



The Life of Reason or the Phases of Human Progress (Classic Reprint)

George Santayana

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Excerpt from The Life of Reason or the Phases of Human Progress

Religion is certainly significant, but not literally true. - All religion is positive and particular. - It aims at the Life of Reason, but largely fails to attain it. - Its approach imaginative. - When its poetic method is denied its value is jeopardised. - It precedes science rather than hinders it. - It is merely symbolic and thoroughly human.


Felt causes not necessary causes. - Mechanism and dialectic ulterior principles. - Early selection of categories. - Tentative rational worlds. - Superstition a rudimentary philosophy. - A miracle, though unexpected, more intelligible than a regular process. - Superstitions come of haste to understand. - Inattention suffers them to spread. - Genius may use them to convey an inarticulate wisdom.

Fear created the gods. - Need also contributed. - The real evidences of God's existence. - Practice precedes theory in religion. - Pathetic, tentative nature of religious practices. - Meanness and envy in the gods, suggesting sacrifice. - Ritualistic arts. - Thank-offerings. - The sacrifice of a contrite heart. - Prayer is not utilitarian in essence. - Its supposed efficacy magical.

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