
One might suspect little common ground among representatives of analytic, American, and continental philosophy. Yet that is what Hodges and Lachs find among the ruins. In six concise chapters, they uncover kinships between Wittgenstein and Santayana on questions concerning knowledge, values, and religious belief. I confine my comments, though, to the shift in philosophic stance presented in the book's kinship thesis.

This is an unusual claim about an odd couple; but the authors make good on it. First they relocate Wittgenstein and Santayana in a context larger than their respective associations with analytic and American philosophy. Then, they explore Wittgenstein's and Santayana's insights into the inescapably contextual nature of thinking and show how those insights shape their individual efforts to come to terms with contingency. The kinship the authors find is not one of style or method (1, 106). But that should not prevent us from seeing that the philosopher-poet and the analytical thinker reach similar positions on the problems they perceive.

The main problem is a hankering for transcendent grounds of certainty in essential truths or necessary foundations and how this, to our ruin, has prevented the west from coming to terms with contingency by concealing its true significance. The answer lies in the immanent stance Wittgenstein and Santayana adopt. Re-contextualizing Wittgenstein and Santayana in the turmoil of the time frames the case for the kindred responses of both philosophers to the crises of the past century. It also sheds new light on the theme that the west - fractured by two world wars and their residual conflicts, the uncertain promise of all modern forms of government, and the rise of skepticism - must concretely address the contingency inherent in being human (1-3). In this way, Thinking in the Ruins examines how Wittgenstein and Santayana seek not to rebuild traditional claims to certainty on the ruins of transcendent foundations, but to face contingency from an immanent standpoint by re-thinking the situated finite grasp of human thought on truth and existence.

In Chapter 4, the pivotal chapter, the authors turn to the particular comparable forms of immanence, Wittgenstein's "forms of life" and Santayana's "animal faith." There they develop the critical point that these two notions are ways Wittgenstein and Santayana call us back from the thought of transcendent certainty to attend to the immanent conditions of stability amidst the ruins, so close to home that they escape notice. For both Wittgenstein and Santayana, action, not thought, is primordial. Forms of life, animal faith, embodied in human practice "constitute the final and definitive context of all our practices" (65).
In Wittgenstein, this takes form in his analysis of linguistic practice where he insists that the meaning of a word depends on the particular use it has in a particular judgement. The sense of the judgement, in turn, rests on its function in the particular “language-game” in play that is but a “part of the activities in which it is embedded” (57). For this reason the authors speak of “displacing” rather than refuting skepticism (Ch. W). For on Wittgenstein’s account, extreme skepticism, which attempts global doubt or repeatedly demands justification cannot initiate its language-game without leaving unquestioned much in the situation in which the exercise is embedded (17, 56). Skepticism has its place, of course; when it succeeds, it is because it is fittingly applied within a well-defined context. When skepticism fails and only appears to succeed, it is because the unwary has failed to observe a shift in contexts, or has misappropriated a term suited to one context to another in which it is not, or has violated all limits by alleging doubt transcendent of and outside all context (26). A modest skepticism fails when it does not remain true to form; a radical philosophical skepticism fails to be true to any “form of life.” Grant the skeptics their premises and free license to shift between context, and they are irrefutable. Wittgenstein refuses to grant them the language or license to begin.

A similar position seems to be endorsed by Santayana’s appeal to the “shrewd orthodoxy which the sentiment and practice of laymen maintain everywhere” (34). Part of what he has in mind here, is that philosophical skepticism cannot be consistent with action (26). His approach, though, is to push skepticism to the immediate certainty of solipsism of the moment (27). Though this differs from Wittgenstein’s approach, the result is much the same; but not because skepticism, reduce to silence, is shown to be self-refuting. Rather, the kinship consists in the result that the skeptic is forced into solipsism by a futile attempt to remove herself from (transcend) all constraints of context. Uncontextualized, the skeptic cannot consistently act for or against, affirm or deny anything. The skeptic cancels the possibility of her immediate certainty by denying any other being from which she might distinguish herself. By depriving herself of a context, she undermines her position. The ambition of transcendence misleads even the skeptic.

The shift from a transcendent to an immanent standpoint is a familiar theme, by now, having been introduced early in the 20th century. Marcel and Heidegger articulate versions of it. Though these two are not mentioned, Hodges and Lachs recognize that immanence is a theme common among existentialists and postmodernists, and can be seen in Dewey’s writings (Ch. 1 and p. 51). The point here is neither to reclassify Wittgenstein and Santayana, nor to raise a question over priority. (But it is worth noting that Santayana’s Skepticism and Animal Faith (1923) predates Being and Time (1927).) Besides, on these issues, continental philosophy has no corner on the market. Coming to terms with contingency is a concern shared, in their own way, by those who either are or once were foundationalists, or who retain some of the language of that school. Rather, the point is the larger context, that the shift from transcendence to immanence as a way of confronting contingency connected many philosophers from different schools at roughly the same time. This points to a possible way around the “current fragmented state of philosophy” (87). One way or another, modern philosophers must come to terms with contingency and the immanent stance. Wittgenstein and Santayana, independent of continental trends attempted to do just that.
Since one of the purposes of a well-executed study is to stimulate further research, this book is without doubt a successful study. I expect it to foster research into other trans-Atlantic philosophical connections I alluded to two above. Another important one suggests itself upon taking "form of life" as Wiggenstein's final interpretation of Frege's context principle. Frege may have abandoned a strict logicist position on foundations, but he never abandoned the context principle. This study of Santayana and Wittgenstein suggests we might be able to find other kinship relations going back to the main influence on the latter. If we follow this out, we may find more of value among the ruins.

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Robert Talisse's *On Dewey* is an excellent first orientation into John Dewey's philosophy. The book is designed for course use and is especially suitable for the undergraduate level where it can supplement a wide variety of texts by Dewey. *On Dewey* is part of a series of books, each of which is dedicated to a particular philosopher. Within the realm of American philosophy, the series also includes volumes on Thoreau and Rorty. In addition, volumes on Peirce, Royce, and Jane Addams are in the works. The clear and accessible style of Talisse makes *On Dewey* suitable not only for upper level courses in American philosophy, but also for general introductory courses in philosophy. Because of this it is unfortunate that all references are to the thirty seven volume Dewey edition, which might not be easily accessible to many undergraduates, especially not to those who study at small colleges. It would have been preferable had Talisse, where possible, relied on more widespread sources, such as the two volume *The Essential Dewey*.

The central theme of Talisse's book is that of Deweyan reconstruction. After an introduction that sketches Dewey's life and career, including his social activism, Talisse starts off with a discussion of Dewey's reconstruction of philosophy. Subsequent chapters deal with Dewey's reconstruction of experience, his reconstruction of knowledge, and his reconstruction of society. Each of the chapters begins with an exposition of the traditionally held views, after which Talisse shows where, how and why Dewey differs. The book is concluded with a "prospective conclusion." Talisse urges the reader that to takes Dewey seriously, one should not approach him as a dusty scholar who seeks to fill in some obscure details, but one should follow in his footsteps by consistently applying democratic intelligence to each and every aspect of human association.

In *On Dewey*, Talisse does a great job in showing that Dewey is not an ivory tower philosopher but deals with important issues that touch actual people's lives. The book is written so as to engage students to think the issues through for themselves, as opposed to blindly regurgitating Dewey's views. The use of philosophical jargon is kept to a minimum (with the exception of "aleatory" which is largely left to the student to figure out) and Talisse presents familiar examples of everyday life for the student to work