



The Sense of Beauty

George Santayana

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George Santayana is remembered mostly by his theory of aesthetics, which is discussed in detail "The Sense of Beauty or Aesthetics." Santayana's aesthetic theory is basically subjective, or "psychological", and if viewed from a contemporary standpoint, somewhat at odds with current developments in neuroscience, but closer than most schools of Western philosophy. All philosophical theories of aesthetics are interesting to investigate from the standpoint of comparing them to what is said about the human aesthetic faculty in modern research in neuroscience. As in ethics, Santayana approaches aesthetics in three different ways, namely as the exercise of the aesthetic faculty, the history of art, and the psychological. The first two do not concern the author in "The Sense of Beauty or Aesthetics." His attention devoted entirely to the third. His intention is to remove himself from the influence of the poets and of Plato, and find out how ideals are formed in the mind, how objects may be compared with them, what properties are shared in beautiful things, and the process by which humans become sensitive to beauty and in turn value it. George Santayana is after a definition of beauty that explains its origin in human experience, and one that explains the human capacity to be sensible of beauty and the relation between a beautiful object and its ability to excite the human senses.

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