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**PRESS & TELEVISION**


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Ewing, a free-lance writer, inherited letters written by Sherman to the author's grandfather (who was Sherman's stepbrother) and great-grandfather. The letters trace Sherman's rising impatience with the press.

In October 1861, the New York *Tribune* printed the Union "order of battle," listing the strength and location of Sherman's forces. A year later, during the first battle of Vicksburg, Sherman's officers intercepted journalists' letters and refused to mail them. New York *Herald* reporter Thomas Knox then rewrote his account, charging that Sherman's actions were due to "insanity and inefficiency." "You are regarded as the enemy of our set," Knox told Sherman after his arrest for espionage. "We must in self-defense write you down."

Knox was tried by a military court, but found not guilty of espionage. This did not alter Sherman's low opinion of the press, however. Journalists, he wrote in February, 1863, "eat our provisions, they swell the crowd of hangers on . . . they publish without stint . . . accurate information which reaches the enemy with as much regularity as it does our People."

For the remainder of the war, Sherman threatened "instant death" to reporters he suspected of espionage. This, he wrote, made journalists "meek and humble."

Sherman continued to chastise the press after the war ended. Yet, in his memoirs, published in 1875, he concluded that "so greedy are the people at large for war news, that it is doubtful whether any army commander can exclude all reporters, without bringing down on himself a clamor that may imperil his own safety."

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**RELIGION & PHILOSOPHY**


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**Santayana's  
Detachment**

"George Santayana and the Consolations of Philosophy" by Joseph Epstein, in *The New Criterion* (June 1987), 850 Seventh Ave., New York, N.Y. 10017.

The 19th-century American philosopher Josiah Royce once remarked that philosophers should live like the rhinoceros, who travels as a herd of one. George Santayana (1863-1952) followed Royce's prescription, living his life as a wanderer. In his autobiography, Santayana called himself a *déraciné*, "a man who has been torn up by the roots, cannot be replanted and should never propagate his kind."

Epstein, a professor of English at Northwestern University, argues that the detachment Santayana felt toward the world is the key to understanding his philosophy. Santayana, Epstein writes, was born with detachment "the way other people are born with, say, large feet."

Santayana's sense of removal from the world certainly began early. Born in Spain and raised in the United States, Santayana "appears to have been a foreigner in every country in which he lived." For example, although Santayana taught in the philosophy department at Harvard for 23 years (where his students included T. S. Eliot, Robert Frost, and Felix Frankfurter), he disliked the United States, which he saw as a nation that

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embraced the future while abandoning traditional virtues. Americans, Santayana wrote in a 1911 letter, are "intellectually emptier than the Sahara, where I understand the Arabs have some idea of God or of Fate." He abandoned Harvard and America for Europe soon after.

In his writings, Santayana distanced himself from other philosophers. American philosophy was, he wrote, "Protestant philosophy," too concerned with pragmatic problem-solving to bother with the permanent things. Santayana's book *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1916), Epstein writes, leaves the landscape of German philosophy like "Berlin in early 1946: scarcely any buildings are left standing." Only Lucretius, Spinoza, and the Greek philosophers escaped Santayana's criticism.

Santayana devoted his life to freeing himself from illusions about the world. He concluded that "survival is something impossible, but it is possible to have lived well and died well."

Santayana's stoicism lasted until his death. Two days before he succumbed to cancer, at age 88, his secretary asked Santayana if he was suffering. "Yes, my friend," he said. "But my anguish is entirely physical; there are no moral difficulties whatsoever." "Philosophy had been for him," Epstein concludes, "a consolation, but finally also life itself."

*Benevolence*

"Benevolence: A Minor Virtue" by John Kekes, in *Social Philosophy and Policy* (Spring 1987), Bowling Green State Univ., Bowling Green, Ohio 43403.

In his first important work, *A Treatise of Human Nature* (1739-40), the Scottish philosopher David Hume argued that benevolence was, at best, a restricted virtue. "The generosity of men is very limited," Hume wrote. "It seldom extends beyond their friends and family, or, at most, beyond their native country."

But should one ever be benevolent toward people one does not know? Kekes, a professor of philosophy and public policy at the State University of New York, Albany, argues that benevolence is no "moral master-motive." There is no good reason, he argues, "why we, as moral agents, should be benevolent toward the vast majority of mankind."

Kekes defines two types of benevolence. "Limited benevolence" is a drive to aid people whom one knows. "Generalized benevolence" extends benevolence beyond the range of personal contact to all human beings, loving "thy neighbor as thyself," as the Book of Matthew teaches.

In Kekes' view, "generalized benevolence" is mistaken. Benevolence should decrease as its potential objects become "more remote and impersonal," he argues. For one thing, charity may not be helpful when directed toward targets of which the benefactor has little knowledge. It is "less than useless," for example, for people to donate money for suffering people in distant lands when they do not know what caused the suffering or whether their aid will alter the conditions that produced the problem.

Generalized benevolence, Kekes writes, undermines "our primary moral obligations" toward family and friends. Benevolence is most useful when intimately directed toward those who are personally close; the more