



The Life of Reason or The Phases of Human Progress: Reason in Art, Volume VII, Book Four (The Works of George Santayana) (Volume 7)

George Santayana

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Santayana's *Life of Reason*, published in five books from 1905 to 1906, ranks as one of the greatest works in modern philosophical naturalism. Acknowledging the natural material bases of human life, Santayana traces the development of the human capacity for appreciating and cultivating the ideal. It is a capacity he exhibits as he articulates a continuity running through animal impulse, practical intelligence, and ideal harmony in reason, society, art, religion, and science. The work is an exquisitely rendered vision of human life lived sanely.

In this fourth book, Santayana writes that art is perfectly native to human endeavor; it is the paradigm of all productive activity. Any worthwhile work of art creates an organic whole, and the whole appeals to many facets of one's nature; beauty brings these many feelings and powers into harmony. The benefits of a cultivated artistic taste contribute to the further growth and harmonization of the self in all its worthwhile activities. Art, or "the remodeling of nature by reason," is, according to Santayana, the most generic form of rational activity; hence the life of reason falls within its domain. The conduct of the life of reason is the supreme art.

This critical edition, volume VII of *The Works of George Santayana*, includes notes, textual commentary, lists of variants and emendations, an index, and other tools useful to Santayana scholars. The other four books of the volume are *Reason in Common Sense*, *Reason in Society*, *Reason in Religion*, and *Reason in Science*.



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