transcendentalism. Hughson seeks a solution to this academic problem in Santayana's personal history, though Santayana himself would not allow that his personal experience explains his system. (Perhaps Hughson ought to ask whether naturalism on its own merits could imply some form of transcendentalism.) What is Santayana's solution to the puzzle? If one holds that nature runs purposelessly, then one is presented with a vain striving for what one knows not. Therefore, "it is the spirit that asks to be saved from that insane predicament." The vital step for Santayana is conversion.

Professor Hughson, using the autobiography and the poetry, has made a most convincing contribution towards understanding Santayana's philosophy. It may be hoped that the author will give us a more rounded account of Santayana that will use his life as a key to *The Life of Reason* and *Realms of Being*.

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Enemies of Poetry, by W. B. Stanford; 180 pp. London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, \$25.00.

An apologia for "the uniqueness and autonomy of poetry" (p. 1) is the concern of W. B. Stanford, the otherwise distinguished editor of the *Odyssey* and exegete of the Ulysses theme. The "enemies of poetry," both old and new, are the factualists, whether historicists or scientists, and the moralists,

who are almost inevitably philosophers. Both classes of critics disparage or neglect the "imaginative element, that is the poetic element in literature" (p. 2). They regard poetry as a kind of Lucretian honey to make more palatable the bitter or boring truths and realities which are the poets' primary aim in narration.

Fair and incisive scholar that he is, Mr. Stanford carefully points out that he does not object to the use of poetry by historians, philosophers, or scientists, but to the denial of an independent validity to poetry above and beyond its secondary uses. Following Aristotle, he insists that a primary purpose of poetry is pleasure. While recognizing the crucial importance of *technē* to the poetic art, he argues throughout that it is Plato's divine *mania* or Coleridge's "creative imagination" which provides the uniqueness and the substance of poetry. Poetic inspiration as defined by the poets themselves is "an irrational and uncontrollable experience" (p. 22). What for Homer and the other ancient poets was the voice of the Muses is today the unconscious provoked, an ecstatic standing outside of self, sometimes encouraged by stimulants so modest as "Housman's glass of beer at luncheon" or "Schiller's smelling rotten apples" (p. 22). The true enemies of the poet as creative imagist are those kinds of critics, in extreme example, who label the divine apparatus in ancient epic *Urdummheit* (pp. 14-15, 116-17), who find Odysseus mastering "castration complex" (p. 49), or who are concerned at Telemachos' clothing, or lack of it, while he is bathed by the unwed daughter of Nestor (pp. 93-96). It is this sort of criticism which implicitly denies that what matters in poetry is "verisimilitude rather than verity, persuasiveness rather than accuracy, pleasure rather than instruction" (p. 34).

In the latter half of his argument, Mr. Stanford shifts his attack from specifically misguided types of critics to "Twenty Six Fallacies of Classical Criticism" (pp. 89ff.) which are, effectively, fallacies of general literary criticism. His catalogue, while scoring major contemporary critical problems such as false inference, intention, affect, and static meaning, and while celebrating poetry as an audial medium, is too often concerned with minor and for the most part out-of-date fallacies and is never very clear as to what is meant by classical criticism. Here, as in earlier chapters, Mr. Stanford tilts sometimes with the ancients, primarily Plato, and sometimes with nineteenth- or early twentieth-century critics such as Leaf, Lachmann, Frazer, and Murray. His learning, his clear perception, and his sensitivity to poetry as beauty and vision is skewed by what may be a twenty-seventh fallacy of criticism, one which he has fairly noted as a danger in his introduction. Mr. Stanford tends to flog dead horses. Suffering from what seems to be a nagging *hamartia* of too many Classicists, and in spite of his clear and cautionary perceptions, he flails away at far too many old, and far too few new "enemies of poetry"—and among the new, the modern defenders, he finds poets no more recent than Shakespeare, Tennyson, Valéry, and Housman. In his commendable defense of poetry as an autonomous art, Mr. Stanford begins persuasively, but with the tentativeness of his concluding chapter, he leaves this reviewer with the tired feeling of too little and too late.