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Winds of Doctrine

Studies in Contemporary Opinion

By: George Santayana

**Edited by: David E Spiech, Martin A. Coleman,
Faedra Lazar Weiss**

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PREFACE TO THE NEW EDITION

THIS book belongs to another age; it was written before the war. To bring it up to date would hardly be possible; a revision would destroy whatever quiet justice or sympathetic insight those observations may have had in the past, without availing to measure the force of direction of the much rougher winds that are now blowing. Moreover, in respect to the chapters on Shelley, on Modernism, and on the Philosophy of Henri Bergson, there would be nothing to alter: in so far as events could affect my judgments at all, they seem to have confirmed them. On the other hand, what I may have said of the Bertrand Russell of that time has little application to the Bertrand Russell of to-day. On the relativity of morals, which I then defended against him, I understand that he now agrees with me; but we put our common theory in practice by cultivating opposite preferences. In natural philosophy, too, he is now intent on constructing a system which is that of John Stuart Mill under a new name, reducing nature to a compound of appearances most of which do not appear. Thus in lieu of hypostatic ethics we have hypostatic psychology. In Mr. Russell's analysis of facts, whether physical or historical, I confess I have little confidence: it is when he derides the existent or plays with the non-existent that I find him admirable.

It may be an illusion of memory, lending an idyllic simplicity to a past which when present was quite confused and prosaic; but it seems now as if before the war we had been living in a lull of expectancy, in a conscious pause. That comfortable liberal world was like a great tree with the trunk already sawed quite through, but still standing with all its leaves quietly rustling, and with us dozing under its shade. We were inexpressibly surprised when it fell and half crushed us; some of us are talking of setting it up again safely on its severed roots. Others, stunned by the shock, warn us of the *Crise de l'Esprit* or of the *Untergang des Abendlandes*; but illusions and fashions, being nothing more, are always lapsing and always springing up. Their ruin does not interrupt the steady movement of substance beneath, the silent concatenation of material circumstances. Nor does it upset the philosophy of those whose philosophy is ancient and true. We are impressionists, and all seems to us anarchy on the surface; we must wait for the true child of natural selection to manifest his identity, and clear away his rivals. We need not say to him tragically, *morituri te salutamus*; for if the spirit in us is at all quick and plastic it will find in him a reincarnation of itself. Spirit is not the pursuit of this good or that beauty, but of the beautiful and the good.

G. S.

Rome, 1926



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