

Overheard in Seville

*Bulletin of the
Santayana
Society*

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The George Santayana Society

2014

ANNUAL MEETING

The Society's annual meeting will be held in conjunction with the December meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Eastern Division) at the Marriott Philadelphia Downtown in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Speakers

Katarzyna Krempleska

Graduate School for Social Research, Polish Academy of Sciences

“The Authorship of Life: Narrative and Dramatic Strategies of Sustaining Self-Integrity in Santayana’s Thought”

Edward Lovely

Author of *George Santayana’s Philosophy of Religion:*

His Roman Catholic Influences and Phenomenology

(Lexington Press, 2012)

“Considering George Santayana’s Anti-Modernism”

Chair

Glenn Tiller

Texas A&M University - Corpus Christi

9:00 A.M. – 11:00 A.M., Monday, December 29th

The George Santayana Society

2015

MEETING

The Society will meet in conjunction with the February meetings of the American Philosophical Association (Central Division) at the Hilton St. Louis at The Ballpark in St. Louis, Missouri.

Topic

Does More Healthcare Lead to Better Lives?

Speakers

Griffin Trotter

St. Louis University, Gnaegi Center for Health Care Ethics

“Is Healthcare Hazardous to Life?

An American Transcendentalist Perspective”

Michael Brodrick

Miami University, Oxford, OH

“Healthcare for Unique Individuals:

What We Can Learn from Santayana”

The panel asks how bioethicists and makers of healthcare policy should understand respect for autonomy, given widely divergent conceptions of the good life arising from unique individuals. We argue that Santayana and the American Transcendentalists offer attractive models of respecting autonomy that are mutually strengthening. However, those models are radically at odds with certain values that structure contemporary bioethics discourse and that manifest in efforts at health care reform in the United States.

9:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M. Thursday, February 19th

George Santayana Society

News and Activities

Most of the essays in this issue of *Overheard in Seville*, the largest yet, are drawn from meetings of the George Santayana Society that were held in 2013 in conjunction with the annual meetings of the *Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy* and the *American Philosophical Association*. The general theme of these gatherings was “Santayana’s Interpreters.” The papers that were presented, as well as those presented at the 2013 World Congress of Philosophy held in Athens, Greece, and the paper by James Seaton included in this issue, show the richness of Santayana’s philosophy, its broad appeal, and the multi-dimensional responses that it elicits. Thank you to all the folks who participated in these lively discussions and helped make them possible.

This past year also saw the George Santayana Society establish itself as a tax-exempt, non-profit educational organization, otherwise known by the IRS as a “501(c)(3).” Getting the GSS registered with the IRS was a taxing undertaking in more ways than one. It would have been all the more difficult without the diligent work of the GSS’s current Secretary-Treasurer, Michael Brodrick. Having established itself as a 501(c)(3), the GSS will be better able to raise funds to help pay for its scholarly activities. Most significantly, it will allow the GSS to award a cash prize for the new “Angus Kerr-Lawson Essay Contest.” This contest will be open to all graduate students or recent graduates who submit an essay on some aspect of Santayana’s philosophy. The contest winner will receive a cash prize and be invited to present his or her paper to the GSS at its annual December meeting. More details about the contest and the first call for submissions will be announced in the months ahead.

Finally, December 2014 will mark two years since the George Santayana Society last held elections for a President, Vice-President, and Secretary-Treasurer. As stated in the constitution, each of these offices shall be held for two years, renewable. The GSS will therefore hold a vote at its annual meeting to renew these positions or elect new officers. Elections will be determined by a majority of members present and voting. All members who are able to attend the annual meeting are encouraged to participate. News of the election results will be announced via email and on the Society’s website in January 2015.

Whether or not you are already a member of the George Santayana Society, and whether you are a professor, a student, or simply curious about philosophy, we hope to see you at one of our meetings. All are welcome.

GLENN TILLER

President of the George Santayana Society

Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi

Lachs and Santayana on the Importance of Philosophy

Millions of people do not question the importance of their work. They may complain about long hours and low pay, but there is no doubt in their minds that what they do at their jobs is important because it pays the bills and puts food on the table. But a growing number of philosophers and other intellectuals see work as important or meaningful only if it serves a transformational social, political, or moral purpose, going far beyond the scope of providing for oneself and one's family and well beyond helping those with whom one comes in direct contact at work.

A recent book, entitled *Stoic Pragmatism*, by American philosopher John Lachs, addresses concerns about the importance of what professional philosophers do in the larger sense of the word "importance." According to Lachs, philosophers should be bothered by the fact that their work is not important enough in the larger sense of "importance," even though they are ill-prepared to do that sort of work.

Not only are philosophers ill-prepared to apply their thinking to questions of public policy, according to Lachs, but the very structure of incentives within their profession directs their efforts to narrow, scholarly pursuits. For Lachs, this is nothing short of alarming and calls for a radical re-imagining and re-structuring of professional philosophy.

Another view of philosophy's importance comes from a thinker about whom Lachs has written many fine articles and several prominent books, George Santayana. For Santayana, the importance of philosophy does not extend much beyond the lives of those rare individuals who take an interest in it, and there is nothing wrong with that. The purpose of philosophy is to understand the world in one's own way, not to reform it. "The truth is not impatient; it can stand representation and misrepresentation," Santayana wrote. "The more we respect its authority, the more confidently and familiarly we may play round its base. The plainest facts, such as the existence of body and of spirit, may be explained away, if we like to do so and to keep house with the resulting paradoxes" (Santayana 1951, 604–5). Moreover, most people are better off without prolonged exposure to the corrosive skepticism that is one of the central methods of philosophical inquiry. Unhindered by excessive doubting, they can operate effectively, with confidence in their own judgments and powers.

Looking for the transformational importance of one's work is understandable and in many ways admirable. But there are different levels of importance, and not everyone is qualified to engage in work leading to sweeping social, political, or moral changes. Perhaps philosophers really are qualified to engage in such work and simply need to re-imagine themselves and re-structure their entire discipline to do so. A more plausible conclusion — one Lachs has argued for in conversation, if not in print — is that, while philosophers are qualified only within their relatively narrow specializations, doing well at what they are qualified to do, such as teaching philosophy courses, is important enough.

For someone arguing that more philosophers should become public intellectuals, applying their thinking skills to questions of public policy, Lachs makes a puzzlingly strong case that philosophers are in no position to do that. Three features of their profession combine to direct philosophers away from public affairs, according to Lachs. The first is an aversion to facts that stems from their graduate education, where “young professionals are taught that argument is king, and for that knowledge of facts is superfluous” (Lachs 2012, 19). Another feature of professional philosophy that leads philosophers away from public affairs is “its perverse incentive structure” (Lachs 2012, 19) that rewards only narrow, scholarly activity. Approval is reserved for those who “invent new wrinkles or . . . resuscitate old, implausible positions in new raiment” (Lachs 2012, 19). A third feature of professional philosophy that points philosophers away from public affairs is “the departmental structure of the university” (Lachs 2012, 19). That structure suggests philosophy’s mission is the same as that of the sciences — to discover new facts. “This wrongheaded ideal,” Lachs writes, “focuses the efforts of our colleagues on reading, conversation, reflection, and writing, all of which are best done within the safe precincts of the university” (Lachs 2012, 19–20).

Lack of courage among academics is another factor preventing philosophers from contributing to public policy. “Safe invisibility is the preferred condition of academics,” Lachs writes. Philosophers and other academics “may have bold things to say in the classroom, but when it comes to putting their complaints into action, they often fail to show” (Lachs 2012, 20).

Lachs does call attention to some exceptions to the rule that philosophers are not in a position to contribute to public policy. “The growth of applied ethics,” he writes, “has turned the attention of at least a portion of the profession toward sites beyond the university where people struggle with difficult personal and social problems. Medical ethics, business ethics, engineering ethics, journalistic ethics, even accounting ethics have undergone significant development both in the number of practitioners and in the quality of their contributions” (Lachs 2012, 20). According to Lachs, that factor alone “should have been enough to turn philosophy in a more productive direction than it followed in the first seven decades of the twentieth century” (Lachs 2012, 20). Why a single factor “should have been enough” to change the trajectory of an entire profession is unclear. In any case, for various reasons, that one factor was not enough.

With so many factors stacked against philosophers applying their thinking skills to questions of public policy, what can be done to achieve the desired outcome of more philosophers becoming public intellectuals? According to Lachs, the American Philosophical Association should form a commission “to study the full range and effectiveness of philosophy” (Lachs 2012, 22). The report of that commission should be “disseminated to the deans and presidents of universities across the country” (Lachs 2012, 22). Unfortunately, Lachs admits, the APA is unlikely to do these things. This leaves “those of us interested in the public role of philosophy” attempting to “convince our colleagues, if necessary one by one, of the importance of addressing the real problems of real people” (Lachs 2012, 22).

But even if the trajectory of professional philosophy can be completely changed one person at a time, in the direction of more philosophers becoming public intellectuals, a fundamental question is whether this change is desirable in the first

place. Lachs finds it “odd that the president has a Council of Economic Advisors and the separate office of the National Economic Council, while he has not a single official to advise him on matters of morality” (Lachs 2012, 21). The “solution” of moral problems cannot be “left to good upbringing and religious feeling,” Lachs explains, because those resources often “fail” (Lachs 2012, 21). While the president does have bioethics commissions, “they are heavily politicized and their purview and efficacy are limited” (Lachs 2012, 21). The U.S. would be “a better nation,” Lachs writes, if it had “a Council of Ethics staffed by philosophers” (Lachs 2012, 16).

Like many discussions among philosophers, this one proceeds at a high level of generality, passing over particular facts that may be far more consequential than any general considerations. Would more advisors change the president’s mind on anything? Is the executive department of the federal government an appropriate place from which to influence public policy in a democracy? Granted that good upbringing and religious feeling sometimes or often fail to produce moral actions, all human efforts sometimes or often fail. In view of human imperfection, is it really better for morality to be handed down from the top of a national government under the sway of philosophers than to rely on good upbringing and religious feeling to guide people in their moral choices? If the bioethics commissions that advise the president are “politicized,” would a council of advising philosophers not be politicized? Do moral problems even have “solutions” — or just trade-offs that make life better in some ways but worse in others? All of these concrete questions about particular facts should at least be addressed before attempting to change the direction of an entire profession, much less that of larger realities, such as government, society, or morality.

The problem with philosophers applying their thinking skills to questions of public policy is that philosophers are trained to think at high levels of generality, ignoring countless mundane but consequential facts that must be considered when making public policy. Is this simply a problem of lack of information? Lachs does say that “philosophy uninformed by history and economics yields only the most rudimentary and naïve perspectives on the world” (Lachs 2012, 17). But getting philosophers to include some relevant mundane facts in their thinking is not enough to make them framers of good public policy. Without the ability to systematically analyze empirical data, philosophers are just speculating — making what Santayana calls “high guesses” — when they suggest one policy or another. Unless philosophy departments start training graduate students in empirical methods, philosophers will not be as effective as other intellectuals, such as economists, in analyzing empirical data.

Here Lachs makes a bold claim about philosophy — that it is a discipline almost without boundaries. “The departmental structure of universities,” Lachs writes, “is only a convenience and does not reveal the nature of reality. To understand anything is to understand its relations to all manner of other things. As a result, truly productive philosophy will always be in debt to a variety of other fields in the humanities and the sciences” (Lachs 2012, 16–17). The point of the suggestion is that philosophers not only can but must achieve competence in “a variety of other fields in the humanities and the sciences” in order to achieve mastery of their own field.

This brings to mind something like the problem of infinite obligations Lachs discusses in a subsequent chapter of *Stoic Pragmatism*. Unless philosophers are very different from other humans, they lack the infinite intelligence attributed to God. That suggests it would be unwise for philosophers to attempt to assimilate a nearly infinite body of specialized knowledge and skills, on top of what they must learn within their own discipline. Philosophers who think of their discipline as boundless are more likely to venture outside its traditional boundaries. But this is desirable only if philosophers are actually qualified to do so. Otherwise, philosophers venturing outside their discipline are likely to make mistakes about questions in other fields. When such mistakes find their way into public policy, the consequences can be disastrous. While some individuals are legitimately qualified in philosophy and another field, such as medicine, they belong to a small minority.

In contrast to the idea that philosophy is important only if it serves transformational purposes, there is Santayana's view of philosophy's importance. For Santayana, philosophy is important primarily for those who enjoy reflection and want to achieve a systematic understanding of the world. Far from transforming society, philosophy is an activity that goes on mainly in the minds of philosophers. No system of philosophy is better than another in the sense of leading to more facts, but individual philosophers may find one system more appealing or convincing than another. Santayana referred to one of his greatest philosophical works, *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, as just "one more system of philosophy" (Santayana 1924, v) that helped him "clean . . . the windows of his soul" (Santayana 1924, vi–vii) but that others would likely find inadequate for their needs. Santayana seems to have been untroubled by the possibility that his philosophy would attract few adherents and would be largely ignored by future generations. He wrote that none of us is "too good for extinction" (Santayana 1969, 29).

Whatever Santayana's influence on Lachs's thinking, his view of philosophy's importance seems to approach the opposite of Lachs's. Santayana clearly sees what Lachs calls the "personal significance" of philosophy but does not seem to see what Lachs refers to as its "social usefulness." While it is hard to understand how philosophers can contribute to public policy, without acquiring expertise in areas other than philosophy and contributing as experts in those areas, rather than as philosophers, Lachs may be right that philosophy has something of value to offer the public. He is clear that philosophers cannot discover new facts or reach confirmed conclusions like their colleagues in the sciences. But Lachs suggests several items that philosophers can offer the public. The first is "critical skills," the second "attitudes."

Philosophers teach general critical thinking skills in their philosophy courses, providing students with conceptual frameworks for reasoning about practical matters. There is obvious value in educating the public in the methods and procedures of critical thinking, but philosophers are not the only ones teaching those methods and procedures.

An old idea that Lachs deserves credit for reviving is that, besides reasoning skills, philosophers teach "attitudes." Stoics teach the importance of calm acceptance in the face of the inevitable, while pragmatists teach the value of striving for improvements. Stoic pragmatists, such as Lachs, teach the value of knowing when to move from one of those attitudes to the other.

Both Lachs and Santayana describe the attitude of joyful absorption in the present moment. Santayana calls this attitude “spirituality,” while Lachs calls it “transcendence.” As with stoic acceptance and pragmatic striving, the public at large may benefit from learning about transcendence. Its value for everyday life, Lachs explains, “lies in offering a counterweight to guilt and regret, with their emphasis on the past, and to hope and planning, with their commitment to the future” (Lachs 2003, 80). By calling attention to immediacies, joyful absorption in the moment relieves the pressure and stress of life. Of this “transporting movement of thought,” Santayana wrote that it is “intimately natural to all of us: when it comes we feel that for the first time we are ourselves; and we return to our common preoccupations as if to the routine of a prison” (Santayana 1951, 569).

While some philosophers may be in a position to educate the public about time-tested attitudes, such as stoicism, pragmatism, and transcendence, they must not do more than offer them as options. Not knowing what is best for others, philosophers must take care not to present their favorite attitudes as mandatory for anyone wishing to achieve a good life. Those who find transcendence attractive should be free to pursue it, while those who do not find it appealing remain at liberty to occupy themselves in other ways.

It is easy to say that philosophers must allow people ample room to decide which attitudes to adopt and which to reject, but in practice it is hard for philosophers to do that. Their tendency to generalize means they readily see the attitudes they prefer as right for everyone. The tendency of philosophers to think in terms of generalities and to generalize from a small number of cases to an entire population is the central reason for caution when considering whether society or the public would benefit from increasing exposure to their influences. While a few unusual people fall in love with existentialism, for example, many more find it obtuse, if not vaguely disturbing.

In his writings on the importance of philosophers as educators and in many conversations, Lachs has suggested that philosophy is more than important enough when operating within university classrooms. Lachs views teaching as “a calling” and “a sacred activity” (Lachs 2003, 18). Sharing the power of ideas with even a few young minds can be deeply satisfying for philosophers, making up for the hundreds of other young minds who never quite see that power. Students who develop an interest in ideas based on promptings from their professors experience the personal value of philosophy celebrated by Lachs and Santayana. If those students and others influenced by them are considered as a group, then perhaps enough personal value adds up to a kind of social usefulness.

I am not sure why in other places Lachs insists that philosophy is important only if it breaks out of universities and transforms the world by directly influencing public policy. As Lachs himself points out, philosophers are unlikely to be able to carry out such a revolution with good results, even if most of them wanted to. Moreover, while the idea of a nation ruled by philosopher kings may be flattering to philosophers; Socrates was right to make light of it. Philosophers are masters of the general and the hypothetical, while those making practical decisions affecting the lives of millions must be masters of real particulars.

But philosophy’s importance, by Lachs’s own admission, is appropriately measured not by how much direct influence philosophers have over the myriad practical decisions that must be made for society to flourish, but rather in terms of its

value for those who love it, whether professors, students, or people without formal training. We can probably do without philosophers telling us what laws to pass, how to run businesses, or what decisions we can live with. While exceptions exist, most philosophers are not in a position to know such things better than those directly involved or those with relevant knowledge and training. Nor do we need philosophy to make our lives or our work important, although in some cases it is clearly capable of enriching both. But for those who love ideas — such as Lachs, Santayana, and myself — the importance of philosophy can hardly be overstated.

MICHAEL BRODRICK

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Morris Grossman on Santayana

Originally presented at the Society for the Advancement of American Philosophy meeting, The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey, 7 March 2013

I. Art and Morality

An undeniable thematic unity runs through the last forty years of Morris Grossman's work, in which he explored the importance for philosophy, art, and life of preserving the tension between that which may be unified and that which is disorganized, random, and miscellaneous. He examined this tension in literature, artistic performance, economics, statecraft, and human rights; in religion, drama, sculpture, philosophical methodology, biography, and human attitudes toward mortality; in the work of Gotthold Lessing, Lewis Carroll, Peirce, Tolstoy, James, Sartre, and Beardsley; and most regularly in the work of George Santayana. And though Grossman believed that irony was a way to express and preserve this tension between that which may be ordered and that which remains outside of a settled schema, it is not especially ironic that he achieved thematic unity in attending to that which resists assimilation. The coherence of his work supports his belief in the need to take seriously both the refined and the intransigently crude in experience. He sought, following George Santayana, to "stand in philosophy exactly where [he stood] in daily life,"¹ and his irony served his honesty.

Grossman described his theme as the tension between art and morality. Art elevates and intensifies certain moments, it consummates life activity and unifies experience; but life is full of moments of irrelevance, interruptions, and dead ends that resist aesthetic arrangement. Art arrests the sense of change and yields moments of unguarded enjoyment and peace; but soon shifting circumstances compel evaluation, decision, and action, and yield wariness and weariness. Art, vital and composed, may seem to transcend the confusion and tedium that mark much of our experience; but for Grossman, art cannot be definitively separated from the rest of life and so a tension remains. Art may relieve or rejuvenate us, but distracting and oppressive experiences remain operative. To discard unaesthetic experience risks dishonesty and estrangement from ourselves; hence, the significance of tragedy, which Grossman characterized as "a reconciliation with those moments of life that resist a coming together in some organizing purpose" ("Art and Morality," 22).²

Art and morality never fully correspond. According to Grossman, the best art acknowledges the impossibility of complete assimilation and final perfection and retains a sense of tragedy. It neither retreats to an irresponsible aestheticism nor surrenders to the demands of animal life, whether through alienating routine or dissolving sensation. The best art preserves the tension between the aesthetic consummation of experience and the press of morality understood as the business of navigating conflicts, making choices, and meeting needs. And so the best artists acknowledge the recalcitrance of life, of impossible choices and irredeemable loss by leaving, in Grossman's words, "loose ends, ambiguities, and elements of randomness, as tribute and echo and reminder of what life is like and what needs to be done" ("Art and Morality," 24).

II. Grossman on George Santayana

Grossman's concern with the tension between art and morality was intimately related to his reading of George Santayana. The best philosophy, like the best art, preserves the tension between what can be ordered and what resists assimilation, and Grossman read Santayana as an exemplar of this virtue. The tension between art and morality may be understood in more general form as the relation of honest, deep feeling to decisions about how to act. In more specific form, it concerns the relation of dialectic and drama in the practice of philosophy, and it was in terms of dialectic and drama that Grossman articulated the tension as it appeared in Santayana's works. The best philosophy, the most honest, does not get lost in the vortex of dialectic and achieves dramatic containment of the inescapable variety of perspectives or voices, just as the best art achieves a reconciliation with a variety of unaesthetic moments. Grossman read Santayana as "embracing . . . multiple attitudes" and employing "logic and art, dialogue and analysis, irony and seriousness, with interchangeable abandon" ("Drama and Dialectic," 213).

Of course, others have noted similar tension or multiplicity or irony in Santayana's work. Saatkamp has written that for Santayana "the reflective life is a polarity between embodied interests and reflective imagination" and that "wisdom is possible so long as one's self-knowledge reflects the polarity of poetic freedom and vested animal interests."³ Sprigge wrote, "Santayana strives to do justice to insights which are usually only developed in opposition to one another."⁴ Santayana's attempt to acknowledge and contain a variety of views sometimes has been reflected in commentators' remarks regarding a particular issue, as when Kerr-Lawson, writing on whether spirit provides evolutionary benefits, noted that "Santayana never makes clear whether or not he adheres to or would adhere to such a doctrine. . . . he does not seek to take a clear position."⁵ Munitz claimed to find three distinct positions in Santayana's account of spiritual life and wrote, "[i]t is by continually shifting from one to the other, sometimes in the course of a single paragraph, that Santayana is able to leave the whole discussion in solution, as it were, and thereby claim for the entire presentation the virtues that in fact come from only some of its part."⁶ Furthermore, Hodges and Lachs have remarked on the irony in Santayana's accounts of his realms of being⁷ which they believe was intended "to let the air out of the grand metaphysical systems of the past."⁸

Grossman differed from many commentators in taking Santayana's refusal to take one position, his embrace of multiple attitudes, and his irony as substantive. Grossman maintained that "we cannot understand [Santayana] if we approach him dialectically, if we attend to his words for their coherence and consistency only. There is no substance to Santayana apart from his style, and his style (to put it another way) is no mere gloss upon a substance." ("Santayana: Style and Substance").⁹ So, unlike Munitz, who detected shifting views in Santayana and suspected rhetorical legerdemain, Grossman read Santayana not as a deceiver but as a preserver of tension between dialectic and drama (except, as Grossman noted, when "like us ordinary mortals, [Santayana] squirms to shake loose from, rather than to embrace, dialectical dilemma" ["Drama and Dialectic," 215]). Grossman responded not by trying to nail down Santayana's real position on an issue but by carefully surveying the seemingly contradictory or inconsistent claims and acknowledging them as

significant in their variety. On Grossman's reading, Santayana's irony was not merely negative, not only a tactic for puncturing bloated systems, but an expression of Santayana's "binocular vision"¹⁰ ("Interpreting *Interpretations*," 254).

Binocular vision, according to Santayana, is the ability to see both the outlines and the solid bulk and perspective of things, and it is requisite for fully seeing reality. Grossman elaborated the notion in his explanation of how Santayana's work expressed observations resulting from binocular vision:

Santayana often does two things at once that can't be properly or, rather, can't dialectically be done at once. He describes the nature of beauty on the one hand and expresses what he understands by the sense of beauty on the other. He characterizes spirit as a category in an ontological scheme addressed to the nature of things, and he also conveys the sense of a spiritual life, spirit seen and felt inwardly. And he often does these things in close and unexpected juxtaposition. . . . it is at the core of Santayana's constant procedure to try to reveal what something is by analyzing it and also to convey his idea of it by intimation, by expression, and by dramatic art" ("Drama and Dialectic," 214).

III. Dialectic, Drama, and Irony

Grossman remarked on the tendency of many Santayana scholars toward a "traditional, orderly, sensible, analytic" approach as they attempted to identify the serious argument buried in the literary style and to tease out the genuine doctrine and discard the embarrassingly inconsistent or confusing parts. This tendency inspired Grossman, in what he called "a spirit of corrective misprisioning," ("Interpreting *Interpretations*," 250) to emphasize even more the irony and drama in Santayana. And so Grossman articulated his rules or axioms for reading Santayana:

- 1) There are no contradictions in Santayana.
- 2) Everything in Santayana is ironic or dramatic.

If contradictions seem to be discovered in a text and 1) is threatened, use 2) to put things aright. Axioms, I think, should be like friends [to each other]: not consistent, not independent, and willing on occasion to help each other out" ("Interpreting *Interpretations*," 252).

Grossman's axioms, of course, contain the very tension he observed in Santayana's work, but this is not intended to mystify, nor is it a game (which ultimately reproduces a dialectic structure). It is a simultaneous analysis of Santayana's thought and an expression — perhaps exaggerated — of the experience of considering his ideas. To understand how Grossman's axioms illuminate Santayana's writings, it will be helpful to consider what Grossman meant by drama, dialectic, and irony.

According to Grossman, drama is "deliberately controlled presentation of contrary viewpoints, or, as in soliloquy, presentation of a single viewpoint with the implied sense that it is one among several. The philosopher stands behind them not as statements that he asserts but as opinions or attitudes or sentiments that he deploys" ("Drama and Dialectic," 216). Dialectic is "the logical elaboration of viewpoints and a consideration of statements that are entailed with respect of their consistency" ("Drama and Dialectic," 216–17).

Renouncing some dialectically refuted claim, say, one entailing a contradiction, can *seem* necessary; but Grossman maintained that such renunciation was optional. He thought it “possible to embrace the contradiction and to make it advertent, sustain the contrary viewpoints dramatically, and acknowledge the variety and paradox in one’s being” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 217), and he thought Santayana showed how this could be done. To explain this, Grossman distinguished “contradictions-in-discourse,” which are statements taking the form A and not-A; and “contraries-in-sentiment” which are modal statements taking the form “I affirm A” and “I believe not-A” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 218). With the latter, modal attitudes become passionate, eclipsing any particular statements. Contradictions and contraries enjoy a variable and shifting relationship, with conversion happening sometimes openly, sometimes subtly. Grossman contended that the subtle shifting “constitutes much of our mental life” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 219).¹¹

With the distinction articulated, one can understand dialectic as aiming to eliminate contradictions-in-discourse through suppression and drama as aiming to domesticate contraries-in-sentiment through different methods that allow for the contrary sentiments to be expressed. Grossman wrote that “[d]rama, by gradually voicing contradictions so that they can be retained as contraries, gathers up and disciplines the mind’s centrifugal and disruptive tendencies. It saves us from contradiction while preserving those very impulses and emotions that tended, or actually gave rise, to the contradiction” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 146).

Drama does its work in different ways, and Grossman considered three—dialogue, soliloquy, and irony—each of which is significant in Santayana’s work. Dialogue resolves contradictions and preserves contraries with an emphasis on the temporal character of drama, since the voices must wait for each other speak. Soliloquy is a special case of dialogue that leaves other voices implied. Irony was the dramatic device of most interest to Grossman, and he characterized it as “drama at its greatest compression” (“Drama and Dialectic, 219).

Irony, for Grossman, is not merely a way of meaning the opposite of what is stated. If it were, there would be little point to it; nothing would be gained over literal statement. But something *is* gained that could not be achieved through dialectically legitimate literal statement: namely, voicing of perspectives that have been dialectically renounced. Irony, by explicitly stating something unlikely, inconsistent, or absurd and simultaneously implying something further and different, intentionally joins what dialectic would sever. In doing so, irony performs a dramatic function: the explicit voice faces an almost overwhelming counter-voice intimated by the context. This simple irony is, according to Grossman, dramatically one-sided. “But in writing that is pervasively ironic, where the ironies accumulate and the mind behind them ranges, the dramatic scope is enlarged” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 220). The result is not a set of statements uttered and a set of statements meant; rather, there is shifting emphasis with something asserted later denied, something valued later dismissed. Grossman likens the shifting emphasis to modulations in music (a phenomenon he treated at length in an essay entitled “Music, Modulation, and Metaphor,” [33–56] which considered the inadequacy of technical analysis to capture the experience of music). Pervasive irony results in “the characteristic uncertainty of drama, which deliberately causes our allegiance to waver and fluctuate and which

avoids any singular and final triumph” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 221). No voice is completely vanquished and no voice dominates absolutely.

Irony cannot be promoted or refuted by dialect. The dialectician cannot be coerced into acknowledging irony and is never unreasonable in rejecting ironic implications. According to Grossman, irony and drama more generally are “psychological primitive[s]”: “they can contest for the scene only by option, by persuasion, and force; they must counter dialectic as vital, and never merely as reasonable, alternatives” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 221).

Just as drama may check any particular voice and prevent it from becoming absolutely dominant, so may human life may check both drama and dialectic and prevent either from becoming absolutely dominant. Too much dialectic diminishes one’s being by silencing voices struggling to be heard; on the other hand, the failure to contain voices threatens confusion of one’s being. Dialectic pursued relentlessly would fall into irrelevance because it lacks a criterion for its own application. Reason alone cannot determine what to reason about and left on its own would simply carry out its elimination of inconsistency without discrimination until variety and possibility are shorn from our natures. The danger here, of course, is that consistency and stability of human nature do not entail consistency and stability of enviroing conditions. Drama taken to the extreme, on Grossman’s view, leads to the overwhelming of reason by rhetoric and things like “Kierkegaard’s pseudonymous extravagance” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 224). “Human diminution and confusion are the respective pitfalls” of excessive dialectic and excessive drama (“Drama and Dialectic,” 224).

IV. Interpretative Strategy

Acknowledging the tension between dialectic and drama furnished Grossman with an interpretative strategy, which led him to diverge from other Santayana scholars. Where others saw implausibility or failure, Grossman saw controlled ambiguity and dramatic containment. Consider criticisms of Santayana on pure spirit and love.

James Gouinlock expressed reservations about Santayana’s speculations on liberated consciousness, or as Santayana called it “pure spirit,” and in particular Santayana’s claims that spirit, freed from the partial perspectives and material concerns of animal existence, loves the love in all things and “necessarily worships . . . that eternal beauty, which lies sealed in the heart of each living thing.”¹² Gouinlock doubted that the object of this love could be the innate life activity in an actually living thing. He saw nothing lovable in the eternal beauties in the hearts of murderers and could find no help in the notion that what is loveable is their possible beauty “because their possible beauty (whatever that might be) is in stark contrast to their actual deformity.”¹³ For Gouinlock, this entails that “we do not love them as real beings. Hence, we do not love the love in all things.”¹⁴ Gouinlock added that “what one loves is not really characteristic of the alleged being; one loves something else entirely — an essence, for example — and imputes it to a natural being.”¹⁵ But, if spirit loves the love in things, then the object of spiritual love cannot be an essence because according to Santayana’s ontology essences, which are non-existent and impotent, do not love. Gouinlock wrote, “[i]f the object of love were essence only,

then living beings would not be objects of love” and spiritual worship would lose reference to the world of existing things.¹⁶

This seems consistent with Irving Singer’s criticism that Santayana’s notion of spiritual love is no love of actual persons. Since it is a love of ideal forms it can be only an idealization of actual persons. Santayana does account for instinctual erotic attraction as a pursuit of material goods or a love of things. But Singer wrote, “Santayana does not understand, or recognize fully, . . . the fact that a love of persons cannot be explained as either a love of things or a love of ideals.”¹⁷ Interpersonal love, according to Singer, is both “a vital attachment” and “a bestowing of values that may create a unique and sometimes beneficial oneness” for which Santayana cannot account. This results, claimed Singer, from a failure of Santayana’s attempted synthesis of materialism and Platonism, of matter and spirit.¹⁸

But on Grossman’s view such a synthesis was not Santayana’s aim. Rather Santayana’s ontology, by being both a generalized account of all being and an arbitrary construction held in suspension, was a dramatic containment of contradictory impulses. The ontology is an example of Santayana’s “double seriousness” and “controlled ambiguity” (“Ontology and Morality,” 235): he was serious about the optional nature of his system and serious about using it to pursue wisdom. The resulting tension is apparent in Santayana’s puzzling over the existence of spirit, which translates as the tension between pure spirit and spiritual life. Grossman cited evidence for Santayana’s indecision in manuscripts “with the word *exists*, on occasion, written and then crossed out” (“Spirited Spirituality,” 241), and so took as autobiographical Santayana’s claim that the subtlest form of distraction for spirit is “when it torments itself about its own existence.”¹⁹ It is a problem that on Grossman’s reading must persist for Santayana: “It is as though Santayana could not, in good conscience, escape the horns of his own dilemma” (“Spirited Spirituality,” 241).

On Grossman’s view, Santayana recognized the necessary tension that lies between an intellectual description of spirituality and the human pursuit of the spiritual life, and this includes recognition of the tension that lies between love of ideas and love of existences. Santayana himself articulated the heart of Gouinlock’s and Singer’s cases against him when he chided spiritual love with these rhetorical questions: “Shall we detach our love altogether from existing beings and platonically worship only universal Ideas of the Beautiful and the Good? This might be wisdom or spiritual insight, but is it love? And can such sublimation really be professed without hypocrisy?”²⁰ According to Grossman, Santayana sought clear definition of elusive things like spirit and love, but also sensed the inadequacy of “pseudo-precision” (244) in dealing with what needed to be experienced. “This caused the wavering and the drama” (244), wrote Grossman, and Santayana preferred “to live with the paradoxes and the drama as over against a vacuous and nonhuman clarity” (“Spirited Spirituality,” 245).

Santayana was both extremely self-aware and an able dialectician. To discount his conflicting views as carelessness or confusion risks a serious misreading. Grossman found the evidence overwhelming that Santayana was dramatizing conflicting perspectives and wrote that “[t]o isolate one of Santayana’s voices to the neglect of other voices, or to present one voice as contradicting another voice, is a failure of criticism” (“Spirited Spirituality,” 246).²¹

Of course, this all may sound too pat and suspiciously impervious to argument, at least from the perspective of dialectic which would mistake Grossman's dramatic approach as illegitimate means to the dialectical goal of clarity. But drama seeks to preserve uncertainty and conflict in ways that open up possibilities in actual living, and so Grossman did not see his own work as the last word. In correspondence late last year Grossman responded to favorable referee reports on a manuscript in the following way:

I am left with a dilemma. What do I do with so much praise of me? I (too) am an ironist, and a contrarian, and at the core of my temperament I want to argue back. 'Oh, maybe I have some good lines, here and there. But I keep piping the same tune, and who wants to keep hearing it? And some sentences remain obscure, even unclear, despite all my rewriting. And how do these chapter efforts, separately and together, compare with the majesty of great philosophy? Too much philosophy is published these days that doesn't merit wide attention. Aspiring is not enough!'²²

I could do more of this, and even be nasty, as I have been in some of my reviews of others. But what is the point? To help get my book published or to continue to remain, to the very end, my self-deprecating and dubious self? Maybe I shouldn't be part of the process!

Is there anything else I can say, or have I said enough?²³

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Notes

1. George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith* (New York: Dover, 1953), vi.
2. Throughout this essay, citations refer to *Morris Grossman's Art and Morality: Essays in the Spirit of George Santayana* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), unless otherwise indicated.
3. H. Saatkamp, "Hermes the Interpreter," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the George Santayana Society* 3 (1985): 25.
4. T. L. S. Sprigge, "Ideal Immortality," *Southern Journal of Philosophy*, (Summer 1972): 225.
5. A. Kerr-Lawson, "The Supervenience of Spirit," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of The George Santayana Society*, 24 (2006): 28–29.
6. M. K. Munitz, "Ideals and Essences in Santayana's Philosophy," in *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. P. A. Schilpp (La Salle, IL: Open Court Press, 1951), 207.
7. M. Hodges, and J. Lachs, *Thinking in the Ruins: Wittgenstein and Santayana on Contingency* (Nashville, TN: Vanderbilt University Press, 2000), 88.
8. Hodges and Lachs, *Thinking in the Ruins*, 91.
9. Morris Grossman, "Santayana: Style and Substance" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Association for Philosophy and Literature, Cleveland, OH, 12 May 1978).
10. Santayana used the phrase in his review of Bertrand Russell's ethics. He wrote that "there is nothing, next to Plato, which ought to be more recommended to

the young philosopher than the teachings of Messrs. Russell and Moore, if he wishes to be a moralist and a logician, and not merely to seem one. Yet this salutary doctrine, though correct, is inadequate. It is a monocular philosophy, seeing outlines clear, but missing the solid bulk and perspective of things. We need binocular vision to quicken the whole mind and yield a full image of reality. Ethics should be controlled by a physics that perceives the material ground and the relative status of whatever is moral. Otherwise ethics itself tends to grow narrow, strident, and fanatical” (G. Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine* [London: J. M. Dent & Sons, 1913], 115).

11. Taking as an example Santayana’s conflict regarding the existence of spirit, Grossman wrote that “[a] scrutiny of the texts, and an examination of early drafts, shows an astonishing series of oscillations — statements to the effect that ‘spirit exists’ and ‘spirit doesn’t exist.’ . . . these alternative and contradictory statements can be traced to powerfully conflicting sentiments and value orientations in Santayana” (“Drama and Dialectic,” 143). If Grossman is correct that the shifting between contradictions-in-discourse and contraries-in-sentiment “constitutes much of our mental life,” then perhaps another way to describe it is as the experience of conflicted feelings yielding some contradictory claims that seem to sum up, more or less, the conflicted situation followed by a feeling of resoluteness that seems to lead to more or less effective action until conflicted feelings, more or less continuous with the earlier situation, become troubling and inhibit confident action.

12. George Santayana, “Ultimate Religion,” *Obiter Scripta*, ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1936), 296–97. Quoted in James Gouinlock, “Ultimate Religion,” *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the George Santayana Society* 16 (1998): 7.

13. Gouinlock, “Ultimate Religion,” 7.

14. Gouinlock, “Ultimate Religion,” 7.

15. Gouinlock, “Ultimate Religion,” 7–8.

16. Gouinlock, “Ultimate Religion,” 8.

17. Irving Singer, *George Santayana, Literary Philosopher* (New Haven, Connecticut and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 109.

18. Singer, *George Santayana*, 109.

19. George Santayana, *Realms of Being* (New York: Scribner’s Sons, 1942), 742.

20. Santayana, *Realms of Being*, 782.

21. Grossman wrote “[i]t sometimes passes as scholarship to go behind the backs, or into the unconscious, of philosophers and to presume to reveal them, as it were, to themselves. We are pleased if we can show that they missed some important implication of what they said, or indeed that what they said here was contradicted by what they said there. Such an approach is sometimes useful and sometimes even appreciated. I do not myself find many such opportunities in Santayana. What he said here might indeed contradict what he said there — but not for want of remembrance. As I have indicated, his repeated *deliberate* juxtapositions of conflicting viewpoints ought to remove all doubts about such viewpoints when they are spread out and not juxtaposed. They ought also to keep us from presuming logical carelessness on Santayana’s part” (“Spirited Spirituality,” 170).

22. But see Grossman, “Spirited Spirituality,” 167–68.

23. Morris Grossman, personal email message, 6 December 2012.

McKeon, Lamm, Levi, and Kerr-Lawson on Santayana

The teachers and interpreters of George Santayana's philosophy are not limited to Santayana scholars. In what follows, I discuss three who were not Santayana specialists — Richard McKeon, Herbert Lamm, and Albert William Levi — and one who was — Angus Kerr-Lawson.

All three of the non-specialists had a University of Chicago connection. I first read Santayana in Richard McKeon's course "Concepts and Methods: Aesthetics and Criticism" in my second undergraduate year. The work was *The Sense of Beauty*. Later, in my fourth year, I read — that is, I read parts of — the one-volume edition of *The Life of Reason* in a two-quarter course on Hegel's *Phenomenology* conducted by McKeon's protégé Herbert Lamm. Lamm used Santayana's work to counterbalance Hegel's, observing that Santayana had read Hegel with a "malevolent eye."

McKeon and Lamm together were the principal force behind the Committee on the Analysis of Ideas and the Study of Methods, which is probably most well-known from the caricature of McKeon and the Committee in Robert Pirsig's novel, *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance*. One of the first things that McKeon said in the first lecture I attended is that philosophy is everywhere: every human assertion or action has philosophic implications and one purpose of studying philosophy is to make the implicit explicit. Implicit in McKeon's remark is that philosophic richness is not to be found by confining discourse to the fads popular in contemporary philosophy departments. This idea — that philosophic value does not depend on prevalent fashion — dominates the thought of all four of my subjects. McKeon and Lamm taught us to regard the history of philosophy as a continuing conversation. You can construct an answer that Plato might give to Kant, Kant to Hegel, or Freud to Sartre (or even to Frederick Crews). It is very easy, McKeon said, to show that a philosopher is wrong. The hard task is to show how he might have been right. Rather than trying to resolve philosophic disputes or to make philosophic progress, a course in philosophy should lay before the student a sample of the variety of positions and methods. Furthermore, the student should be led to understand that the differences among philosophers depend on the problems they are trying to solve and the questions they consider important.

The Ideas and Methods tool for examining the variety of philosophic systems is a schema McKeon devised that he called philosophic semantics (see Figure 1). The philosophic semantics separates a philosophy's grounding principles from its method of investigation or presentation, and again from its interpretations or conclusions. In each of these three categories, McKeon distinguished four positions based on four modes of thought. Those modes might be roughly described as focus on: 1) an englobing whole, 2) construction from parts, 3) the resolution of problems, and 4) the conceptions, assertions, and actions of people. The ancient philosophers who exemplified these four modes were Plato, Democritus, Aristotle, and Protagoras. I shall not spell out the full complexity of the semantic schema, but I do want to concentrate on those parts of it that have guided my interpretation of Santayana. I emphasize the word 'guided,' because neither Lamm nor McKeon regarded the

semantic location of a philosopher's position as substitute for reading his or her works. While deep into the reading of some text, a student asked Lamm about where a particular passage might place the writer in the semantic schema. Lamm replied he didn't like to pigeonhole people. The interpretations that I recount here are the ones that McKeon and Lamm originally led me to and are not necessarily the ones I hold today.

Among the four methods, McKeon distinguished two he called particular methods — methods that need to be reconstituted for each area of inquiry. These two are the problematic method (representing the mode of thought that focuses on resolution of problems) and the logistic method (representing the mode that focuses on construction from parts). In the problematic method, you begin with what is commonly known or what initial observation reveals about some topic and you study it to determine what you can eventually learn about it. Using the problematic method, you arrive at definitions in the course of or at the end of your inquiry. This is the method of Aristotle, Aquinas, William James, and Dewey. The logistic method proceeds in reverse. You start with axioms or definitions and arrive at what we commonly know from that clear and firm starting point. The logistic method is the method of Euclid, Hobbes, Descartes, Spinoza, Peirce, and Santayana.

It may be somewhat of a surprise to think of the unmathematical Santayana as employing the method of Euclid, but that is precisely one of the things McKeon's semantics is supposed to do: cut through the rhetorical haze to indicate what a philosopher is actually doing. Santayana's method is especially clear in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*. His four realms of being are defined by fiat. An essence is an eternal idea, image, or feeling. Matter is whatever physically makes the world what it is and propels it forward. Spirit is awareness, the perception of essence. Truth is the set of essences that are exemplified in the realm of matter or perceived in experience. His four-volume *Realms of Being* spells out the ramifications of these definitions.

When it came to interpretation, the Ideas and Methods philosophers used semantics to frame the debate as to whether the later Santayana is compatible with the earlier. McKeon's four interpretations also fall into two groups: the ontic interpretations in which reality is something beyond experience and the phenomenal interpretations, which locate reality in experience. The two ontic interpretations are the ontological and the entitative. In the ontological interpretation, which is from the englobing-whole mode of thought, reality is something superior to experience (God, ideas, or noumena, for example). In the entitative interpretation reality is constructed from atomic units below the level of perception. The two phenomenal interpretations are the essentialist and the existential. Under the essentialist interpretation, derived from the Aristotelian-Deweyan mode of resolution (not from Santayana's idea of essence!), you find fundamental things and properties within the sphere of perception. Using the existential interpretation, derived from the Protagorean human-centered mode, reality is found or described in what is perceived and the delineation of fundamental properties depends on the perspective of each individual. The question of whether the later Santayana is different from the earlier was posed by McKeon and Lamm as a question of whether or not Santayana abandoned the existentialist interpretation of *The Life of Reason* for an entitative one in *Realms of Being*. That is, did he abandon the centrality of human discourse in favor of an appeal to the inhuman and largely inscrutable realm of matter?

I agree with Angus Kerr-Lawson that Santayana's later writings do not differ fundamentally from his earlier ones, but rather spell out the system implicit in earlier works. Although Santayana himself said, "nature has come forward and the life of reason receded," it is clear from the later works that the importance of individual perspective never went away. In the dialogue in limbo "Normal Madness," Santayana has Democritus conclude with a celebration of beauty, which Santayana conceives as possible only from the "illusions" of individual experience, not from the cold indifferent world of atoms and the void. *Scepticism and Animal Faith* is driven by the meditations of an individual soul contemplating the nature of his own existence and the source of his beliefs. In the introduction to *Scepticism*, Santayana clearly says that his system is not to be regarded as a universal one, but rather one that expresses his own way of coming to terms with the world he lives in.

The notion that no philosophic system is universal or exhaustive of the possibilities of human thought underlies McKeon's philosophic semantics. This suggests that McKeon not only taught Santayana, but that Santayana affected McKeon's own philosophical development. When I studied with McKeon and Lamm they were roughly my current age — mid to late sixties. Lamm was round and jowly and McKeon lean and dapper. Those who knew them said that Lamm, the lover of dialectic and reconciliation, was Socrates to McKeon's Protagoras, the lover of debate and controversy. When McKeon wrote his master's thesis on Tolstoy, Croce, and Santayana in 1920 at the age of 20, Santayana was 56 and had not begun to publish the later works in which he described the four realms of being. Dewey was one of McKeon's graduate advisors and McKeon taught at Columbia in the years leading to Dewey's retirement in 1930. I mention this only to show that when McKeon and Lamm were students, Santayana — and Dewey, as well — were living active presences, not historical figures.

McKeon is perhaps most well-known for editing the *Basic Works of Aristotle*. There is a remark in the bibliography of that volume that gives a clue to Santayana's influence on McKeon. McKeon includes "The Secret of Aristotle" from *Dialogues in Limbo* as a reference on the topic of "metaphysics" and notes that it is "An imaginative guess without pretensions of history, which nonetheless does not depart from what could be found in the histories" (McKeon 1941, xxxviii). In "The Secret of Aristotle," Santayana imagines the Persian philosopher, whom we know in English as Avicenna, reporting his enlightenment as to the true meaning of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* after reading a commentary foisted upon him in the marketplace by a stranger. The commentary revealed that Aristotle's four causes can only be understood by regarding them not as aspects of things — or "quadrants on a wheel" as the commentary puts it — but "as four rays shed by the light of an observing spirit," only one of which, Memory, reveals change and is thus the only faculty capable of discerning the efficient principle, Matter, which is "the only proper cause in the world" (DL 183–84).

Several things need to be said about this. The most obvious to someone familiar with Santayana's work is that in reducing four causes to one, Santayana puts his own philosophy in the mouth of the medieval Persian and, in doing so, attributes it to Aristotle. But this sleight-of-hand is of secondary concern at the moment. In the first place, the shift from four causes to one illustrates the way one philosopher reinterprets another — a side-effect of the differing philosophic perspectives framed

in McKeon's semantics and which the semantics help explain. But there is something more. There is a fourth category in McKeon's semantics. In addition to principles, methods, and interpretations, there is also the category of selections. This is the choice of topics or problems that philosophers in a given age choose to talk about. According to McKeon, philosophers may start theorizing about things, but then after they have done that for decades (or centuries), they shift to discussing the faculties of thought and experience. Then, after a while, they shift again and focus on what people say or what they do. These shifts have cycled through many times in the history of philosophy and they constitute a change, not in philosophic substance, but in the linguistic selection that philosophers of a particular time and place make. The old questions reappear in new guises. Kant's Copernican revolution, which shifted the center of Western philosophic discourse from metaphysics to epistemology, was a change in vocabulary and the way questions were formed. The linguistic turn of the twentieth century was to shift to framing philosophical questions as questions of language. McKeon said in class that Santayana wrote at the tail end of the epistemological focus — the focus on consciousness, thought, and imagination. So in reading "The Secret of Aristotle" for the first time, I had both McKeon's remarks and the map of McKeon's semantics in my head. "The Secret of Aristotle" illustrates Santayana's linguistic selection more sharply than any of his other writings. The change from the quadrants of a wheel to the faculties of the mind — the rays of light from the lamp of spirit — is an unmistakable shift from things (or metaphysics) to mental faculties (or epistemology).

McKeon's way of interpreting philosophy had another key element: it is important to develop an intuitive feel for a philosopher's system as a whole. He seldom made the importance of grasping the philosophic gestalt explicit, but rather taught by example. As undergraduates we would stare at his head and wonder how so much could fit inside it. It was as if he had read and analyzed everything. But perhaps he didn't have to, for he is reported to have said that he would sometimes attribute a position to a philosopher and then go home and look up where he had said it.

Another master at grasping the essence of a philosophic system was Albert William Levi. Levi did postgraduate work with Richard McKeon at the University of Chicago in the 1930s and taught at Washington University from 1950 until his death in 1988. Like McKeon, he believed in teaching the humanities — the examination of the great works of mankind — as an integrated set of disciplines, rather than teaching philosophy as an isolated specialized subject. From 1965 until his retirement in 1979, Levi was the David May Distinguished University Professor in the Humanities. His works, still available in second-hand editions at Amazon.com and elsewhere, include such clearly written, broad-ranging, and substantial works as *Philosophy and the Modern World*; *Literature, Philosophy and the Imagination*; and *Humanism and Politics*. His approach was the opposite of what Santayana deemed the "searchlight" of philosophers like Bertrand Russell. Levi called his approach "maximum contextualization." If McKeon (and Dewey before him) could say that philosophic systems are different because they respond to different problems and raise different questions, Levi took this one step further and sought to understand a philosopher in light of his character and circumstances. He looked on the works of the great philosophers not only as complex systematic efforts to grapple with

issues of fundamental importance, but also as expressions of the human spirit, each realized at a particular historical moment in response to a convergence of cultural, social, political, and personal issues. Levi was careful to maintain a perspective that balanced both logical and historical analysis and that succumbed to the excesses of neither. As he put it:

Excessive rationalism (Philosophical Analysis) emphasizes the logical relationships of philosophical doctrines apart from their social role. Excessive politicization of ideas . . . distorts this social role by . . . exaggerating its materialistic roots and class anchorage. (Levi 1974, 23–24)

Although Levi had great respect for McKeon, his emphasis was different. McKeon did not like to single out a particular school of philosophy or philosophical figure as representative of a particular epoch, arguing that in every age and place you can find a wide spectrum of philosophic positions. Levi, on the other hand, believed in the importance of finding the exemplars of each age. In *Philosophy as Social Expression*, he selected four figures to represent the manner of writing philosophy by an individual with a particular position in the society he lived in. Plato was the philosopher as an aristocrat, Aquinas was the saint, Descartes the gentleman, and G. E. Moore the professional. The basis for this approach is found in the writings of Santayana, whom Levi read appreciatively and quoted in many of his own works. Santayana regarded his own philosophy as the expression of southern European ideals about how life should be lived, a reaction to the American culture that surrounded him from the age of eight. As he wrote in the post-Darwinian age, Santayana felt obliged to reconstruct his European moral perspective in naturalistic terms.

Levi exhibited the influence of Santayana both in his writings and in many casual remarks. He wrote two essays on Pound, Eliot, and Stevens, both modeled on Santayana's *Three Philosophical Poets*. Levi once said in conversation that the failure to appreciate religion, even if you have no supernatural beliefs, is a kind of human blindness — a vision straight out of *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, *Reason in Religion*, and *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*. While it would be myopic to attribute Levi's attitude to Santayana alone, Levi often said that Santayana had gotten some things just right, even in simple matters: the difference between matter and spirit, for example, could be exemplified in the difference between eating and dining. Levi steered me to see that matter and spirit were the fundamental principles in Santayana's philosophy.

This emphasis on the two realms of existence, in preference to essence and truth, caused certain passages in Santayana to jump off the page when I first read them or came across them again — passages from works as separated in time and subject matter as *Reason in Art* (1906) and *Dominations and Powers* (1951). In the latter, arguing that material circumstances drive political perspective and expression, Santayana wrote that two “strangely different streams would seem to compose human life: one the vast flood of cyclic movements and sudden precipitations” (i.e., the realm of matter) and “the other, the private little rivulet of images, emotions, and words babbling as we move” (i.e., the realm of spirit) (DP 15). In *Reason in Art*, written well before he had developed the four explicit realms of being — before he

called the realms of matter and spirit by those names — Santayana, in writing about music, said:

That a pattering of sounds on the ear should have such moment is a fact calculated to give pause to those philosophers who attempt to explain consciousness by its utility, or who wish to make physical and moral processes march side by side from all eternity. . . . That the way in which idle sounds run together should matter so much is a mystery of the same order as the spirit's concern to keep a particular body alive, or to propagate its life. Such an interest is, from an absolute point of view, wholly gratuitous; and so long as the natural basis and expressive function of spirit are not perceived, this mystery is baffling (RA 45).

Angus Kerr-Lawson, who as it happens had a master's degree in mathematics from the University of Chicago, was not, strictly speaking, my teacher. I came to know him after I started attending meetings of the Santayana Society in the year 2000. He exemplified what dedicated Santayana scholarship — what any scholarship — should be: generous and open, lucid and compassionate, clear-headed and rigorous. Angus, like the others I have discussed, was not swept up by the winds of philosophic doctrine. He left studying mathematics at the Sorbonne to study philosophy in London, only to become quickly disenchanted with lectures given by A. J. Ayer. His subsequent dedication to Santayana's work was made with clear satisfaction that he was not following the crowd.

If, on occasion, I became a bit disenchanted with Santayana, it took only a brief remark from Angus, either in correspondence or in person, to help me see things in a different light. Angus was dedicated to the exposition of Santayana's system and to showing both its consistency and its applicability to current philosophic concerns.

Once, when I was especially frustrated with Santayana's notion that spirit has no power of its own, because its ideas, impulses, and passions all come from the psyche, spirit's material counterpart — this notion reflected Santayana's wariness of the ability of intelligence to influence human affairs, a wariness I found troubling — Angus reminded me that the psyche is a deliberately vague notion and soon, thereafter, I read Angus's fine essay "On the Supervenience of Spirit," in which he discussed a related issue — whether spirit offered human beings an evolutionary advantage by adding to the power that the psyche has by itself. Angus concluded that as Santayana generally "finds ways to avoid" mind/body problems, he would not have been interested in determining how much power spirit contributes to psyche (Kerr-Lawson 2006, 34), and likewise would not have been troubled with some technical issues I was raising.

Angus played the role of my philosophic conscience, implicitly reminding me to follow McKeon's admonition not to take the low easy road of counting the places where Santayana falls short, but to continue the search for consistency in a philosopher's system even if I find some of his conclusions unsatisfying.

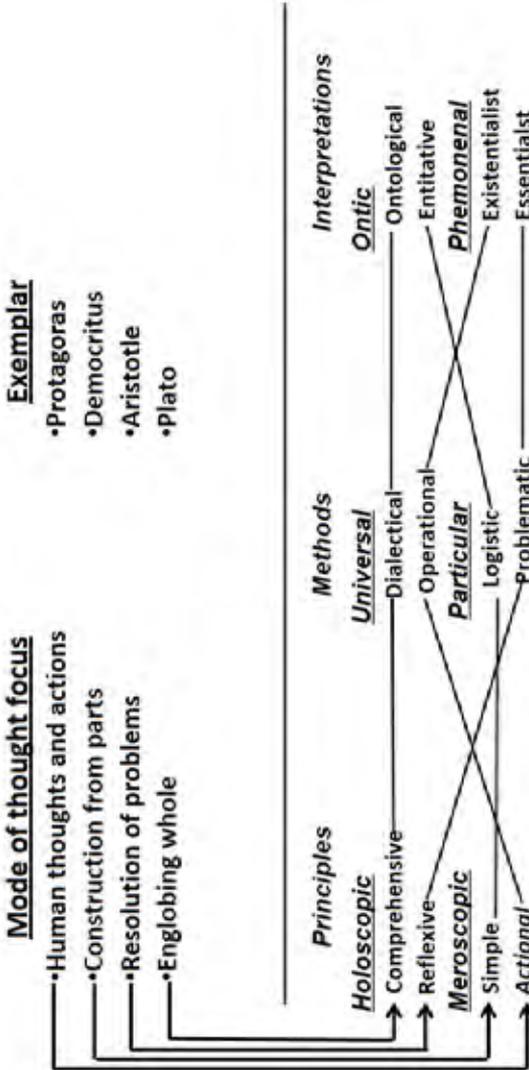
Toward the end of "The Secret of Aristotle," there is a selection that seems to re-emphasize — with Santayana's characteristic hyperbole — McKeon's, and surely also Kerr-Lawson's, interpretative principle. Santayana has the Stranger (Santayana himself) remark that if Avicenna is attributing a doctrine to Aristotle simply because he believes it to be true, then we have no need to consult Aristotle's works. "On the contrary," says Avicenna, for that very reason, we need to consult and to ponder them unceasingly. Why else read a philosopher? To count the places where his pen

has slipped? To note his inconsistencies? To haggle over his words and make his name a synonym for his limitations? Even if with some fleck or some crack, he is a mirror reflecting nature and truth, and for their sake only do we look into him; because without this mirror, in the dungeon in which we lie, we might be cut off from all sight of the heavens (DL 188–89).

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McKeon's Schema of Philosophic Semantics



Selections: things, thoughts, language and actions

Figure 1 Based on "Philosophic Semantics and Philosophic Inquiry" (McKeon, 1980)

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Santayana's Absolute Idealist: Timothy Sprigge

I

The word “irony” sometimes appears in discussions of Santayana’s philosophy. The first and best reason for this is that he belongs to the set of philosophers with a sense of humor. In his biography on Santayana, John McCormick puts this point categorically. “Some philosophers can bring a smile,” he tells us, “William James and Ludwig Wittgenstein among them. Some, like Nietzsche, terrify, although not for the reasons he thought he was terrifying. Only Santayana can make us laugh aloud.”¹ I am not so sure that Santayana has cornered the philosophy and humor market, but it is true that he can be witty and ironic where many others are only dry or grim. The term is also used in a more general, though less compelling, sense to characterize his apparently paradoxical philosophy, and to mistakenly suggest that he did not seriously mean many of the things he wrote. This is the idea of Santayana as the philosophical court jester: the anti-metaphysician who delineates ontological categories; the materialist who extols the spiritual life; the pessimist who charts the life of reason; and, of course, the American pragmatist who was neither an American nor a pragmatist.

For those who believe that much of Santayana’s philosophy is soaked in irony, yet grant that he is nothing if not a severe and sincere critic of idealism, it might seem only fitting that one of the contemporary philosophers he influenced the most, and one of his very best interpreters, also happens to be a full-blown pantheistic absolute idealist. Certainly, when I first learned of Timothy Sprigge’s work, it struck me as both odd and improbable, as well as slightly disconcerting, that the same individual who wrote the book *Santayana: An Examination of his Philosophy*, published in 1974, went on to write a book, published in 1983, entitled *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*.² After all, Santayana was no friend of idealism, so why was an absolute idealist friendly toward him? And what did it say about Santayana’s system of philosophy if one of his finest interpreters had apparently jumped ship?

The apparent oddness cannot be explained away by claiming that Sprigge is not a careful critic or sympathetic interpreter. His less “beautiful” but more “neatly tabulated” — to use his words — exposition of Santayana’s philosophy remains an excellent and, I believe, unequalled analytic guide through the main lines of Santayana’s epistemology, ontology, and moral philosophy.³ The book was also just right for its time since it gave Santayana a modicum of respect amongst the mass of analytic philosophers who dominate the field and normally would not give him a second thought. Nor can it be argued that Sprigge was influenced by Santayana’s

¹ John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1987), xiv.

² Timothy Sprigge, *Santayana: An Examination of his Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1974). Hereafter cited as *Santayana* followed by the page number; Timothy Sprigge, *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1983).

³ *Santayana*, xix.

philosophy in merely a negative way. That is, he did not undertake a rigorous study of Santayana's system and then simply reject it all in favor of absolute idealism. On the contrary, Sprigge regularly acknowledges Santayana's deep and positive influence on his thinking. He is explicit that many of the ideas in his philosophy, such as those about scepticism, time, consciousness, and final causes, to name a few, are either directly derived from or supported by Santayana's system.⁴ So we are left with the question: how is it that Santayana, staunch critic of idealism, had such a profound influence on a contemporary absolute idealist who is one of his finest interpreters?

Whatever irony there might seem to be in this state of affairs evaporates as soon as we begin to trace Sprigge's philosophical development and locate some of the guiding principles of his system. Such is my aim in what follows. Once done, then the case of Santayana's absolute idealism becomes less mysterious, even if residual questions about Santayana's influence on Sprigge's philosophical development remain.

Before moving on to these matters, it is helpful to note the bond Santayana and Sprigge shared with Spinoza's philosophy. Santayana was profoundly influenced by Spinoza's philosophy, despite the fact that Spinoza is a rationalist, monist, and pantheist and Santayana is not. Spinoza had a profound influence on Sprigge too; and we would expect their pantheistic idealist systems to have more in common with each other than with Santayana's atheistic, naturalistic philosophy. I don't attempt to establish this claim here, but it is nevertheless pertinent to our discussion. For one of the things that Spinoza and Sprigge have in common is a commitment to certain elements of rationalist epistemology. More specifically, and to put the matter in Santayana's terminology, both Spinoza and Sprigge hold that we possess the ability to know the literal truth about the realm of matter through metaphysics, rather than possessing only symbolic knowledge about matter through physics and the other branches of natural science. As we will see, this commitment is a fundamental reason why Sprigge rejected Santayana's naturalism and embraced absolute idealism.

II

Sprigge sums up his remarkable theory of existence in a single sentence of remarkable breadth:

I am led to the view that what the world really is is a single cosmic consciousness containing as its contents all manner of finite centres of experience which appear to each other (at least in the case of such centres as ourselves) as distributed in a space and time the notion of which we obtain from our own perceptual fields and span of temporal consciousness, but whose relations to each other are really a matter of how closely they are experienced together as its contents by the absolute consciousness.⁵

As this sentence indicates, Sprigge's theory of existence culminates in absolute idealism; but, for him, the taproot of absolute idealism is panpsychism. He defines panpsychism as the view that "physical nature is composed of individuals, each

⁴ See the various references to Santayana in: Timothy Sprigge, *The Importance of Subjectivity*, ed. Leemon B. McHenry (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

⁵ "Absolute Idealism," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 211.

of which is to some degree sentient.”⁶ It is true that he has reasons independent from panpsychism for accepting absolute idealism. Nevertheless, panpsychism is the main impetus for his absolute idealism. The purportedly amazing fact that everything is to some degree sentient energizes his broad form of utilitarianism and his work defending animal rights; and it is what inclines him toward deep ecology. It is also what allowed him to find spiritual comfort in a form of pantheism since, for him, “in so far as a metaphysical position makes plain the falsehood of physicalism, it serves the cause of religion in the best sense.”⁷

Sprigge’s death in 2007 prompted the following pithy but improbable account of how he became a panpsychist:

While on a walk in the Austrian countryside at the age of 20, he suddenly had an intuitive experience of panpsychism. Looking up at the clouds and wondering what they really were, he concluded they must be appearances of some form of consciousness.⁸

Now, whether or not Sprigge had a conversion experience involving clouds and thereby became a confirmed panpsychist, his autobiographical statements recount a more measured and studious philosophical development. He describes how, when he was a young man doing his national service in the British Army, and before he completed a Ph.D. under the supervision of A. J. Ayer, he arrived at the core ideas of his system:

[T]here were just two philosophical books in the camp library in Austria, first, Berkeley’s *Principles* together with his *Three Dialogues* and, second, Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles*. Puzzling out the challenge posed by these I concluded that the inner being of the whole of nature must be somehow psychical, for I accepted Berkeley’s arguments that the physical world of our ordinary experience can only exist for an observer and thought Spencer right that ordinary phenomena are the appearance of something mysterious “behind” them, called by him “the Unknowable”. However, I concluded that the Unknowable was some kind of felt life within things not so far from the feeling we have of our own bodies.⁹

So we see that Sprigge accepted panpsychism at an early stage in his philosophical development. He also informs us that it was only later, in the 1960s, that he began to read Santayana “earnestly” and, for a time, believed that Santayana had solved what in his estimation were the “biggest philosophical conundra,” namely, “how that which is most evidently present to consciousness in perception is related to the physical object perceived and, second, the relation between mind and brain or body.”¹⁰ Given such assertions, and there are others like them, it is fair to say that Sprigge’s general philosophical views, apart from his panpsychism, were temporarily

⁶ Timothy Sprigge, “Panpsychism,” *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward Craig (London: Routledge, 1998), 195.

⁷ Timothy Sprigge, *The God of Metaphysics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 473.

⁸ Jane O’Grady, “Timothy Sprigge,” *The Guardian*, Monday, September 3, 2007. Online at: <http://www.theguardian.com/news/2007/sep/04/guardianobituaries.booksobituaries>

⁹ “Orientations,” *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 3–4.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 4.

aligned with Santayana's. Further, whatever his later philosophical views, his abiding appreciation of Santayana's philosophy was securely established when he concluded that Santayana's philosophy was "the only naturalistic materialist view of the world that could possibly be true, being uniquely successful in its treatment of consciousness and value."¹¹

Bearing in mind Santayana's disdain for idealism, it might still seem a bit surprising that Sprigge was so strongly drawn to Santayana's thought. Perhaps he was encouraged by Santayana's assertion in *The Realm of Matter* that panpsychism is a "conceivable hypothesis" superior to other forms of idealism.¹² His later attempts to nudge Santayana in the direction of panpsychism by appealing to Santayana's notion of natural moments suggest that he may have regarded Santayana as some sort of wayward panpsychist with an appealing set of ontological categories ripe for idealist revision.¹³

However it was that Sprigge was able to look past Santayana's anti-idealism, he was soon to turn away for good from Santayana's naturalism. He reports that, in the late '60s, certain "aspects of Santayana's thought left [him] dissatisfied"; more specifically, he states that he read F. H. Bradley's *Appearance and Reality* and consequently "gradually became convinced that in essentials Bradley was right that reality consists in one cosmic mind of which all finite minds are fragments, while the inanimate physical world is the way a system of low-level minds, or at least streams of experience, appear to minds like the human."¹⁴ This statement points to another route to absolute idealism, one that stands apart from panpsychism. In fact, as Sprigge's written output attests, he has, as he puts it, "a battery of arguments" supporting his absolute idealism.¹⁵ Some of these have nothing to do with panpsychism. He insists that panpsychism and absolute idealism need not be paired together. As he states in his discussion of Bradley's argument from holistic relations to absolute idealism, "it might be that every experience could be related to every other without their all combining to constitute any kind of unitary overall experience, let alone one with the unity ascribed to the Absolute."¹⁶ And the history of philosophy is not without absolute idealists, such as Hegel, who were not also panpsychists. However, it is not in keeping with Sprigge's philosophy to separate the two doctrines since, as he sees it, "panpsychism points us onwards to absolute

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Santayana, *Realms of Being* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942), 375: one-volume edition which contains Santayana's four books: *The Realm of Essence* (1927); *The Realm of Matter* (1930); *The Realm of Truth* (1938); and *The Realm of Spirit* (1940). Hereafter cited as "RB" followed by the page number.

¹³ See Timothy Sprigge, "Santayana and Panpsychism," *Overheard in Seville* 2 (1984): 1–8. See also Angus Kerr-Lawson's rejoinder in the same issue: "Spirit's Primary Nature Is to Be Secondary," 9–14.

¹⁴ "What I Believe," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 7–8.

¹⁵ "Pantheism," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 224.

¹⁶ Timothy Sprigge, *James and Bradley: American Truth and British Reality* (Chicago and La Salle, IL: Open Court, 1993), 273–74.

idealism.”¹⁷ To get there all that an aspiring absolute idealist need do, as he writes in *American Truth and British Reality*, his comparative study of James and Bradley, is “combine the thesis [held by James] that the stuff of the universe is experience with [Bradley’s] holistic principle and that of universal relatedness, then we can move swiftly to a proof of the Absolute.”¹⁸ So while a philosopher might attempt to begin with an argument for absolute idealism and then later seek to integrate panpsychism, this approach does not reflect the flow of reasons in Sprigge’s system.

III

We have seen that prior to studying Santayana’s philosophy Sprigge accepted what turned out to be the impetus for his pantheistic absolute idealism. This impetus is panpsychism, a metaphysical position that he accepted in his youth and from which he never wavered. Although for a period of time his views were closely aligned with Santayana’s and his later writings preserve several aspects of Santayana’s philosophy, he was soon converted to absolute idealism. Accepting this much, one way of seeing why Sprigge parted ways with Santayana’s philosophy is to look at some of the reasons why he accepted panpsychism in the first place. More specifically, we can focus on those reasons that contrast most sharply with Santayana’s views. Doing so raises additional questions about the influence of Santayana on Sprigge, for a guiding principle that leads Sprigge to accept panpsychism is the thesis that we can possess literal knowledge about physical reality. Although Spinoza and other rationalist philosophers assume this thesis, it is anathema to Santayana. It is remarkable that a follower of Santayana would accept it since hardly any proposition is more contrary to the letter and spirit of his philosophy.

In the introduction to *The Realm of Matter*, Santayana tells us that “[t]heoretical scruples about the reality of matter are of two sorts: they may be skeptical . . . based on the fact that matter is no immediate datum of intuition; or they may be scientific . . . based on the suspicion that some particular idea of matter may be unfit or inadequate to express its true nature” (*RB* 185). With regard to the first sort of scruple, Santayana and Sprigge are in agreement. Sprigge gives full credit to Santayana’s treatment of scepticism and holds that it “carries a message which philosophers have still not learnt.”¹⁹ For both philosophers, knowledge rests on animal faith. It is in regard to the sort of second scruple that they disagree.

This concern is that “some special description of matter — say that of Democritus or that of Descartes — is inadequate or mistaken” (*RB* 186). Each “special description” of matter, such as the claim that it is composed of perfectly formed tiny spheres, or that its essence is extension, or sentience, is a claim to literal knowledge. Santayana was not at all troubled by the possibility that no special description is literally true. In his view, “all human notions of matter, even if not positively fabulous, must be wholly inadequate; otherwise the natural philosopher would be claiming a plenitude of miraculous illumination such as no prophet ever thought to

¹⁷ “Absolute Idealism,” *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 209.

¹⁸ *American Truth and British Reality*, 273.

¹⁹ *Santayana*, 218.

possess" (RB 186). As part of Sprigge's march toward absolute idealism, he argues at length that we cannot conceive of a physical world apart from: "(1) perspectival character; (2) gestalt organization; [and] (3) aesthetic quality."²⁰ Santayana would doubtless accept many of these arguments since he readily grants that "[h]uman ideas of matter are initially as various as human contacts with it, and as human sensations in its presence" and that "[t]hese ideas are sensuous and pictorial *from the beginning*" (RB 186 — emphasis added). However, for him, this fact does not point to panpsychism, or any other special description, but rather to an acceptance of symbolic knowledge with regard to physics and agnosticism about substrative matter.

Despite the fact that Sprigge states he was attracted to mysticism, he does not philosophize in the manner of a prophet. He is well aware that absolute idealism is a minority position and a wild sounding idea to most ears, but he does not attempt to elide criticism or objections. For instance, with regard to the question of how centers of sentience are compounded to form centers of consciousness that are then compounded to form the Absolute, Sprigge frankly admits "[t]here is no pretending on our part that this view of things is not a puzzling one, or that it makes it all light and clear."²¹ He is also sensitive to the fact that it is difficult to imagine, to put it mildly, why the Absolute "chose," in some sense of the word, to contemplate the existence of vast amounts of horrendous evils and the implacable suffering endured by many a soul. Similarly, he calls intentionality "the central puzzle of the self-transcendence of the mental" and a fundamental problem in philosophy — one that is particularly pressing for idealists.²² However, whatever mysteries there might be about intentionality or the "output" of thought, for Sprigge the veracity of its particular "inputs" is another matter. For he maintains that metaphysics, apart from natural science — indeed *opposed* to natural science — provides us with literal knowledge about what exists.

Employing Santayana's epistemic distinction, Sprigge argues that the "paradigm case of knowing literal truth, as opposed to pragmatic truth [or 'symbolic knowledge'], is the knowledge we have of someone else's state of mind to whatever extent we imagine it correctly."²³ Santayana of course allows that literary psychology can provide us with such knowledge, but for him it is the only situation in which one can credibly claim to have literal knowledge: when the facts we aim to know are what another like-minded person is thinking. Sprigge and Santayana also agree that science provides us increasingly abstract symbolic knowledge that helps us to flourish practically, but leaves the qualitative nature of matter opaque. The theoretical views of matter that science presents are far beyond what we can clearly imagine. However, in Sprigge's view, in order to fill out the abstract picture of reality presented by science, we must supplement the scientific descriptions of reality with the clear and distinct pictures arrived at through metaphysical inquiry. "The first thing," Sprigge states, "which distinguishes the metaphysical quest from others is

²⁰ *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*, 116.

²¹ *Ibid.* 263.

²² "The Distinctiveness of American Philosophy," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 97.

²³ "Absolute Idealism," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 194.

the concern that such truth as may be attained will be of a deeply literal kind, the second is that it is concerned with the discovery only of very general facts about reality.”²⁴ Insofar as Santayana rejects the idea that metaphysics is a distinct and legitimate branch of inquiry, one that is in some ways superior to natural science, he finds no reason to endorse one special description of physical reality over another. Although he allows that the panpsychist hypothesis is conceivable, inferring the actual from the conceivable is not good methodology. A naturalistic view about our cognitive abilities and our place in the universe requires that we content ourselves with agnosticism about physical reality “in the style of Kant and Herbert Spencer,” as Sprigge characterizes it — a proposal that he says he takes “very seriously” but that Santayana builds into his system.²⁵

Instead of opting for agnosticism, Sprigge argues that since the metaphysician is charged with the task of discovering literal truths about physical reality, agnosticism should be accepted only after exhausting “all attempts to find a more positive hypothesis as to the nature of noumenal reality.” However, once we set about this task, he tells us, we find that “the very idea of *being* is so bound up with that of *experience*, that it is doubtful if we can make genuine sense of the idea of something-we-know-not-what even existing without tacitly thinking of it as somehow experienced by itself.”²⁶ This statement, as Sprigge notes, reaffirms his general view that we can form no conception of physical reality that lacks experiential properties. With no other credible hypothesis for a literally true account of external reality on offer — Santayana would agree with his dismissals of naïve realism and phenomenalism — panpsychism is the preferred hypothesis, at least until it is discredited or an alternative is offered.

It is worth noting that Sprigge is open to the idea that we are able to form a positive conception of something that is essentially non-experiential and that has being but not existence. In defending his system he states “[i]t is unnecessary to claim that there are no other *items* at all, which we know as they are in themselves, and whose being is not phenomenal.”²⁷ He points to the set of natural numbers as an example of an unactualised, non-phenomenal reality that we can clearly think about. Santayana would agree with this, since for him the entire realm of essence, of which numbers are a part, has being but no existence and is not mind-dependent. Included within the realm are those essences that pertain to consciousness and phenomenal states, such as the essence of intentionality, but are not conscious or sentient in any way. It might be supposed that any ontology that admits *being* without consciousness offers some leverage for the claim that we can think about something *existing* without introducing sentience. However, Sprigge denies this move. What matters for him is that we cannot imagine what Bradley calls “pieces of existence” apart from sentience, not that we can mentally separate essence from existence.

It might seem rather arbitrary to say that while we can think of essences that do not have sentience as part of their character, we are unable to do the same

²⁴ *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*, 33.

²⁵ “Absolute Idealism,” *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 209.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *The Vindication of Absolute Idealism*, 109.

with that which exists and it is only this fact that counts. Sprigge's position seems rooted in the egotism and "cosmic impiety" that Santayana warned against. To be sure, it feels wrong to charge Sprigge, so sympathetic and sincere a thinker, with anything like egotism or cosmic impiety in his philosophizing. And it feels doubly so given that Sprigge himself cautions against cosmic impiety, stating "I agree with Santayana that those absolute idealist pantheists who seem to think that the world spirit fulfills itself almost exclusively in human life are guilty of 'cosmic impiety' towards the great natural scheme of things. No pantheism or idealism to which I could subscribe," he continues, "would play down the vastness of the non-human (or non-animal) cosmos."²⁸ Nevertheless, Sprigge's philosophy, from Santayana's perspective, appears anthropomorphic and an act of near divination since it takes the kind of reality we are most familiar with, conscious experience, and marks it as the very essence of the vast, non-human cosmos. It cuts reality down, and builds it up, if not to the human scale, to something we can fully comprehend. For we know the literal truth about existence and its riddle is half-solved. We need to look no further than the act of looking.²⁹

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²⁸ "Pantheism," *The Importance of Subjectivity*, 230.

²⁹ My sincere thanks go to Paul Forster and Andy Piker for comments on an earlier version of this paper, as well as to the participants at the 2013 meeting of the George Santayana Society in Baltimore, MD. My thanks also go to Emil Badici, Don Berkich, Jeff Glick, Andy Piker, and Stefan Sencerz for a helpful discussion of Sprigge's philosophy.

Henry Levinson's Santayana: Interpreter and Trickster

Henry Levinson was my mentor and my friend. For five years I had the pleasure of being his student at UNCG and learning about Santayana, James, and other philosophers before heading off to graduate school at Princeton, as he had.

Henry Levinson was the author of *Santayana, Pragmatism, and the Spiritual Life* (1992), along with numerous articles about Santayana (but also and earlier, about William James). He trained at Stanford under William Clebsch, where the inclination to think of an American aesthetic tradition of religious thought was instilled in him by his mentor. At Princeton he made “Henry-characteristic” contributions that helped shape a Princeton “school” of pragmatism.

Levinson's canon within the Santayana canon included: the essay “Religion of Disillusion” from *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*, the essay “Ultimate Religion,” and the book *Reason in Religion* from Santayana's *Life of Reason* series — but the highlight for Levinson was *Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies*, particularly the “Later Soliloquies” and in particular the essays “The World's a Stage,” “Masks,” “The Tragic Mask,” “The Comic Mask,” “Carnival,” and “Hermes the Interpreter.” These essays, along with the work on ritual by Victor Turner and the essays on religion and culture by Clifford Geertz, fairly well summed up Henry's vision of what religion was — at least after his earlier Clebsch and James focus.

Any interpretation of a writer selects what to emphasize as a key to interpreting all the rest of the work, but also what to soft-pedal. The parts of Santayana's corpus Levinson acknowledged as present but gracefully dismissed as unfortunate include Santayana's lack of taste for democracy, the neo-Platonic elements in his work, his easily misunderstood and idiosyncratic use of the word “essences” (an unfortunate choice of term for a philosopher Levinson portrayed, rightly I think, as a pragmatist) and the “anti-Hebraic” bent to his thought.

This description of Levinson's Santayana will first address Levinson's take on Santayana's naturalism, and then examine the framework Santayana provided for discussing religious naturalism. This framework focused on three aspects of religion and was used in *Reason in Religion*: let's call these three categories, first, “contingent piety”; second, “imaginative spirituality”; and last but definitely not least, “comic charity.” Then I'll turn to the question of what the legacy of Levinson's Santayana might be; certainly I have made use of these three categories in my own work (see Eddy 2003). For the pragmatist tradition, Santayana provides useful critical leverage on Dewey's progressive faith; and finally, on the interdisciplinary borderlands of scholarship, Levinson's Santayana highlights the kinship of a hermeneutical approach to religious studies in the humanities and cultural anthropology in the social sciences.

Santayana's Naturalism

What was important to Levinson in Santayana's religious naturalism was, on the one hand, its tough-mindedness and unflinching nerve to face the worst news nature had

to offer to humans, and on the other hand, Santayana's wistful fondness for religious language and thought, despite his atheism. Like Dewey, but unlike James, Santayana found no good reason to suppose that there were other than natural worlds: "[t]here is only one world, the natural world . . . but this world has a spiritual life possible in it, which looks not to another world but to the beauty and perfection that this world suggests, approaches, and misses" (RB 833).

Santayana's varieties of materialism and religious naturalism carved a place for the existence of human purposes or ideals, which he found entirely natural to human thinking. Through the use of reason, humans could imagine ideals and assess our powers to achieve them — but only if we disciplined ourselves not to confuse or conflate the two. The only way humans could make life bend closer toward their ideals was by using their own material powers; no disembodied spiritual powers could move matter on their own. By making "a modest inventory of our possessions and a just estimate of our powers" we can assess what resources we may have and what resources we lack: we can abandon "our illusions the better to attain our ideals" (IPR 250).

Santayana described his own "atheism, like that of Spinoza, [as] true piety towards the universe," which denied "only gods fashioned by men in their own image, to be servants of their human interests," but confessed that "even in this denial [he was] no rude iconoclast, but full of secret sympathy with the impulses of idolaters" (SELS 246).

Contingent Piety

Now I turn to the *Reason in Religion* triad: first, a contingent sense of piety. Levinson's Santayana displayed a variety of religious naturalism that emphasized the role chance and contingency played in the course of human events. Santayana said that "[p]iety . . . may be said to mean man's reverent attachment to the sources of his being and the steadying of his life by that attachment" (RR 179). "In other words," as I have written elsewhere,

we live, not by the guidance of Providence, or the indifference of natural selection in its turn, but by the watchful nurture of parents, friends, teachers, civil governments, cultures, associations, and institutions (and for only as long as they *do* nurture.) We are rooted to and dependent upon luck of the draw, ecosystems, laws of gravity, and particular pieces of land that sustain us and to which our relationship might someday change. Thanks to these particular and not eternally guaranteed attachments, we get by and flourish physically and spiritually in whatever ways we can. (Eddy 2003, 29)

By focusing on contingency, Santayana, the pragmatist, accepts rather than dismisses the role of chance. To de-emphasize chance, or even the possibility of cataclysm, is to ignore what Santayana emphasized. Santayana saw no guarantees for human purposes to take comfort in: "It remains for time to show" he writes, "whether what survives in a given man has fortune on its side and contains the inward elements of vitality" (IPR 237).

As I've previously noted, "Undefeated by the lack of control over change such a universe presents to the person living within it, Santayana finds ways to live with the necessity" (Eddy 2003, 29). He urged us "to represent man with his intelligence as the product and the captive of an irrational engine called the universe" (IPR 241–

42). “What is there,” he challenges, “so dreadful in mutability? What so intolerable in ultimate ignorance? We know what we need to know, and things last, perhaps, as long as they deserve to last” (IPR 242). Santayana means that “[h]owever daunting the environment may seem and however hostile to our purposes . . . the world does sustain, at least for the moment, a vast vegetating mass of living existence of which humans are a part” (Eddy 2003, 29).

Santayana puts the role of chance events in the natural world front and center in his religious philosophy. He writes that like other living things on this earth, humans also “have found foothold and room to grow, . . . not by virtue of an alleged intentional protection of Providence, but by . . . watchful art and exceptional good fortune” (IPR 246).

But why should humans acknowledge their dependence upon and be grateful to a natural world that seems to frustrate their goals at every turn? Why not? asks Santayana; “Great is this organism of mud and fire, terrible this vast, painful, glorious experiment. Why should we not look on the universe with piety? Is it not our substance? Are we made of other clay?” (RR 191).

All life, according to Santayana, comes “rooted like a vegetable to one point in space and time” (RR 185–86):

these are the natural conditions that bring human beings all the goods that they have. Such graces as come our way stem from our contingent attachments to the world as living and finite beings, and this inherent natural contingency ought to inform our understanding of human reason. (Eddy 2003, 29)

According to Santayana, even the filial relationship

is based on the incidental and irrational fact that the one has this particular man for a father, and the other that particular man for a son. Yet, considering the animal basis of human life, an attachment resting on that circumstance is a necessary and rational attachment. (RR 184)

Importantly for Levinson the pragmatist, contingency, in Santayana’s philosophy, is one of the premises of reasonableness, not its catastrophic demise.

“This consciousness that the human spirit is derived and responsible,” claims Santayana, “that all its functions are heritages and trusts, involves a sentiment of gratitude and duty which we may call piety” (RR 179). The universe offers us no guarantees to sustain our lives and ideals, but it does offer a chance, which will have to be good enough. Santayana, in Levinson’s treatment, had an eye and an ear not only for what happened to happen but also for what might have been, but didn’t turn out that way. He was as appreciative of the world “of unheard melodies and uncreated worlds” (SELS 144) as he was tough-minded about illusory religious thinking.

Imagination-driven Spirituality

The second category of Santayana’s triadic schema in *Reason in Religion* is imagination-driven spirituality. “We are a part of the blind energy behind Nature,” writes Santayana,

but by virtue of that energy we impose our purposes on the part of Nature which we constitute or control. We can turn from the stupefying contemplation of an alien universe to the building of our own house, knowing that, alien as it is, that universe

has chanced to blow its energy also into our will and to allow itself to be partially dominated by our intelligence. (IPR 245)

Building our own house means constructing ways to feel at home in the world. The natural world here has a darker spiritual hue than it did for Santayana's spiritual predecessor Emerson, whose "higher optimism" Santayana thought was impaired "by a kind of philosophic Nature-worship" (IPR 247). Santayana's view of nature was not pantheistic, but rather sacramental. Nature itself is not generally divine except in fleeting glimpses and intimations. It suggests the divine to us, helps us to visualize the ways in which natural things can, at times and places, in bits and pieces, fits and starts, lend support to our ideals. Transcendental religious naturalism would amount to wishful thinking, according to Santayana, but he writes, "There is no safety in lies. . . . Let the worst of the truth appear. . . . That Nature is immense, that her laws are mechanical, that the existence and well-being of man upon earth are, from the point of view of the universe, an indifferent accident" (IPR 148)—all this Santayana could accommodate without divinizing nature. The spirituality that Levinson's Santayana embraces is epitomized in the "Ultimate Religion" essay as a disciplined exercise of disillusion and imagination:

I will therefore ask you today, provisionally, for an hour, and without prejudice to your ulterior reasonable convictions, to imagine the truth to be as unfavourable as possible to your desires and as contrary as possible to your natural presumptions; so that the spirit in each of us may be drawn away from its accidental home and subjected to an utter denudation and supreme trial. . . . imagine . . . that nature may be but imperfectly formed in the bosom of chaos, and that reason in us may be imperfectly adapted to the understanding of nature. Then, having hazarded no favourite postulates and invoked no cosmic forces pledged to support our aspirations, we may all quietly observe what we find; and whatever harmonies may then appear to subsist between our spirits and the nature of things will be free gifts to us and, so far as they go, unchallengeable possessions. (UR 339)

Crucially, imagination was a central virtue requiring cultivation for Santayana — central to allowing selves to cast off their illusions and their hopes that wishful thinking made it so.

Comic Charity

But imagination was also a cardinal virtue for the practice of comic charity. Santayana's third and final move toward religious closure was comic charity. Santayana is far too comic in his thinking to assume that human purposes or any living being's purposes are likely to win out at the end of the day. What made self-disillusionment possible was to take oneself less seriously, to see oneself stripped of personal and social pretensions. With a disciplined and practiced comic sensibility, the dead serious horror of imagining life in a hostile universe, from the perspective of comedy rather than tragedy, allows us to see ourselves as the person who just slipped on the banana peel — we can be the pretentious butt of our own joke. Why should we humans pretend to be different from anything else in the universe? It hurts a bit at first, but we all get a good laugh in the end because with a trained capacity for comic charity "everybody acknowledges himself beaten and deceived, yet is the happier for the unexpected posture of affairs" (SELS 141).

Levinson's own wry wit served him well as a tool for coping with physical challenge. For many of his students and friends he opened up and illuminated a spiritual place for humor. Henry was a playful and imaginative scholar of religion, even at points where belief eluded him. Like Hermes, he interpreted and translated the religious worlds of others to his students with delight.

Hermes, his model, shows us "the innocence of the things we hated and the clearness of the things we frowned on or denied" (SELS 263); he interprets us to one another. Playing this trickster/interpreter role was the spiritual and moral center of Levinson's academic work. When Levinson channeled Jonathan Edwards' description of salvation and true virtue in his classroom, we can see Santayana's Hermes at work: "I merely endeavour to interpret, as sympathetically and imaginatively as I can, the religion and poetry already familiar to us; I interpret them, of course, on their better side, not as childish science, but as subtle creations of hope, tenderness, and ignorance" (SELS 254). Through Santayana, Levinson saw religious studies as an interpretive undertaking.¹

Santayana had urged "charity . . . to the lives and desires of others . . . no less inevitable than our own" (UR 341). Imaginative skills made interpreting religion a kind of a game — a playful ritual. Levinson loved the Santayana (and the James) who valued other-centeredness — who valued human religious traditions of charity that (at least in theory) made room for apprehending human goods other than one's own or other than those goods that happened to enjoy cultural dominance in a given time and place. What did a scholar of religion need? "The disciplined ability to let one's imagination *exceed* one's belief" (Levinson 196). Imagination as virtue gave reason breathing room and kept it sane. Imagination was just as vital a portion of intellect and intelligence as more traditional forms of reason. Reason, claimed Santayana, is "the passion for consistency and order . . . just as prone as the other passions to overstep the modesty of nature and to regard its own aims as alone important. . . . Reason cannot stand alone . . . unless irrational impulses and fancies are kept alive, the life of reason collapses for sheer emptiness" (SELS 137). For Santayana, life should not be a strain; it should be graceful, it should be festive — a joyful carnival that makes people more conversant with each other. Festive faith was a hard sell to a culturally Protestant audience. Santayana described what it felt like to be culturally Catholic in Emerson Hall at Mardi Gras time:

It is not worthwhile playing with people who don't relish games. The subtlest part of the pleasure is being blindfolded on purpose and feeling lost when you know you are not lost. . . . When you are fundamentally sane it is pleasant to play the madman and to yield to the eloquence of an imagined life; and it is intolerable to have the game spoiled by some heavy-footed person who constantly reminds you of the discovered facts and will not lend himself to the spirit of your fiction, which is the deepest part of your own spirit. . . . (SELS 129)

Nor is this innocent art of innocent make-believe forbidden in the Decalogue, although Bible-reading Anglo-Saxondom might seem to think so. On the contrary, the Bible and the Decalogue are themselves instances of it. . . . (SELS 138)

¹ See Henry Samuel Levinson, "Religious Criticism," *The Journal of Religion*. 64 (1984): 37–53.

Fancy is playful and may be misleading to those who try to take it for literal fact; but literalness is impossible in any utterance of spirit, and if it were possible it would be deadly. (SELS 138–39)

Alas, many of Santayana's colleagues never could see the good in carnivalesque practice. They could not understand a festive attitude in the face of evil, suffering, and death. Again Santayana reminds himself:

Argument is not persuasive to madmen; but they can be won over by gentler courses to a gradual docility to the truth. One of these gentler courses is this: to remember that madness is human, that dreams have their springs in the depths of human nature and of human experience . . . the illusion they cause may be kindly and even gloriously dispelled by showing what the solid truth was which they expressed allegorically. . . . We must not kill the mind, as some rationalists do, in trying to cure it. (SELS 251)

Santayana's (and Levinson's) Legacy

For Levinson, Santayana's status as a philosopher on the peripheries of American Protestant culture was key. Santayana, Levinson emphasized, offered useful immanent criticism of American culture. What does this residence on the cultural margins of American religious thought offer as intellectual legacy, in Levinson's opinion?

First, for pragmatists, Santayana provides critical leverage on Dewey's progressivist religious naturalism. Our intelligence — our intellectual capacities — in all probability, have holes and blind spots in them; better to recognize and emphasize the fallibility of our instrumental use of reason. If Dewey foregrounded human instrumental reason bringing forth good and progress in the natural world, Santayana, on the other hand, emphasized the natural background — the unfeeling universe of matter in motion in which humans are but a part, though they build their homes there (DNM 614). Santayana protested against a wholly prudential and instrumental ethics.

Second, Santayana left religious naturalists a language and schematic structure for philosophical use. The framework of piety, spirituality, and the comic is a structure I've used fruitfully in my own work.² "Natural piety" is becoming an accepted category in religious studies at present. Perhaps the rest of the framework put forward in *Reason in Religion* will also be adopted eventually. Comic charity will always be a hard sell; on this point,

the near future may actually produce [a scientific philosophy]: not that its terms will be less human and symbolical than those to which we are accustomed, but that they may hug more closely the true movement and the calculable order of nature. . . . No doubt the popularizers of science will turn its language into a revelation, and its images into idols. . . . (SELS 253)

warned Santayana presciently.

Third, Santayana provided the map for discovering the value and kinship of religious studies with cultural anthropology. No one has yet deeply investigated the neglected tradition of religious philosophy traceable at least from William James, through Santayana and Kenneth Burke, and compared it to a parallel strand of

² Eddy 2003.

ethnography/culture criticism picked up by Ruth Benedict and followed through by Clifford Geertz and Renato Rosaldo. I hope to do work that will introduce these interdisciplinary cousins someday.

I'll give Hermes, the interpreter and trickster, the last word on Henry Levinson's interpretation of Santayana and its relation to Henry's own philosophical calling:

I have always loved [Hermes] above the other gods. . . . There is a certain roguery in him, and the habit of winking at mischief. (SELS 259)

The lies of Hermes are jests; they represent things as they might have been, and serve to show what a strange accident the truth is. (SELS 259–60)

[Hermes] interprets us to the gods, and they accept us; he interprets us to one another, and we perceive that the foreigner, too, spoke a plain language. (SELS 263–64)

[F]or living men, whose feet must move forward whilst their eyes see only backward, he interprets the past to the future, for its guidance and ornament. Often, too, he bears news to his father and brothers in Olympus, concerning any joyful or beautiful thing that is done on earth, lest they should despise or forget it. In that fair inventory and chronicle of happiness let my love of him be remembered. (SELS 264)

Insert "Henry" for each instance in which "Hermes" appears in this passage, and take away the gods-talk. Thus would this student remember Henry the trickster as well.

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David Dilworth on Santayana

To read or listen to David Dilworth riff¹ on the great philosophers of the past is something of a tremendously challenging tutorship. I would like to think that I can provide a useful perspective, if for no other reason than that I was once an undergraduate student of his — not just that, twenty years ago I was a very green philosophy major who made a real pedagogical connection with him and discovered my love of American philosophy through his inspiring lectures. It would not be overstating things to say that I owe my life occupation to Professor Dilworth, and this opportunity to discuss his scholarship on Santayana is a tremendous privilege.

So, apologies in advance for injecting some of these assessments with personal associations, but they are included for honest reasons; from that early connection I would like to think that I obtained a kind of leg-up appreciating his uniquely brilliant angle of vision. On first acquaintance his perspective for some can be dizzying and perhaps overwhelming. Dilworth speaks with substantive appreciation of a staggering array of major figures, and traditions from across the spectrum of arts and letters spanning Western and Eastern traditions. Meantime too, his reliance at times on highly technical conceptual vocabulary — even sometimes in idle conversation — is apt to confound. And yet, I believe that Dilworth is that very rare instance of a scholar who can rise to a level of insight proportionate to the genius possessed by the subjects under analysis. Moreover, and this is the feature of his perspective that I hope comes through here, he is at heart a poet, a lover of the music of language in a sense that is astonishing in a scholar so adept at the same time at thinking in terms of the great philosophic systems.²

Now the task at hand is to convey something of Dilworth's contribution to our understanding of Santayana. This is no straightforward task. When I first became acquainted with Professor Dilworth, Santayana held a place of privilege in his historical understanding that I discern has declined over the years. Or at any rate, it might be fairer to say that over the years Peirce has figured more centrally in Dilworth's historical understanding, with Santayana coming increasingly to seem to him more derivative than previously estimated.³ To make the task manageable here I shall focus primarily on the analysis of Santayana that Dilworth provides in his 1989 book *Philosophy in World Perspective* (Yale University Press). In this remarkable book Dilworth makes use of a comparative hermeneutic that is of great interest, or ought to be so, to anyone hoping to situate Santayana in "world perspective." Once this task is accomplished I shall conclude with some observations about the perspective of Santayana that seems to have developed in Dilworth's more recent philosophic reflections, and in the meantime too I shall consider his trenchant critique of contemporary academic scholarship.

¹ "Riff" for some reason is an apt characterization.

² Wallace Stevens and William James receive equal bill of appreciative consideration in Dilworth's scholarly assessments as Kant, Aristotle, and Peirce.

³ I shall reserve room for this point in my concluding remarks. For Dilworth's most recent statements on Santayana, see his "Mediterranean Aestheticism, Epicurean Materialism" in *Santayana at 150: International Interpretations* (Lexington Books, 2014), 53–87.

In my undergraduate days, from which I best remember his American philosophy survey, and a focused seminar in which we read among many other Santayana works *The Life of Reason* in its entirety, Dilworth's vocabulary was peppered with Santayanian notions. Santayana's ontology seemed in Dilworth's able hands to be everywhere linked with world philosophies — we spoke of Santayana's categories of *spirit* and *matter* in the same vein as the Hindu notions of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*; we considered the commensurability of Santayana's naturalism with the Greek notion of *phusis*; Santayana's unique materialism was contextualized with the works of other exceptional modern and semi-contemporary philosophers, including Spinoza, Nietzsche, and Freud; Peirce's categories of *firstness*, *secondness*, and *thirdness* were linked with Santayana's ontological classifications of *essence*, *matter/truth*, and *spirit*.⁴ Dilworth would present these remarkable associations with such conceptual clarity they seemed convincing even when one was woefully out of one's depth of understanding.

It is worth mentioning in this relation, a striking characteristic of Dilworth's scholarly approach, his very language and even person seem to become animated by the specific conceptual character of a thinker or work under consideration. It is as though in order to understand a great work or genius of the past Dilworth comes to embody the figure's thinking, to literally permit his thought to inhabit his being for a time, and to venture out for a time *as if* the world encountered is the one envisioned by the figure under consideration. I have met more than a few philosophy scholars, amongst whom I include myself, for whom such a method of reading and interpreting would be impossible, or if attempted, full of peril (and probably of comedic possibilities). It strikes me that what makes Dilworth an able "animator" of genius is his possession of certain, what I might call for lack of a better phrase, "features of interpretive literacy"; features that exist separately and singly in the perspectives of many other fine scholars, but almost never all at once in a single scholarly perspective. It departs from present purposes to specify the "features" to which I refer here, so I shall just trust that they come through as I develop the portrait of Dilworth's scholarly perspective.

But in the meantime, it must be acknowledged: surrendering oneself to the philosophic perspective of another is risky business. The sway of a philosophic thinker is nothing with which to play around. In my estimation Dilworth appears able to submit himself to thinkers without insidious conversion, or risk of divisive orthodoxy because his submission is in the spirit of appreciator of excellent, beautiful things. In fact, I think this manner of encountering world-important philosophies may account for the link between Dilworth and Santayana.⁵ His animation of expressions of genius such as Santayana's is celebratory, and appreciative; in

⁴ As to the other famous classical American figures — James, Dewey, and Royce — though Dilworth was judicious and at moments appreciative, they were more often than not treated as foils, not uncommonly with the help of Santayana's well-known criticisms.

⁵ The influence a given poetic work or piece of music has on a person compared to the influence of ideologies, be they theoretical or theological, is of profound importance to consider. The former is a concrete relation born of piety, love, passion and inner emotional connection, the latter of abstract intellectual loyalty, principle, or other outward-certified sources of connection. In his assessments of Santayana and the other "world" philosophers among whom he is grouped, Dilworth seems to have taken this lesson to heart.

particular, his endeavor to place Santayana into “world perspective” yields results that are edifying and salutary.

One should not be surprised to learn that Dilworth began his academic career as a classics major, mentored by first-rate scholars through Homer, Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides, and “half the Platonic corpus,” which in turn led to his study of the Pre-Socratics and eventually, of course, Aristotle. I remain in awe of Dilworth’s amplificatory understanding of the traditions of Plato and Aristotle, the keen eye he has for appropriations and misappropriations of their texts by modern and contemporary philosophers. The further fact must not go without mention that he spent a substantial amount of time during his early scholarship studying Eastern philosophic paradigms, centrally the Chinese and Japanese traditions. Given this truly *worldly* background it is not surprising Dilworth has been drawn to the thought of Santayana. Santayana is without argument the most worldly, cosmopolitan of American philosophers. Moreover, as Dilworth told me several times in a way that suggested to me my own scholarly path, one can put to service Santayana’s system as a kind of “prism” through which the entire history of philosophy can be seen to be refracted.

An excellent sense of Dilworth’s understanding of Santayana can be gained from reviewing *Philosophy in World Perspective*. The work presents a “comparative hermeneutic of major theories” that was greatly influenced by Dilworth’s colleague Walter Watson. Santayana figures prominently in the book, occupying a place of importance not simply in the American tradition, but in the scheme of world-important philosophies: “Santayana,” he wrote, “transcended the chauvinistic claims of the American tradition. Contrary to his own philosophic protestations, he produced a text for all ages and cultures by realizing an essential possibility of thought” (139).

Watson’s “pioneering work” in the architectonics of meaning seems to have been influential on the conception of Santayana that Dilworth puts forth in the book. Dilworth deploys a four-fold categorical scheme he describes as “transcendental principles”: “They are transcendental because they function as semantic factors, or causes of philosophical meaning” (24–25). This way of conceiving the meaning of texts is proposed in stark opposition to a fashionable form of “deconstruction” prevailing in the academic culture of Dilworth’s university, a methodology he railed against frequently. This particular feature of Dilworth’s approach is of such importance, and connects so directly with Dilworth’s own “poetic” propensities, that I must provide the following lengthy quote from *Philosophy in World Perspective* to illustrate:

A good text is always internally consistent, revealing some unified grasp of life in its various forms of expression. For example, the Zen master shouts “Ho!” in a simultaneous assertion, enactment, and aesthetic exhibition of the ego-shattering truth of the Buddhist teaching. . . . By contrast, we regard as a bad text one whose semantic forms are not conceptually consistent or sincerely lived; we consider characters who change their identities in midscript to be bad.

But in the realm of philosophy we are well beyond all that. We expect and find a high degree of internal consistency in the semantic forms of the great texts. Indeed,

these texts have achieved such consummate unions of form and content that it is impossible to imagine them otherwise.

The burden of disproof clearly falls upon those who practice a hermeneutic of ambiguation. Granted, for instance, that it is possible to play the deconstructionist game — to put play back into play, in Derrida's phrase. The danger is that this kind of disingenuous interpretive practice may distort more important philosophical goals. In particular, it may impair the greater interpretive sensibilities that civilization requires of us. (18, 19)

Heavy-hitting stuff here: a hermeneutic of ambiguation, or "deconstruction" as it was once fashionable to say, is *disingenuous* and *may impair the greater interpretive sensibilities that civilization requires of us*. The latter requirement, I take Dilworth to be suggesting, comes at least in part from the unique character of lasting texts. Such texts testify, whether anyone says so or not, to remarkable heights of human achievement; they do so, he argues, in virtue of their "consummate unions of form and content." What civilization "requires" of scholars worthy of the name is to *say how this is so*; to express, ostensibly in terms accessible to precedence, what is originally expressed without precedent.

These points are dense, and need further exploring. As I shall try to establish, they have a direct bearing on the conception of Santayana bequeathed from Dilworth. Dilworth specifies that lasting texts are "inexhaustibly rich yet perfectly definite" (159); they are "semantically complete" and "represent enduring forms of mental culture" (157). The puzzling thing is the immense diversity of such texts. How does it happen that lasting works can achieve such realized degrees of universality and visionary truth, yet repel one another semantically? Indeed, when a great text comes to displace another, it is never due to some single claim or set of claims being "trumped" (if that is the issue, the work is not worthy of the designation "world"-text); instead, the text seems to re-set the very terms of the conversation. Clearly there is at play here no mere "accumulation of truth" or similar such progression in the history of philosophy.

To provide an account of this, Dilworth proposes, in part inspired by the work of Watson, "archic variables," fundamental hermeneutic principles that provide an explicit classificatory profile of world philosophies, one that explains their paradoxical character (of realizing unprecedented truths while semantically displacing other realizations of unprecedented truth). The hermeneutic principles, Dilworth proposes, help one see how "The texts of Plato, Confucius, Lao Tzu, Aristotle, Spinoza, Kant, or Peirce are comparable to the violin or clarinet, two musical instruments perfected at a certain point of history and apparently incapable of any further technical improvement" (157–58). The point of invoking hermeneutic principles, as I understand the endeavor, is to make explicit the characteristics of a world-text that make for its elusive yet abiding character, to establish analytic interpretive tools that enable one to appreciate the *objectively meaningful* character of a given world-text.

The four categories Dilworth puts forth as placing into *world perspective* major (especially Western) thinkers are: *authorial perspective*, *ontological focus*, *method of articulation*, and *grounding principle*. Dilworth indicates that the four general categories are reinterpretations of Aristotle's four causes, and contain in themselves (as we shall consider) four possible categories of consideration. This

four-by-four interpretive matrix, Dilworth makes clear, is directly culled from the work of his colleague Watson. These “hermeneutic controls” offer the possibility of framing “256 possibilities of textual formations” (158). I shall identify the matrix of American philosophers Dilworth provides and use its classifications as a basis for elaborating the meaning of its key conceptions; this will both convey what is at stake generally in the interpretive matrix approach, and make explicit Dilworth’s conception of Santayana. Dilworth categorizes the Classical American figures along the following lines:

Principles of meaning <hr/> Thinker	<i>Authorial Perspective</i>	<i>Ontological Focus</i>	<i>Method of Articulation</i>	<i>Grounding Principle</i>
Peirce	OBJECTIVE	ESSENTIALIST	SYNOPTIC	REFLEXIVE
James	PERSONAL	EXISTENTIALIST	SYNOPTIC	CREATIVE
Dewey	DISCIPLINARY	ESSENTIALIST	SYNOPTIC	CREATIVE
Royce	DIAPHANIC	ESSENTIALIST	DIALECTICAL	REFLEXIVE
Santayana	OBJECTIVE	SUBSTRATIVE	LOGISTIC	ELEMENTAL

Allow me just to summarize the meaning of Santayana’s classification by comparison and contrast with the other figures’ classifications. Santayana’s perspective, like that of Peirce, is “objective” in that it is dispassionate, denying supreme authority to subjectivity and guarding against anthropocentric conceptions. The perspective differs from that of the compared figures in the following ways: the “diaphanic” perspective of Royce is one of revelatory insight, the standard perspective of religious texts; the “disciplinary” perspective of Dewey is typically first-person plural and takes as its audience an “ideal community of like-minded readers” (28); the “personal” perspective of James, unsurprisingly for familiar readers, is “self-referent, idiocentric,” typically first-person singular or plural.

Santayana’s “substrative” ontological focus de-privileges the “surface life of existential consciousness” and appeals to a more fundamental, invisible (material) “level of real causality and motion” (ibid.). This substrative focus privileges nature over experience as a causal, explanatory factor. James is the lone “existentialist” in that his ontological focus privileges experience, more particularly the “acts and affairs of human experience” as they make their “appearance in the stream of an individual or epochal (societal) consciousness” (ibid.). By contrast, the “essentialist” focus of Peirce, Dewey, and Royce privileges neither nature nor experience but instead appeals to “ideal forms and general, continuous, or enduring traits of nature and experience” (28–29). (Interestingly, apart from the three Americans’ texts

Dilworth identifies as “essentialist” in focus, he associates, among others, the Old Testament, Confucian and Neo-Confucian texts, and those of Xenophanes, Socrates/Plato, and Aristotle.)

Santayana’s method of articulation is identified as “logistic” for its procedural reduction of “complexes to simples” (29) (in the case of Santayana, “essences”) in order to mechanically construct an orderly picture of the connections of things. This method is alleged to differ from the “synoptic” method of Peirce, James, and Dewey in that the latter pursue holism, endeavoring to understand how parts and wholes hang together. Royce is identified as the lone “dialectician,” pursuing as he does a “logic of higher agreement” (29), a synthetic unity or reconciliation of opposites.

Finally, the “elemental” grounding principle is said to be Santayana’s adherence to a “principle of sameness, identity,” namely, of course, his notion of “essence,” which is a semantic principle enabling a “recycling” of forms that meaningfully grounds one’s understanding of reality. (Matter, we recall, is for Santayana the source of all form, but all ways to matter come through essence.) By contrast, the “creative” grounding principle of James and Dewey is a principle of “renewal,” one in which some “new” form continually replaces the old such that the principle of difference triumphs over that of sameness as a ground of reality. Differing from both of these, the “reflexive” grounding principle of Peirce and Royce is indicative of their reliance on the notion of the “self-completion of a thought.” Privileging neither sameness/identity nor difference as a grounding principle, these philosophers instead emphasize the autonomous action of thought.

Now there is much in this taxonomy that must of necessity be left out of consideration here. I will therefore restrict my concluding remarks to points that bear on the virtues of Dilworth’s greater scholarly contributions, and suggest the need for us to consider how future Santayana scholars might strive to heed his enduring example. Much more of what I might convey about Dilworth’s scholarship is challenged by the fact that it is grounded in Peircean methodological principles of which I confess I have only a remedial understanding. The prestige of Peirce among the Classical figures in Dilworth’s estimation, even in 1989, is fairly clear from what he says in elaboration of his hermeneutic categorizations: “Of the many post-Kantian philosophers, Peirce alone formulated a universal semiology that permits limitless generalizations and continuities of ideas. In this way, he suggests the possibility of our comparative hermeneutic” (137). The remark here is in perfect continuity with the development of Dilworth’s later scholarship up to the present, in which Peirce’s thinking has figured more and more crucially. Commensurate with this trend, Dilworth’s understanding of Santayana has been refined. I shall turn briefly now to an example of that refinement, then turn in conclusion to a recent piece of Dilworth’s that echoes his early indictments of contemporary academic scholarship. The latter has implications for much that is of relevance to the present Society’s considerations for future scholarly engagements.

In “Mediterranean Aestheticism, Epicurean Materialism,” Dilworth is quite specific in his characterizations of Santayana’s thinking, and it is clear that at least in part that specificity is due to the confident use he now makes of Peirce’s “metaphysical categories [which] provide independent tools with which to illumine Santayana’s Epicureanism” (54). Notwithstanding this contextualization of

Santayana's thought by way of Peirce, Dilworth has the following high praise for the originality of our Epicurean:

Santayana, even more than Peirce, should be especially appreciated for developing a style of philosophizing that turned the attention of his contemporary philosophical confreres back to the resources involved in reprising the great philosophical paradigms of Greece and Rome. In that regard his methodic contribution can be considered peerless even now. (55)

Santayana's having no peer in the respect suggested here by Dilworth can certainly be verified by the reception of his *Life of Reason*, the book Dewey highly praised in his 1907 review, and that James Gouinlock justifiably praises in the critical edition introduction: "[*The Life of Reason*] ranks as one of the greatest works in modern philosophical naturalism."⁶ *The Life of Reason* is at the very least as original a synthesis of Aristotelean, Darwinian, and Hegelian strains of philosophic inquiry as Dewey's work of the same period.

So, Santayana's early period influence being, as Dilworth notes, unquestioned, the always difficult question involves what one is to make of his later period work. Here, Dilworth's understanding of Santayana is of particular aid because it accounts for the ontological turn Santayana makes, with its emphasis upon the life of spirit that became for so many of those early-influenced naturalists a sticking point. Dilworth goes on to diagnose:

[L]et me speculatively submit, Santayana not only consistently re-framed the Epicurean paradigm, he also consciously drew upon the dyadic metaphysical hermeneutics of Schopenhauer. Though it requires a careful comparative study, I suggest that Santayana to some extent consciously reenacted Schopenhauer's semiosis of Will and Representation in his doctrine of Matter and Spirit, while also reprising Schopenhauer's aesthetic and moral doctrines of "denial of the will." (56)

Dilworth's speculative suggestions here may be used to great advantage. The Epicurean paradigm of Santayana accounts, we may safely say, for the point of view that was such an attraction to figures like John Dewey, Frederick Woodbridge, Irwin Edman, and John Herman Randall, especially in Santayana's earlier period of "naturalistic idealism."⁷ As Dilworth puts it, "Santayana's serious legacy for us can be determined to consist in his having expressed and having lived out into extreme old age a form of naturalistic saintliness associated with the classical Epicurean paradigm. (His predilection for Spinoza's sense of blessedness would be a variation on that.)" (57–58). This side of Santayana's overall philosophic personality may well have been that admitting of his most friendly reception, not only from like-minded readers, but interested persons, poets, and intellectuals who flocked to him to the end of his days. Alignment with the Epicurean paradigm may alone suggest, in other words, what enthusiasts of a secular-humanist, naturalistic bent — indeed, even, especially pragmatists who, not unlike J. S. Mill, owe something to Epicureanism — have always found attractive about Santayana's thinking.

⁶ Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. remarks: "This work became almost canonical for naturalists such as Frederick Woodbridge, Irwin Edman, John Randall . . . Morris R. Cohen, and Corliss Lamont" (*American National Biography Online*: <http://www.anb.org/articles/20/20-00898.html>).

⁷ "Naturalistic idealism" is a characterization of Santayana's perspective in the *Life of Reason* provided by John Dewey. I think that characterization is on the mark.

Yet, as Dilworth helps us see, this leaves out another important side of Santayana's philosophic personality that better explains his mature ontological system of philosophy, a philosophic turn that contributed significantly to a cooling of the earlier attachments and interests of aforementioned naturalist luminaries. Perhaps it is not exaggerating to say that Santayana's "reprising" of Schopenhauer's aesthetic and moral doctrines of "denial of the will" accounts for much beyond Santayana's writings, including his long solitary life, and retirement from the world. Just how deeply into Santayana's tender way of thinking did Schopenhauer penetrate? How seriously might Santayana have connected with Schopenhauer's remarkable assertion: "True salvation, deliverance from life and suffering, cannot even be imagined without complete denial of the will"?⁸ The following sentiment from a long poem Santayana wrote to Herbert Lyman during his early days of study in Germany displays fairly clearly the esteem he reserved for Schopenhauer (and Spinoza):

On Homer and Lucretius nature lays
With all her strength the seal of her authority;
Cervantes and Molière for the world's ways
Over all life's observers take priority
And Goethe and poor Byron paint our days
And by their failings show our inferiority,
While in Spinoza and in Schopenhauer
Is found the picture of the ruling power.⁹

Schopenhauer and Spinoza deserve recognition among those offering big picture visions of things as having established no less than the "picture of the ruling power." Powerful praise, for sure.

This connection is well summarized by Dilworth in his summary assessments:

[I]n net result, I am inclined to think, Santayana produced a rare form of ludic [playful] pessimism. Historically considered, he espoused an Epicurean worldview while consciously joining forces with Schopenhauer in validating an "unworldly" domain of "liberated" — that is, "disillusioned" — aesthetic and moral-religious experience that, metaphorically speaking, partakes, if only temporarily, in the care-free life of the gods. (69)

It is the playful character of Santayana's pessimism that differentiates him from Schopenhauer, perhaps being balanced by the erstwhile Epicureanism.

These categorical assessments of Dilworth's carry with them the certification of many, many years of imbibing big picture thinkers and visions of things. I conclude now with an abiding critique of contemporary scholarship that Dilworth has presented, one that I think is important to bring into connection with our work as a Society, in relation especially to the greater scholarly endeavors of American philosophers.

Dilworth's most recent piece that is to be published in *Cognitio*, the Brazilian journal published in connection with the Center for Pragmatism Studies in São Paulo, is sub-titled "The Provenance of Peirce's Categories in Friedrich von Schiller."

⁸ Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Representation: Volume I*, trans. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1969), 397.

⁹ George Santayana, Letter to Herbert Lyman, 9 November 1886, in *The Letters of George Santayana: Book One [1868]–1909*, ed. William G. Holzberger. MIT Press, 2001, 32.

Dilworth makes remarks in this piece that intersect with an earlier point under review. He writes: “Trends in the contemporary academy that either *nationalize* or *professionalize* philosophy in narrow-gauge scholastic — hide-bound cultural or technocratic — trajectories are nominalistic. They fall short of Peirce’s theory of inquiry with its emphasis on the inter-national and inter-generational character of heuristic discovery, which he conceived indeed as extending beyond the present geological age.” As steeped in the Peircean framework as Dilworth is, he remains concerned to expose the shortcomings of contemporary scholarly trends. To the extent that “deconstructionist” fashions have subsided, they appear from Dilworth’s point of view to persist in “hide-bound,” nominalistic approaches.

Is it far-fetched to say that the nominalism Dilworth rightly observes to be thriving in today’s academic scholarship is only a re-conception of the “hermeneutics of ambiguation” that prevailed in earlier days? A *hermeneutic of ambiguation* such as was once explicitly affirmed in deconstructionist interpretive practices can certainly not be said to be thriving in today’s academic scholarship, but are we prepared to consider whether other extant interpretive practices, even ones that disavow “ambiguation” as a stated, explicit aim, fall prey to Dilworth’s charge of nominalism?¹⁰

The issue here, as Dilworth suggests in both versions of this criticism, is one of interpretive ingenuousness and keeping within the parameters of “heuristic discovery.” As Dilworth asserts, no less than *civilization* requires of scholars that they take interpretive responsibility, holding themselves accountable for the critical task of refracting brilliant creations of the substantial past. With regard to Santayana, we owe much to Dilworth for fulfilling this interpretive task, for his ingenuous effort to “take Santayana at his word,” and to help us see better the *nature* of that “word.”

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¹⁰ Just to take one example that is of relevance to American philosophic scholarship, Rorty’s “liberal ironist” and the controversies the concept has generated among Deweyan pragmatists seems to me to illustrate the uneasy conscience within American philosophy about its own loyalties to nominalism, if not overtly to a *hermeneutic of ambiguation*. Or why, if the Deweyan social reformer is sure-footedly standing afield of any hermeneutics of ambiguation (as is overtly espoused by Rorty), would contemporary scholars like Ralph Sleeper and Larry Hickman spend so much energy distinguishing him from Rorty’s “liberal ironist.” See Larry Hickman, *Philosophical Tools for Technological Culture: Putting Pragmatism to Work* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001), 99.

Santayana's Way of Life and Ours

Originally presented at the 23rd World Congress of Philosophy in Athens, Greece, August 2013, where the conference theme was "Philosophy as Inquiry and Way of Life."

Rising at seven, breakfast in the room — tea, a soft-boiled egg, and toast. At the desk by eight, writing till noon, then a bath, dressed by one o'clock — black suit and tie, felt hat. Lunch at the Roma, or some such restaurant, alone or with a friend or other visitor — real food at last and wine, good simple wine. In the afternoon, weather permitting, a walk to the Pincio — a good decent walk — to sit in the garden and read the newspaper or part of a book, broken off so as to be easily carried. Back at the hotel, by five, writing letters until dinner at six in the room. Perhaps taking in an evening concert, or more usually reading or writing letters for the rest of the evening. In bed by 10:30 or 11.

This was Santayana's way of life when he lived at the Bristol Hostel in Rome in the thirties: determined, but without stress, solitary, but not detached — a life conducive to both focused contemplation and desultory ambling. It was more or less his manner of living, wherever he was, after leaving the United States in 1912.

What did he write about? Essence, Matter, Truth, and Spirit — his four Realms of Being. The uncertainty of knowledge, but the belief that all existence has a material basis. That consciousness or spirit is a fundamentally different form or existence from the matter that gives birth to it. Interests and importance emerge along with perception, feelings, and thought. But spirit has interests other than the animal interests of survival and reproduction. Delight in the play of light and sound — the eternal essences that make up the data of perception — and beyond them, the imagination that, once it is freed from the obligation to tell the truth about the world, may be directed at divining the truths about the soul. Imaginative sympathy is the key to both self-understanding and charitable empathy toward others — seeking the good in what they love. Spirit, which starts out as a servant of the world, becomes its guest when the world supports its true vocation: contemplation of the eternal.

Santayana was no other-worldly mystic. "I frankly cleave to the Greeks," he wrote, "not to the Indians, and I aspire to be a rational animal rather than a pure spirit."¹⁷ By this, he meant he preferred a civilized, orderly life that freed the mind to follow its own inclinations, tempered by good company and laughter.

I do not mean to suggest that his life was without difficulty. Santayana was brought to the United States, not knowing English, at the age of eight, and although he came to be one of the masters of English prose, he always felt like a foreigner in the land that educated him and gave him his career. He studied in Europe and traveled there almost every year once he started teaching. He grew tired of teaching and professorial life and left both Harvard and America as soon he could manage it financially. As the event that made that possible — his mother's death — approached, Santayana went to his mother's house and burned all his letters to her, finding them impersonal and uninformative. He did not wait for his mother to die from her demencing illness, but left her by steamship, never to return, in care of his sister, Josephine, who had not, as he wrote, "learned the modern scientific way

of leaving invalides in the hands of doctors and nurses, and living one's own life uninterruptedly."²

In his autobiography, Santayana wrote that, having moved to Europe and his "official career" having "happily come to an end," a "spirit, the spirit in a stray individual, was settling its accounts with the universe."³ Yet, as spirit is always the efflorescence of a living creature, accounts are never fully settled. In the summer of 1914, he left his base in Paris for what was to be a short visit to England. But, while there, the Great War started, and he remained in England until the war ended in 1918. In a letter to Bertrand Russell, he ridiculed the cut-off lives that the young men who died in the war might have led, saying they "would grow older . . . and then they would be good for nothing."⁴ Nevertheless, he wrote haunting poems that wailed at the deaths of young men he actually knew.

The war over, he resumed living on the continent. All his roads led to Rome, where he eventually settled.⁵ Mussolini quelled the post-war chaos and Santayana enjoyed relative peace and the freedom to write about what he cared to, to enjoy what he liked to enjoy, and to play the role of the laughing philosopher, who loved gossip and irony. World War II was a disruption. Food was in short supply and he lost both weight and health. Yet, in the first years of the war, he completed both *The Realm of Spirit*, the last of the four volumes of *The Realms of Being*, and his reply to his critics for the second volume of *The Library of Living Philosophers*. He could only get limited funds from his nephew in America, so he could no longer live in hotels. Proposed journeys to Spain or Switzerland proved impossible or too daunting. In October 1941, he moved to a nursing home on a hill near the Colosseum run by the Little Sisters of Mary, an Irish order also known as the Blue Nuns.

In January, 1943, he wrote to a nephew in Spain — one of the few places he could send mail and many letters didn't get through — that in spite of the "terrible" war,

My health is very good, much better than when I lived in hotels. . . . I take my walk every afternoon I have never been more at peace or more happy.⁶

That summer, when the Allies began bombing Rome, he wrote:

Naturally the mind suffers when it hears talk of so many horrors, but at my age, knowing that I am useless, I find solace in my books and my philosophy, as though it were a matter of ancient history.⁷

Rome became undefended and the Germans occupied it. During the horrific events depicted in Rossellini's film *Open City* and while the Nazis were rounding up Roman Jews for the death camps, Santayana wrote his autobiography and *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*.

Well-suited to express Santayana's way of life is a philosophy in which the discrete units of both cognitive intuition and the natural world are timeless essences. While ignorant armies clashed by night, Santayana could live in the eternal. Santayana's term for whatever in the body produces spirit — whatever retains memory and engenders emotion, thought, and action — was 'the psyche.' Violent clashes and even ordinary disagreements, whether personal, political, or religious, are the result of conflict among psyches bred under different circumstances and expressing wildly different desires and hopes. Conflict often arises when the spirit these psyches produce is ignorant of what it should hope for and what would fulfill

its yearnings. Settling accounts with the world — finding what in the world you can live in harmony with — is the way toward peace and happiness. Of course, spiritual life is never perfect. I imagine that even on one of those peaceful afternoons in the park in Rome some bird may have shat on the book Santayana was reading. If there is any poetic justice, it would have been by Louis-Ferdinand Céline or one of the other anti-Semitic writers Santayana liked to read while writing *The Realm of Spirit*.

If I suggest something rotten, I mean it without malice toward Santayana. His own teaching promotes the virtue of charity — meaning, in part, understanding of where someone comes from. That should remind us that the anti-Semitism Santayana expressed in letters and marginalia was a product of his times, his upbringing, and the culture of Spain and Boston and not directed with hatred toward any individuals.⁸

It is something more fundamental that troubles me. Another aspect of charity is the appreciation of what someone else values even if the value is not one you share. Those of us who incline toward an engaged life can recognize that Santayana's philosophy expresses a common yearning: the urge to get away from it all, to rise above the fray, to regard even a troubling series of events as a drama playing out — as a moment in which an eternal trope comes to life. While the bombs were dropping on Rome, what choice did he have, other than to despair?

So Santayana's stance is understandable — it shows a desire not to be disturbed by troubling things you can't control, so that in narrowing your concerns you can broaden your horizons. But is that the fundamental goal of life? What if you think that spirit without engagement — without problems to resolve — is an impoverished spirit? What if endeavoring to improve life is more important than mere understanding or enjoyment?

So I ask: What philosophy best suits an engaged life? This question underlies the well-known dispute between Santayana and John Dewey that emerged in the mid-1920s, although it had been brewing for nearly twenty years. If you are concerned about social progress, solving problems, and generally making life better, do you need to adopt a metaphysics, like Dewey's, grounded in events rather than eternal essences? Rather than answer that question directly, let us consider further the notion of charity and see whether Santayana's idea of charity encompasses all we would want.

For Santayana, charity is a key part of spiritual life. It broadens one's understanding of spirit by endeavoring to be sympathetic to all forms of desire and to think through them to discover what different people fundamentally want. But charity should be more than just sympathy with grand overriding passions or imaginative understanding of how people come to seek what they seek. This seems to limit charity's reach and to be at odds with the more usual sense of the word 'charity' as encompassing endeavors to relieve human suffering; it is at odds with the idea that the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness means not liberty to do whatever you want, but the obligation to foster the requirements of life, liberty, and happiness for as many as possible. Guided by this sense of charity, perhaps politicians, for example, would realize that promoting austerity to solve economic problems not only fails to work economically but demoralizes and punishes people who have been struggling to do things right. In the summer of 2013, the new Pope Francis told the youth of Brazil — and implicitly its political leaders — to recognize that "Jesus offers us something bigger than the World Cup" and exhorted them to "overcome apathy" and "be the agents of change."⁹

Santayana's philosophy recognized the limitations of the charitable imagination: the multitude of human aspirations make them irreconcilable. I must admit that I get many solicitation letters from worthwhile causes that I just drop into the recycling basket, because there are more painfully needful efforts than I can reasonably focus on and because I am part of the 99% who have rather limited resources to spread around.

As the charitable imagination has its limits, we should recognize that there are limits to our own sympathy for Santayana's way of life and thinking. We would have to stretch our charity so far that it becomes either frustrated or ironic. Earlier I indicated there was something disturbing about Santayana's anti-Semitism. I meant that as a warning about Santayana — a signal that you shouldn't buy into everything that underlies a philosophic system or that its author expresses, no matter how much you appreciate the structure and scope of his work. But I did not mean to suggest that Santayana's casual anti-Semitism had anything to do with the atrocities that such sentiments led to. Santayana was well aware that philosophic positions seemingly remote from everyday life could have harsh consequences. In his book *Egotism in German Philosophy* (1915), Santayana wrote that even a well-intentioned complex philosophic system, like Kant's, could serve as "a perfect frame for fanaticism."¹⁰ While professing to write about German philosophy with "care and . . . sympathy,"¹¹ Santayana wrote that the "religious tyranny" of German philosophy "has its martyrs now by the million, and its victims among unbelievers are even more numerous."¹²

Santayana was one of the first philosophers to recognize that metaphysical choices have moral implications. He says, in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, that he chose the realms of being as his fundamental ontological categories for their moral value. Many of us who do not share Santayana's moral and political outlook find that his four realms of being provide a useful vocabulary in which to express philosophic issues, but we must remain alert to the possibility that, with insufficient sensitivity, Santayana's frame of reference can lead to cavalier indifference toward poverty and hunger; lack of education; gender, racial, and other inequalities; childhood misery and death; disease; climate change and unsustainability — most of which are remediable problems — even indifference to the death of your own family members. "Abandon all hope when you enter here" reads the sign over the entrance to hell in Dante's *Inferno*. In the "Don Juan in Hell" sequence in Shaw's *Man and Superman*, the Devil says that hope is nuisance because it's a form of moral obligation. But that's the devil speaking. Without hope, life seems futile. If Santayana's philosophy means that hope is only for ideals in the imagination rather than things to work for in the world, then his philosophy leaves out an essential element in the lives we lead today.

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Notes

1. RB 65.
2. Letters, GS to Strong, 13 September 1911, 2:52.

3. MS 181.
4. Letters, GS to Bertrand Russell, December 1917, 2:303.
5. Cayetano Estébanez describes in detail Santayana's affinity for Italian, and especially Roman, culture in "Poetic Italy in the Works of Santayana," in Flamm et alia, editors, *George Santayana at 150* (Lexington Books, 2014), 111–24.
6. Letters, GS to José Sastre González, 27 January 1943, 7:81. This is my translation of Santayana's Spanish.
7. Letters, GS To José Sastre González, 13 August 1943, 7:84–85.
8. Santayana's anti-Semitism is discussed by both John McCormick in *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1987), and Daniel Pinkas in *Santayana et l'Amérique du Bon Ton* (Métropolis, 2003).
9. Apostolic Journey of Pope Francis to Brazil, Address of the Holy Father, Vigil with Young People (Rio de Janeiro, 27 July 2013). Text from page of the Vatican Radio website, [http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/07/28/pope_francis:_wyd_prayer_vigil_\(full_text\)/en1-714565](http://en.radiovaticana.va/news/2013/07/28/pope_francis:_wyd_prayer_vigil_(full_text)/en1-714565) (retrieved 14 March 2014).
10. EGP 62.
11. EGP ("New Preface" 1939) xvii.
12. EGP 83.

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- MS – *The Middle Span*. Volume 2 of *Persons and Places*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945.
- RB – *Realms of Being*, one volume edition. Originally published by Charles Scribner's Sons, 1942. Reprinted by Cooper Square Publishers Inc., 1972.

Santayana's Gliding Towards Disengagement: 1912–1914

Originally presented at the 23rd World Congress of Philosophy in Athens, Greece, August 2013, where the conference theme was “Philosophy as Inquiry and Way of Life.”

Two passages of Santayana's own words, one from *Three Philosophical Poets* (1910), and the other from an intensely personal letter to John Francis Stanley Russell (Bertrand's older brother) of 29 July 1910, alert us to his state of mind facing the choice of living a life of reflection within cultural parameters and what he actually thought of both that life and the social world he found himself a part of. In his letter to Russell he writes:

It would be incredible, if madness and ignorance had not, since the world began, been the chief impulses that keep men talking in public. . . . But what is the use of talking about anything, however patent the fact may be, when what guides events, and people's opinions, is not justice or the facts in the case, but a certain party instinct, or sense for the direction in which they would wish things to move?¹

And in the staid prose of *Three Philosophical Poets* he claims:

In philosophy itself investigation and reasoning are only preparatory and servile parts, means to an end. They terminate in insight, or what in the noblest sense of the word may be called *theory*; . . . — a steady contemplation of all things in their order and worth. Such contemplation is imaginative. No one can reach it who has not enlarged his mind and tamed his heart.²

This was 1910. This is less than two years before Santayana's eventual maturation into a non-attached, solitary, independent thinker, who blended both thought and life into a coherent whole. We could call it the melding of theory and praxis. We could also understand it as an instantiation of what John Lachs has recently conceptualized as *stoic pragmatism*, in his book with that very same title, but it is *pragmatic* in a highly personal sense. We could also understand it as an instantiation of choosing *philosophy as a way of life*, as an example in recent history of a thinker living life in the mode of what Pierre Hadot has coined *philosophy as a way of life* — a unity of thought and everyday existence.

By 1910 Santayana was in a regressive mode, in a gradual retrenchment moving away from a primary involvement with the *shared* immediate world, from any social ties that could rattle his world to the point of distraction — any daily *obligation*. There were definitely more considerations than merely a disdain for the educated dialogues and chatter of a nation's/culture's citizenry (as intimated in the first

¹George Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana, Book Two, 1910–1920*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2002), 16.

²George Santayana, *Three Philosophical Poets* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1910), 11.

quote), active in his psyche. He had given the original six lectures that made up *Three Philosophical Poets* at Columbia University in February, and then in Madison at the University of Wisconsin in April. He spent the summer, per the usual, in Europe. He was back teaching at Harvard in October. In January 1911, his last full-time year in the States, two letters, one to Bertrand Russell, and one to Charles Augustus Strong, give voice to his intent of breaking away from both Harvard and the U.S. To Russell, on 15 January, he writes of planning “to turn my face resolutely in the opposite direction”³ (*i.e.*, Europe). To Strong he writes of “making a sort of farewell tour of the country,”⁴ which he did in the summer of 1911, traveling by train to California. By January 1912, he was packing off his books to Strong in Paris. He sailed from New York on 23 January, destination Plymouth, England. He would never return. The long, winding road towards a liberated philosophical life, free of any institutional obligations and/or loyalties, had commenced.

What can we project as his state-of-being at this time? What constituted this philosophical life? Understanding the ancient Greek term *theoros* as denoting an insular spectator engaged in viewing and comprehending what surrounds a human being, is helpful in Santayana’s case. With his own private savings and family-regulated *capital*, Santayana was economically independent. His life was vulnerable to no one or to no thing, except perhaps indirectly to the international banking system and the stability of nation-state regularities and traffic. World War I, as World War II would a little more than twenty years later do, grounded both his movements and his access (for the most part) to international means of communication and general contact with the outside world. But he did not *answer* to them personally; only by their collapse and dysfunctionality could they adversely affect him — which in fact they did do twice in his own lifetime. Santayana had finally attained what he had always aspired to, ever since his Instructor days at Harvard after finishing his doctorate, and that was becoming an anchorless student-at-large, an embodied mind at liberty to engage the world when and how he was inclined to.

In a striking coincidence of time interval, it was during a two-year period, from 2 August 1912, through 2 August 1914, that I am claiming focused Santayana’s efforts on how he would live as a *theoros*, independently negotiating the world in a new manner, for whatever time remained in his life. Let us recall here that in August 1912 Santayana was forty-eight years of age — not a young man by any stretch. He was anticipating this renascent break away from institutions and commitments, having a clear schematic design as to how he was going to go about it. After sharing with George Herbert Palmer, perhaps the most learned and cultivated individual member of Harvard’s Philosophy Department, his three projects that he wanted to actualize, he opened up on more personal matters:

With these projects (and some half-finished poetical plays left over from my younger days) I shall have enough to occupy my mind. For the rest, where I shall live, etc, it is a matter of less consequence. . . . It seems as if with advancing years one’s nature asserts itself more markedly against one’s circumstances; and I never felt so much a foreigner in New England as I did of late.⁵

³George Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana, Book Two, 1910–1920*, 28.

⁴Ibid., 30.

⁵Ibid., 94.

We know that Santayana had completed five *dialogues* of his eventual *Dialogues in Limbo* in 1913, even though the first edition was not published until 1925 with ten of them. If we assume that the dialogue "Normal Madness" was one of those, we can interpret the following words from that dialogue as reflective of his state of mind, spoken through the mouthpiece of Democritus: "For by sanity I understand assurance and peace in being what one is, and in becoming what one must become; so that the void and the atoms, unruffled and ever ready, are eminently sane. . . . Of life madness is an inseparable and sometimes a predominant part: every living body is mad in so far as it is inwardly disposed to permanence when things about it are unstable, or is inwardly disposed to change when, the circumstances being stable, there is no occasion for changing."⁶ Santayana fled Harvard in nothing less than a search for his sanity, in search of the person he sensed himself intrinsically to be, and what we can be certain of was that being first and foremost a professor in Cambridge (Harvard) could not have filled that inner chasm, his missing *être*. Europe would incrementally, but surely, furnish that being.

From August 1912 to the year's conclusion, Santayana was in Paris and Italy, primarily Rome. Santayana had been linked to Harvard, in one way or another, for almost exactly thirty years. In a certain sense, he was anchorless now, back amidst the continent of his birth, and discernibly living out his latent desire to *manifest* life as an unencumbered, 'semi-official' graduate student and scholar. Financial considerations were not overlooked. Economically, he knew that he could afford to break with Harvard's plentiful coffers. Clearly, he was on the way to becoming an unattached *theoros*. On 30 November, he wrote to Elizabeth Stephens Fish Potter, Warwick Potter's mother, from Florence:

As you know, my situation at Harvard has never been to my liking altogether, and latterly much less so, because I began to be tired of teaching and too old for the society of young people, which is the only sort I found tolerable there. . . . My brother assures me that I shall have a little income that more than supplies my wants. . . . Here, on the other hand, everything is alluring. . . . Intellectually, I have quite enough on hand and in mind, to employ all my energies for years.⁷

In what is perhaps his most straightforward depiction of his own *philosophical* position that he expressed during these two years, Santayana shares in a letter to Horace Kallen of 7 April, 1913, what can be understood as his foundational *philosophical* position:

And this leads me to make a slight complaint against you for having said that I am an "epiphenomenalist" — I don't complain of your calling me a "pragmatist" because I know that it is mere piety on your part. But the title of epiphenomenalist is better deserved, and I have only this objection to it: that it is based (like the new realism) on idealistic prejudices and presuppositions. . . . Therefore I am no epiphenomenalist, but a naturalist pure and simple, recognizing a material world, not a phenomenon but a substance, and a mental life struck off from it in its operation, like a spark from the flint and steel, having no other substance than that material world.⁸

⁶George Santayana *Dialogues in Limbo* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1925), 40–41.

⁷George Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana, Book Two, 1910–1920*, 108–9.

⁸*Ibid.*, 127.

In the same letter Santayana touches on what can be understood as the expanding, inclusive, leveling *Western* advancement of industrial-technological-political civilization. Santayana was never, throughout his entire life, averse to it. He never represented the positions of a dreamy-eyed throwback to an earlier age or epoch. He was simply aware of its limitations, and what kinds of relationships and dynamics that it did *spread*. Madison, Wisconsin, embodied the similar political and societal correlations as did Boston, as did Paris. Some were merely older and historically complex. He writes of it as follows, and this is reflective of how easily he was capable of adapting to almost anywhere in the Western world, although he much preferred historically rich and compelling Europe:

What you say about yourself at Madison is intelligible, but I think you overrate the superiority of the spirit you might find in other places. The whole world is very Western now, and clerical, industrial, or political preoccupations are dominant everywhere. One must tread the wine-press alone. . . . I like Wisconsin so much that I want you to like it.⁹

And tread alone he did — literally, for the rest of his life. Yet intellectual companionship and amity were appreciated by Santayana. Apart from his long-enduring friendships with Charles Augustus Strong (and later Daniel Cory), he enjoyed knowing that his thinking was treated seriously by others, and that his intellectual efforts were studied and discussed. An example of this was his reaction to learning that the *Harvard Monthly* had dedicated an entire issue in April 1913 to his *Winds of Doctrine*: “What is most gratifying to me is to see that I have so many friends among the young wits at Harvard, that they read and talk over my books, and that some of them remember their old teacher with affection.”¹⁰ This would be the case throughout the entirety of his life. He was studied, discussed, praised and criticized. Yet his individual path in life was a solitary and disengaged one, wrapped in enigma, living as a *theoros* and practitioner of life, the “laughing philosopher” as Horace Kallen branded him, who erected an edifice of privacy that could only after his death be penetrated. As he wrote to his sister Susana from Oxford on 1 October 1913: “However, in the end every philosopher has to walk alone.”¹¹

For the next eleven months until the outbreak of WWI in August 1914, Santayana moved from England to Spain (with four months in Seville), finally to Paris in June and July, arriving back in London at the end of July. What we can discern in his letters, to be sure, are moments of inspired liberation (from institutions, from obligations) along with expressions of honest uncertainty as to his future and the future of the world as he was then a part of. He was working on the four books of *Realms of Being*, and the dialogues. Yet he still was sufficiently self-aware that he was undergoing a new beginning, experiencing new *horizons* of possibility, even though structured by the very lenses through which he had always viewed the life-world: “One of the fatalities of my life,” he writes on 10 November 1913, “has always been that the people with whom I agree frighten me, and I frighten those with whom I naturally sympathize. No: that isn’t it exactly, because I don’t sympathize

⁹ *Ibid.*, 128.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 130–31.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 145.

with the old foguys as they now are, nor with any stale convention; but I love the sentiment and impulse out of which these now stale conventions arose, far better than the impulse and sentiment out of which springs the rebellion against them."¹² In late December he wrote to Polly Winslow from Ávila:

I am very very cold in this southern climate, and am going farther south still (very illogically) to see if that will mend matters. I am going to a romantic thriftless old city called Seville, to see if (having past fifty) I can still write poetry and fall in love. You don't think that is very likely, I know, and can almost see you laughing at me. The fact is I don't think it very likely myself; but it is sometimes amusing to expose oneself to the dangers from which one is perfectly safe.¹³

How serious we choose to accept these autobiographical claims by Santayana I suppose winds up being a subjective question. One month earlier, he had written to Strong something similar from Cambridge:

The clouds, the river, the fields, the colleges intoxicate me — as if they were not an old old story: I want to write verses or fall in love, but alas! I can't manage either. What is the matter? Do you suppose that there could have been a sentimentalist frozen in me all these years by America and Professordom, which it has taken two years of sunshine and pleasant influences to begin to thaw out?¹⁴

What we can affirm, in all fairness, is that there were *marked* changes of mental orientation and projection on Santayana's part during these two years. From his own personal testimony we do have written records of these evolutionary changes. Perhaps none is so revelatory as his letter dated 21 January 1914 to Oliver Wendell Holmes from Seville:

I am not a great philosopher, but in my separation from the world of action, and now even from the academic world (for I have retired from teaching) I feel that I can distinguish the normal and inevitable lines of human opinion from the modish flourishes that overlay it. This is my solid standing-ground outside and around special systems. . . . I am now a wanderer, almost without impedimenta of any sort. . . .¹⁵

As a way of practical existence to accompany his theoretical disengagement from the pressing affairs of human beings, Santayana matched the intellectual uncoupling with the physical one of shedding all shades of involvement in *attachment* to *things*. In a letter to Mary Potter Bush (Wendell T. Bush's wife) of 9 June 1914, he gives voice to this disengagement:

As to happiness I find that it is of two kinds, one the kind we dream of when we are young and vague in our desires, and the other the kind we find possible and suitable to our capacities when we begin to be old and wise. I venture to say that I have attained this second kind of happiness more nearly than most people, and I shouldn't now exchange it for the other more ideal sort even if it were possible. The secret of it, in my case, lies in the very old but forgotten maxim of not possessing things nor being

¹² *Ibid.*, 155.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 163.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 160–61.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 166.

possessed by them, more than is absolutely inevitable. On that principle, I have made my peace with things, and find my life very acceptable.¹⁶

Santayana's hard-won state of relative distance from unwanted and irritating influences developed consistently throughout these two years, from August 1912 to August 1914. With the hindsight we have today from a twenty-first century perspective looking back, we know that Santayana would have roughly forty more years of life to evolve and experience alterations of outlook and emphasis, and that this period was merely two years on that continuum of time. But as I have tried to point out, these were crucial, vital years during which Santayana formed a pattern of cosmopolitan, independent existence and thinking that clearly demarcated a *before* and an *after*. The *before* was the United States, his professorship, his students, and the *after* a new life in Europe (including England), no institutional ties, freedom of teaching, and economic independence that allowed him to live in a semi-retired state of writing and publishing. Though WWI's outbreak in August 1914 isolated him in England for nearly five years, the years served as a great discipline to both his writing and newly found manner of practicing the philosophical life as he saw it and grew to live it. As Richard Shusterman has maintained in his *Practising Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life*, one need not demarcate in an absolutist way "between philosophy as theory and as artful living,"¹⁷ — in other words between intellectual accomplishment and scholarship and everyday, ordinary living. They can conceivably coexist in a being who thrives in and by writing to aid him/her expand his mental and physical parameters. Such was the case with Santayana, especially once he disengaged from academia, secured a small reserve for funding, found an environment that nourished his psyche, and braved the philosophical life that he had chosen.

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¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 181.

¹⁷ Richard Shusterman, *Practising Philosophy: Pragmatism and the Philosophical Life* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 3.

Richard Rorty's Misleading Use of Santayana

Richard Rorty (1931–2007) was perhaps the leading American exponent of a way of thinking known to professors in philosophy and English departments by a variety of terms such as “textualism,” “anti-foundationalism,” and “post-structuralism,” but probably better known to the general public as “postmodernism.” One of the key tenets of this school has been the thesis that works of philosophy are in contemporary culture best understood as works of literature. The traditional notion that philosophies should be judged by the degree to which their ideas make it possible to comprehend the nature of reality is rejected as obsolete. Instead, it is urged, philosophical works should be valued by the same standards used, according to this school, by literary critics to evaluate works of literature. Correspondence to truth is irrelevant, since literary works are avowedly fictional — what counts is the ability to seize the imagination, to arouse interest, to expand one’s consciousness, or, as Rorty writes in “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre,” to put one “in touch with the present limits of the human imagination” (479). From this point of view, philosophy is equivalent to literature, from which it follows that discussion of philosophical works is equivalent to literary criticism. It is of course a fruitless task to distinguish philosophy *tout court* from discussion of philosophical works, but that is not a problem since, in the postmodernist view, it is a mistake in any case to attempt to distinguish literature itself from literary criticism.

Rorty differentiated himself from other postmodernists by presenting his postmodernism not as a set of ideas imported from the Continent through translations of Heidegger, Derrida, or Foucault, but instead as a truly homegrown American philosophy, an up-to-date version of the pragmatism of William James and, especially, John Dewey. Rorty also repeatedly suggested that postmodernist ideas and attitudes were in some deep way adumbrated in the work of George Santayana. In the book that brought him to general attention, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, and in key essays such as “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre” and “Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture,” Rorty employs Santayana as a sort of character witness in defense of his postmodernist critique of traditional conceptions about the relations between philosophy and literature. In *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* he does not cite any particular work of Santayana, but in “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre” he calls on Santayana’s essay “The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare,” while “Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture” looks at contemporary culture in the light of Santayana’s “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy.” Rorty does not, so far as I am aware, refer to “Philosophical Heresy,” but he certainly could have found statements in that essay which, at least at first glance, provide support for the notion that Santayana’s ideas about philosophy and literature anticipate Rorty’s own.

In “Philosophical Heresy” Santayana suggests that if one wants to avoid being a philosophical “heretic,” the practical alternative is to offer a philosophy that would “renounce all claim to be a system of the universe” and instead “concentrate all its attention on personal experience, personal perspectives, personal ideals.” One’s

“system of philosophy” is better thought of as “a personal work of art” (47). The would-be philosopher should not aim to articulate a doctrine but instead work to create “a myth, a graphic way of rendering and lighting up some group of facts or observations, lending them a certain specious unity and rhythm” (48). For Santayana, at least in “Philosophical Heresy,” there does not seem to be much to choose between philosophical systems; all claim more than they can possibly accomplish:

Viewed from a sufficient distance, all systems of philosophy are seen to be personal, temperamental, accidental, and premature. They treat partial knowledge as if it were total knowledge: they take peripheral facts for central and typical facts: they confuse the grammar of human expression, in language, logic or moral estimation, with the substantial structure of things. (44)

Richard Rorty concludes *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* with criticisms of philosophical systematizing that seem close to Santayana’s in “Philosophical Heresy.” Rorty makes a distinction between “systematic philosophers” and those who are “edifying.” Rorty’s sympathies are with the “edifiers” rather than the “systematizers.” According to him the systematizers hope to work out a system of thought that corresponds to the way things really are, an unachievable goal, while the edifiers have a project that is actually attainable: “finding new, better, more interesting, more fruitful ways of speaking” (360). In Rorty’s words, “edifying philosophy aims at continuing a conversation rather than at discovering truth” (373). Rorty includes Santayana among the “edifiers” he is celebrating, though it is far from clear that Santayana would have been pleased to find himself in such company: “Goethe, Kierkegaard, Santayana, William James, Dewey, the later Wittgenstein, the later Heidegger” (367).

Rorty observes that while “Great systematic philosophers are constructive and offer arguments. . . . Great edifying philosophers are reactive and offer satires, parodies, aphorisms” (369). Santayana surely was “reactive” in the sense that some of his most incisive writings were responses to contemporaries — Henri Bergson, William James, Josiah Royce, John Dewey, and Robert Browning and Walt Whitman among the poets. Some of Santayana’s aphorisms are almost too well known, having become such common currency that few see any need to read the works in which they occur. Given Santayana’s literary style, his opposition to systematizers and his advocacy on behalf of philosophy as literature, the case for including Santayana among Rorty’s “edifiers” is at least plausible.

In “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre,” Rorty adduces Santayana in support of his thesis that over the last two hundred years Western culture has, fortunately, made a “transition from a philosophical to a literary culture.” Although Rorty declares at one point that this “transition . . . began shortly after Kant” (477), a few pages later he claims that “literature began to set itself up as a rival to philosophy when people like Cervantes and Shakespeare began to suspect that human beings were, and ought to be, so diverse that there is no point in pretending that they all carry a single truth deep in their bosoms” (478). In defense of this notion Rorty points to Santayana’s essay on Shakespeare in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*:

Santayana pointed to this seismic cultural shift in his essay “The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare.” That essay might equally well have been called “The Absence of either Religion or Philosophy in Shakespeare” or simply “The Absence of Truth in Shakespeare.” (478)

Rorty goes on to argue that “Cervantes and Shakespeare . . . play up diversity and downplay commonality” and thereby “underline the differences between human beings.” Their writings discourage any attempt to “look for a common human nature,” which in turn “weakens the grip of the Platonic assumption that all these different sorts of people should be arranged in a hierarchy” (479). The overall effect of Cervantes and Shakespeare, therefore, has been to hasten the arrival of people whom one might characterize as postmodernist thinkers — people like, for example, Richard Rorty: “Initiatives like Cervantes’ and Shakespeare’s helped create a new sort of intellectual — one who does not take the availability of redemptive truth for granted, and is not much interested in whether either God or Truth exist” (479).

In “Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture,” Rorty employs Santayana’s “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy” to make his case that today the most significant intellectual activity takes place within what Rorty calls “highbrow literary culture” (62), a milieu where philosophical writings are treated as just another literary genre. There is indeed no contemporary equivalent of the genteel tradition in academia, since professors are no longer genteel. Observing what he calls “the manly, aggressive and businesslike academics of our own time,” Rorty is not surprised that today “The public no longer associates our profession with epicene delicacy, but either with political violence and sexual license or with hard-nosed presidential advisors.” Santayana’s conception of the genteel tradition is not entirely obsolete, however: “If there is anything remotely analogous to what Santayana spoke of, it is the specifically highbrow culture — the culture which produces poems, plays and novels, literary criticism and what, for want of a better term, we can call ‘culture criticism’” (61).

Rorty, however, insists that the “highbrow literary culture” should not be dismissed by serious philosophers “in the same way as Santayana dismissed the genteel tradition,” as mainstream philosophers tend to do: “They see this culture as palliating cranky hypersensitivity with aesthetic comfort, just as Santayana saw Royce and Palmer as palming the agonized conscience off with metaphysical comfort” (62). Rorty, in contrast, approves of the replacement of an intellectual culture in which philosophy was at the center by the new “form of life” in which the search for truth and the obligation to make moral judgments are no longer central but simply “drop out”:

Beginning in the days of Goethe and Macauley and Carlyle and Emerson, a kind of writing has developed which is neither the evaluation of the relative merits of literary productions, nor intellectual history, nor moral philosophy, nor epistemology, nor social prophecy, but all these things mingled together into a new genre. . . . Philosophy is treated as a parallel genre to the drama or the novel or the poem. . . . In this form of life, the true and the good and the beautiful drop out. The aim is to understand, not to judge. The hope is that if one understands enough poems, enough religions, enough societies, enough philosophies, one will have made oneself into something worth one’s own understanding. (66)

Rorty calls on Santayana to explain why this new “form of life” is superior to the old. Quoting from “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” Rorty points out that while Santayana criticized “transcendentalist metaphysical systems,” he praised transcendentalism as “a method, a point of view” that could be considered as “the chief contribution made in modern times to speculation” (qtd. 66–67). Presenting

his own advocacy on behalf of “highbrow literary culture” as an expanded version of Santayana’s celebration of transcendentalism as a method rather than a system, Rorty identifies this sense of transcendentalism with his conception of highbrow culture:

This transcendentalist point of view is the mark of the highbrow. It is the attitude that there is no point in raising questions of truth, goodness, or beauty, because between ourselves and the thing judged there always intervenes mind, language, a perspective chosen among dozens, one description chosen out of thousands. (67)

Rorty implies that Santayana himself shared this point of view:

When Santayana traced ‘transcendentalism’ (in the good sense) back to Kant, his point was that Kant’s treatment of scientific truth makes science just one cultural manifestation among others. But since scientific truth has been, since the seventeenth century, the model for philosophical truth, Kant’s treatment of scientific truth leads to Santayana’s own aesthetic attitude toward philosophic vision. It was this sense of relativity and open possibility which Santayana thought we should admire in Emerson. (67–68)

Based on the examples I have cited, it seems clear that Richard Rorty wanted to include George Santayana among the precursors of his own postmodernist pragmatism, despite what would seem to be some striking differences — perhaps most obviously their differing attitudes about John Dewey and pragmatism. Even on this point, however, Rorty goes out of his way to suggest that what he shares with Santayana is more important than any differences. In an essay on “Dewey’s Metaphysics,” Rorty declares that his own “first and most general criticism [of the argument of Dewey’s *Experience and Nature*] just repeats Santayana’s claim that ‘naturalistic metaphysics’ is a contradiction in terms” (*Rorty Reader* 78). Certainly Rorty’s appreciation of Santayana’s intellectual significance makes a welcome contrast with the neglect Santayana’s philosophy has endured from most professional philosophers in the decades since his death, and Rorty is surely right to see that Santayana’s oeuvre cannot be judged fairly if one assesses it by the usual criteria established — with important honorable exceptions — in American departments of philosophy. Rorty’s well-meant attempt to associate his own point of view with that of Santayana nevertheless distorts Santayana’s actual ideas and thus has the effect of diminishing the significance of Santayana’s true legacy. In making my case, I will first discuss Rorty’s use of Santayana in “Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture,” then turn to his interpretation of Santayana’s essay on Shakespeare in “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre,” and finally address his classification of Santayana among the “edifiers” rather than the “systematizers” in *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*.

The key points Rorty makes in “Professionalized Philosophy and Transcendentalist Culture” to associate his view with that of Santayana is to claim, first, that although Santayana criticized transcendentalism as metaphysics, he approved of transcendentalism as a method and point of view; second, that the transcendentalism Santayana approved of is equivalent to the viewpoint that, according to Rorty, is “the mark of the highbrow”; and third, that Santayana’s analysis of Kant led Santayana himself to view “science [as] just one cultural manifestation among others” and, accordingly, adopt the same “aesthetic attitude toward philosophic vision” that

Santayana, according to Rorty, found praiseworthy in Emerson (66–67). A rereading of “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” however, makes it clear that these claims are either misleading or simply wrong.

It is true that in “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” Santayana does declare that transcendentalism is, as a method, “the chief contribution made in modern times to speculation.” But he immediately adds that it is “a method only.” Properly understood, the transcendental method does not, Santayana emphasizes, carry any implication that knowledge of the world, whether through organized science or individual perception, is unachievable. Indeed, Santayana calls the transcendental method “the critical logic of science” and insists that one must go on to seek knowledge “by observing the object, and tracing humbly the movement of the object.” It serves no purpose, Santayana warns, to keep “harping on the fact that this object, if discovered, must be discovered by somebody, and by somebody who has an interest in discovering it” (530). Contrary to Rorty, Santayana has little sympathy with Kant’s attempt to apply “the transcendental method to matters of fact, reducing them thereby to human ideas” (531). In “The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy,” Santayana praises Emerson not for his “sense of relativity and open possibility” (Rorty 1982, 67), but because “he coveted truth,” and for Santayana if not for Rorty “To covet truth is a very distinguished passion” (532). Passion for truth, is, of course, *passé* in Rorty’s “highbrow literary culture.”

Rorty’s interpretation of Santayana’s “The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare” is equally misleading. In “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre,” Rorty cites Santayana’s essay as a witness on behalf of his view that Shakespeare’s plays “helped create a new sort of intellectual,” the kind that fits into the “highbrow literary culture” of Rorty’s imagination. In defense of Rorty’s use of Santayana’s “The Absence of Religion in Shakespeare,” it is fair enough to say, as he does, that the “essay might equally well have been called “The Absence of either Religion or Philosophy in Shakespeare”; Santayana declares explicitly that Shakespeare “is remarkable among the greater poets for being without a philosophy and without a religion” (100). Rorty goes too far, however, when he goes on to claim that the essay could have been called “The Absence of Truth in Shakespeare.” In the first paragraph of the essay, Santayana praises “the works of Shakespeare” for providing “the truest portrait and best memorial of man” (91). Rorty claims in “Philosophy as a Transitional Genre” that the plays of Shakespeare “underline the differences between human beings” and thus discourage the search for “a common human nature” (479). Santayana, on the other hand, far from discouraged, praises Shakespeare in his own essay on the ground that “No other poet has given so many-sided an expression to human nature” (91). Rorty sees the absence of religion or philosophy in the plays as an aspect of Shakespeare’s greatness, since it prevents Shakespeare from attempting a unified view in which all of life would be seen according to a hierarchy of values. Santayana sees the same absence as a flaw that prevents Shakespeare, for all his genius, from achieving the supreme greatness of a Homer or a Dante: “Those of us . . . who feel that the most important thing in life is the lesson of it, and its relation to its own ideal, — we can hardly find in Shakespeare all that the highest poet could give” (100). Santayana demands the coherent overall perspective whose absence Rorty values so highly. For Santayana, the working out of an overall point of view is both an intellectual and an aesthetic achievement:

Fulness is not necessarily wholeness, and the most profuse wealth of characterization seems still inadequate as a picture of experience, if this picture is not somehow seen from above and reduced to a dramatic unity. . . . Unity of conception is an æsthetic merit no less than a logical demand. (100)

Rorty's edifiers, at least according to his characterization of them, are not interested in seeking truth in part because they don't believe that language can tell the truth, since "words take their meanings from other words rather than by virtue of their representative character" and therefore "vocabularies acquire their privileges from the men who use them rather than from their transparency to the real" (96). They are "textualists" because they see no way of correlating words or texts to anything beyond the text; beliefs current at any particular time simply express the prejudices of those in power, and no appeal is possible from those prejudices to anything other than a different set of prejudices. Rorty finds it reasonable "to view textualism as the contemporary counterpart of idealism — the textualists as spiritual descendants of the idealists" (123). According to Rorty, "post-Kantian metaphysical idealism was a specifically philosophical form of romanticism whereas textualism is a specifically post-philosophical form" (125). In "Philosophical Heresy" Santayana rejects the romantic idealism that Rorty embraces, declaring, "This romantic philosophy of philosophy is itself a good instance of heresy, both mystical and sectarian" (49).

Santayana believed that ordinary human beings making use of nothing more than unphilosophic common sense can learn and communicate a good many important truths, such as the common-sense notion that the external world exists independent of human perception; as Santayana puts it in "Philosophical Heresy," "geography studies an earth that existed before all geographers, and brought them forth" (49). If philosophical systems are heresies, orthodoxy is what is often called common sense, or, in Santayana's words,

Merely the current imagination and good sense of mankind — something traditional, conventional, incoherent, and largely erroneous, like the assumptions of a man who has never reflected, yet something ingenuous, practically acceptable, fundamentally sound, and capable of correcting its own innocent errors. (44)

It is true that in "Philosophical Heresy" Santayana urges those who cannot help systematizing to at least avoid pretension by recognizing that "a system of philosophy is a personal work of art which gives a specious unity to some chance vista in the cosmic labyrinth" (47). One does so, however, only because it seems impossible to achieve a "comprehensive synthesis . . . so evenly inspired and broadly based that it should report the system or the medley of known things without twisting any of them" (46). Santayana himself, in *Scepticism and Animal Faith*, made it clear that his goal was not to bring about a revolution in philosophy but to accomplish something more valuable and perhaps more difficult — to give "to everyday beliefs a more accurate and circumspect form" (v). There are, it seems, postmodernist skeptics for whom words like "reality" and "truth" or "facts" must always be put in quotation marks; yet these sophisticated thinkers, as far as one can tell, reserve their skepticism for their classes and their writing; they complain like other people if they are not given the right change, and they often do their best to stay out of the rain. Their skepticism is dogmatic and absolute, but it plays no part in

their daily lives. Santayana proudly declared "I stand in philosophy exactly where I stand in daily life; I should not be honest otherwise" (vi).

Today's genteel tradition, contrary to Rorty, must be sought in those academic precincts where the traditional humanistic search for truth has been displaced by the reigning postmodernism, where appeals to either common sense or truth are in bad taste, where it is always wrong to be judgmental but still possible to be self-righteous. Richard Rorty wanted to assimilate philosophy to literature on the grounds that neither is really concerned about truth. Santayana also saw parallels between philosophy and literature, but he insisted that the truly important parallel among these human activities could be found in the attempt of both to search for and to express truth.

Santayana is indeed relevant today for many reasons. These do not include, however, his ability to anticipate the postmodernism of which Rorty was probably the most persuasive American advocate. Instead, I suggest that one of the reasons his thought is especially relevant today is because it offers one of the most eloquent, rich and persuasive alternatives and critiques of the genteel tradition not only of his day but of our own as well.

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Review of *George Santayana at 150*

George Santayana at 150: International Interpretations

Edited by Matthew Caleb Flamm, Giuseppe Patella, and Jennifer A. Rea (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2014)

The collection of seventeen essays entitled *George Santayana at 150: International Interpretations* is a result of a common undertaking of international scholars from both sides of the Atlantic, who met in 2012 (the 60th anniversary of the scholar's death) at the Santayana conference in Rome. The book was published by Lexington Books the following year, in 2013, on the occasion of Santayana's 150th birthday. This peculiar coincidence of one's death anniversary followed by his birthday and the book's publication may well be considered symbolic for the ever more flourishing revival of interest in Santayana's legacy.

Not being among the participants myself, I have the pleasure of reviewing the book for the readers of *Overheard in Seville*. Let me start with a few general remarks, and then — while bearing in mind that it is impossible to give proper attention to all the depth and richness presented by scholars of such diverse interests in one brief review — I'll point to what I found most essential or inspiring in the essays, while sharing with you some impressions concerning my experience of reading *George Santayana at 150*.

If I were to pick three distinctive features of this scholarly enterprise, I would say that it has the merit of being *evidently* international in that the scholars' diverse cultural backgrounds are reflected in their interests and approaches, it presents an enormous thematic scope, and it is novel. And yet, despite its diversity, it offers a remarkable unity, which is due to — on one hand — a few *leitmotifs* reappearing throughout the book — and on the other hand — to the editors' work. Matthew Caleb Flamm, Giuseppe Patella, and Jennifer Rea, by dividing the content into thematic chapters and providing each of them with a brief introduction (not to mention the general introduction and the final note), have managed to achieve a sense of integrity that, along with the high quality and the novelty of scholarly contributions, makes for a successful publication.

In the final essay of this collection, "Santayana's Relationship to Rome," Charles Padrón restores Santayana *the man* to us by looking at him through the lenses of his connection to Rome and "painting the parameters of this dynamic bond" (249) in beautiful language, with great sensitivity and attention to biographical accuracy. Guided through a selection of Santayana's letters, we are witnessing the process of his growing familiarity with Rome until it turns into a permanent and intimate relation, one which suited the needs of this urbane and cosmopolitan thinker. As a cultural and historical palimpsest, Rome could furnish Santayana's imaginative world and accompany him in his orientation towards spiritual life. This picture of the late Santayana becomes even more complete and vivid when accompanied by the essay of Daniel Pinkas, who, in "Santayana's Epicureanism" points, with a dose of humor, to the fact that Santayana's allegiance to the realm of essences was always backed up by his Mediterranean appreciation for the simple enjoyments life could offer. Local cuisine and wines must have played a role in the choice of Rome for a

place of permanent residence by the thinker, who in his tastes epitomized a lower case “e” epicureanism. A unique-in-literature closer look at Santayana’s culinary preferences is followed by an equally novel analysis of the protagonists of *The Last Puritan* in respect to the type of hedonism they represented.

Santayana’s Rome emerges from the collection as a place of destiny and a focal point reflecting, like a mirror, the whole spectrum of masks which shaped his *personage*. One might say that Rome had been inhabited by the thinker even prior to his first physical visit there, for, as we are told by Cayetano Estébanez, in “Poetic Italy in the Works of Santayana,” Santayana felt always at home in a Latin cultural context. It is a nice surprise to come across his poetry, usually neglected by scholars, and to learn to what extent the language of Lucretius, Vergil, and Dante shaped Santayana’s own poetic language and his sensibility. This influence extended beyond literature and perhaps affected Santayana’s ability to dwell in the realm of essences, which he enjoyed particularly in the last decade of his life, presenting, as Stevens famously wrote, “a kind of total grandeur in the end” (432–33).¹

Wallace Stevens is also a reference point for David A. Dilworth, who, in his thought-provoking essay “Mediterranean Aestheticism, Epicurean Materialism” scrutinizes the influence of Santayana’s somewhat decadent combination of Mediterranean aesthetics, Epicurean materialism, and cosmopolitanism on great American poets like Stevens and Lowell. Meanwhile, Dilworth adds a voice of criticism to this rather appreciative and sympathetic collection, by challenging the above mentioned blend of tendencies characterizing Santayana’s philosophical outlook as incapable of providing intellectual support to any constructivist endeavor. Santayana’s retreat to the classical roots of philosophy, suggests Dilworth, involves a conflation of the aesthetic and the ethical, which in certain contexts should be recognized as disempowering and hence “inferior” to some competing philosophical conceptualizations of reality proposed by his contemporaries.

However, the perspective of the good and the dignity of an *individual* life, consciously chosen by Santayana, is what makes it a potential source of practical wisdom, as argues widely acclaimed Santayana scholar John Lachs, whose contribution, “Was Santayana a Stoic Pragmatist?” is one of the book’s highlights. Lachs ascribes to Santayana an outlook and an attitude which he calls *stoic pragmatism*, the heritage of which reaches back to Seneca’s mindfulness about human finitude. Santayana was in search of a philosophical language fit for conveying elements of stoic wisdom concerned with the possibility of life which might count as “a career that is rich and dignified” (206) under any circumstances. John Lach’s essay illuminates the difference between mainstream American pragmatism, focused on the conditions of amelioration, and Santayana’s philosophy, which was looking beyond, at the *uncharted territory* of alternative situations, including one when “all efforts of amelioration fail” (206) and only a combination of the acceptance of limitations with “intelligent effort” prevents fanaticism and allows for preserving the dignity and gracefulness of one’s life. This (*post-*)*modern/post-rational retreat* to ancient wisdom, emphasized also by other contributors, is a mark of the universal and cosmopolitan spirit of Santayana’s legacy, one of considerate synthetic power,

¹ Wallace Stevens, “To an Old Philosopher in Rome,” in *Collected Poetry and Prose*, ed. F. Kermode and Joan Richardson (New York: Library of America, 1997), 432–33.

which benefits particularly from international scholarship, of which this collection is an epitome.

The question of the intrinsic value of life and the quality of lived experience resonates also in Michael Brodrick's deliberation over the possibility of transcending means and ends as part of a mature approach to life. Brodrick's insightful analysis, "Transcending Means and Ends Near the End of Life," concerns the spiritual potential for disinterestedness, which consists in two stages: first, the ability to sustain the fragile equilibrium between means and ends; and second, the ability to transcend both in their worldly dimension in favor of a *vita contemplativa*. Subtly, the text reveals how demanding this aspect of Santayana's thought may prove. Not only does it require some maturity that must be gained through life experience backed up by reflexivity, but it also tests readers' ability and readiness to extend their understanding sympathy to attitudes which seem to belong to a largely marginalized option in twentieth-century Western culture. It was not until the last two decades of the past century that a favorable intellectual atmosphere for this kind of philosophical reflection began.

The post-rational inclination in question, which is visible especially in the later Santayana, resonates well among the ruins of *la città eterna*. In "Ruins as Seats of Values," Krzysztof Skowroński examines Santayana's conception of architecture on the basis of some rarely invoked essays, to conclude that ruins were of particular importance for the philosopher of essences, who saw in them material concretions expressive of particular human cultures and the values they represented. The remnants of ancient Greek and Roman edifices embodied the ideals of the so-called classical culture that Santayana had idealized as a model of a perfectly natural, unpretentious relation between man and the world. Interestingly, Skowroński sets the discussion in a wider context of possible philosophical attitudes to architecture to the extent that he is able to demonstrate the difference between Santayana and American pragmatism on the ground of their diverse approaches to ruins.

The idea of ruins as a reminder of values seems legitimate also in the light of Santayana's "Mediterranean rationality," which assumes an unbreakable bond between beauty and the celebration of life, and the idea that art reflects or expresses what Spanish scholar Amparo Zacarés Pamblanco, in her essay, "Santayana's Theory of Art," calls the "total appreciation of human life" (152). Zacarés essay, in an informative way and with a remarkable expertise, explores the irreducibility of Santayana's conception of art and at the same time manages to disambiguate certain common misunderstandings concerning Santayana — like the tendency to mistake disinterestedness for indifference or insensitivity. Most importantly, Zacarés contextualizes Santayana's aesthetic theory in reference to contemporary debates on art criticism.

One of the guiding themes of the collection is Rome — Rome the city and the imaginary Rome that was inhabited by Santayana and which translated itself into a Mediterranean spirit and a philosophy amply referring to its own ancient sources. There appears yet another, related key idea here — that of a polysemic mobility, a multi-layered nomadism inscribed in the cosmopolitan outlook of the thinker and his philosophy of travel. *Clericusvagans, homo viator*; "off-centered and against the flow," "a globe trotter of thought" (125–27) are just a few examples of brilliant metaphors coined by Giuseppe Patella in "A Traveling Philosophy." Even though

Patella cuts Santayana from any associations with *transcendence*, if one assumes a broad and metaphorical meaning of this notion, the whole spectrum of ways in which the here-and-now is being constantly *transcended* by Santayana's philosophy may be said to belong to the "traveling" aspect of it. Due to the form of a review and limited space, let me only mention that the Italian scholar also introduces the idea of *uprootedness*, which leads me right to another contributor — José Beltrán Llavador and his essay "The World, a Stage." The suggestion that the "chronic" sense of uprootedness noticeable in Santayana's writings might have been a "mode of being," which resulted equally out of a peculiar biography and out of a conscious choice, is followed by a hermeneutic vision of geographic itinerary as representative of intellectual biography, or, in other words, of mutual correspondence between the inner world and an "extrinsic order" traceable in the pattern of places visited and inhabited. The analyses of Santayana's intellectual heritage in the context of his nomadic lifestyle or *fate*, belong, as I believe, to the highlights of the collection and represent a novel path in Santayana studies.

Equally promising seem Santayana's cosmopolitanism and pluralism, as addressed by Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., in his essay, "Santayana: Cosmopolitanism and the Spiritual Life," which sets up a comparison with Kwame Anthony Appiah, the contemporary thinker referred to as a "post-modern Socrates."² Both Santayana and Appiah are inscribed in the continuity of the cosmopolitan intellectual tradition, starting with Diogenes and reaching twentieth-century major thinkers such as Levinas and Derrida. Global interconnectedness, which is one of the faces of our reality, is a challenge for philosophy and actually targets its very essence, which has always, to a lesser or greater degree, consisted in an aspiration for universality. Cosmopolitanism is not — to be sure — an easy solution, but rather a challenge, involving the dialectic of the universal and the individual, and probing human capacity for transcending locality. To give Santayana voice in this context is to render him relevant for the most pressing and current interdisciplinary debates.

Any current or future research on Santayana may profit from a closer look at his ontology, for this is where — I believe — one should look for the truly intellectually liberating power of his thought. The (de)constructive and negotiative potential of the realms of spirit and essences is the subject of Martin Coleman's essay under the provocative title "On Celebrating the Death of Another Person." Instead of focusing on Santayana's views and asking what he believed or meant, Coleman probes *Santayana's* system and demonstrates how it works in praxis. Spiritual openness lifts one up from the mundane constraints of everydayness and allows for thinking which is capable of delivering and comparing a variety of vistas. The gain is "the ability to detect arbitrariness in dogma and to appreciate perfection in alien contexts." (182). The significance of human spirituality, then, extends definitely beyond *vita contemplativa* and through a number of examples the reader is convinced by Coleman that Santayana's realms offer more than a declarative appreciation of intellectual liberty.

Throughout this collection, authors repeatedly reassure readers that the ethical and the aesthetic are not easily separated in Santayana's work. One may emphasize

² William McPheron, "Kwame Anthony Appiah," Stanford Presidential Lectures in the Humanities and Arts, <http://prelectur.stanford.edu/lecturers/appiah/>.

this unity with reference to antiquity and the Mediterranean spirit, as some contributors do, or one may try to discern and qualify the ethical in Santayana in the context of contemporary “Scientific Ethics.” The latter is Glenn Tiller’s approach. Tiller articulates the synthetic potential hidden in Santayana’s conceptualization of human morality in terms of the phases of its development: pre-rational, rational, and post-rational, arguing for the usefulness of this conceptual tool in challenging the schematic rigidity of the Kantian — utilitarian opposition, which has become a default mode of discussing ethics these days. While the unifying principle is to be sought in the unity of life as conceived of by a naturalist thinker, spiritual endowment provides a corrective principle in relation to the particularity of interests involved in natural sources of morality. Most importantly for Santayana’s current relevance, as noted by the author, his ideal of rational ethics does not lose sight of the requirement of impartiality and remembers to advocate tolerance.

A number of contributors to *Santayana at 150* address the hardly classifiable alliance of naturalism with idealistic realms in Santayana’s *oeuvre*. One of them, Leonarda Vaiana, re-examines the issue in her essay, “Nature and the Ideal in Santayana’s Philosophy,” and, in her conceptual attempt to marry the recognition of the natural as fundamental with the pursuit of the ideal, she explores nuances of Santayana’s relativism to the effect that we see the ambiguity of the very notion of relativism and understand that it requires a discernment of further sub-variations in order to be of any use. I am convinced by the subtle but telling ethical distinction between a Socratic and a full-blown, Rortian type of relativism, proposed by Vaiana, as one way of accounting for the problematic marriage of nature with the ideal.

Michael Hodges’ essay, “The Realm of Truth in Santayana,” enriches the collection with a touch of analytical criticism. Revealing the problematic status of truth that serves both as an ontological realm and as a quality of a judgment, this American scholar challenges the compatibility of Santayana’s realms with the naturalist perspective of animal faith. Here Hodges keeps the discussion of Santayana’s philosophy in systematic terms alive while confirming the difficulty of testing Santayana’s philosophy from an analytical angle due to ambiguities related to its “free” use of key concepts. An incoherence Hodges brings to the fore may well suggest the need for considering some other approaches to Santayana’s ontology, one possible example being the idea of “ironic ontology” introduced in *Thinking in the Ruins* — an outstanding study by John Lachs and Michael Hodges himself.

There are two more brilliant essays I haven’t mentioned so far, both concerning Santayana’s materialism. In “Bifurcation of Materialism,” Daniel Moreno Moreno sets a novel context for the discussion by introducing the hardly known fact of the thinker’s participation in a conference on materialism in Rome in 1946. Regarding the time and place, Marxist and Stalinist versions of materialism turn out to be self-imposing elements in the discussion and Moreno persuades us to see clearly at what a remove both remain from Santayana’s standpoint. Both inevitably seem to be, as Moreno argues, a sort of metaphysics conflating ideal concepts with reality and searching for worldly solutions in the movement of matter. The liberating potential of Santayana’s materialism rests rather in the order of spirituality, to which matter gave rise. Matthew Caleb Flamm develops this issue in “Free Will for a Materialist.” After elucidating the nature of the gap between American pragmatists and Santayana as resting mainly in the moralistic, socio-political stakes of the former rather than in

the very fact of Santayana's materialism, Flamm focuses on Santayana's "spiritual liberalism" and persuasively presents the cathartic nature of Santayana's spirit as an alternative to "a perpetually bothered self" (25) proposed by pragmatists. By addressing this pressing problem in Santayana scholarship, the author refers to the very dignity of philosophy, which has traditionally been concerned with the task of delineating human freedom.

It turns out that — quite accidentally, guided by a chain of associations of my own — I started the review with the closing essay of the collection and I am closing it with the opening one, the theme of which provides a good occasion for a conclusion. When I was thinking about a possible way of translating *the Rome* (of this collection) to which all roads lead into one philosophical concept, the first idea to come was that of spiritual freedom — one which promises an unrestricted imaginative mobility, able to transgress artificial boundaries of all sorts and yet, one that is meaningful only when serving a finite human life. The experience of reading *Santayana at 150* brings a sense of participating in a realm of free and superb thought, while being guided by its contemporary interpreters, who by exploring it in a variety of directions, constantly inspire it with new life.

Giuseppe Patella hits the nail on the head in the introduction when he mentions the task of "thinking [Santayana's heritage] over again" and letting it "resound in our current intellectual concerns." (1). The task, as I am convinced, has been fully achieved and we get a novel, inspiring collection, indispensable for any Santayana scholar willing to keep him/herself up to date. Moreover, the attention given to Santayana's life and personality as interconnected with his intellectual biography, set in a broad context of intellectual and cultural milieu of the era, constitutes an added value and makes the book of interest for a broader circle of philosophically-oriented readers and scholars of American Studies worldwide.

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Review of *Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred: Justus Buchler, Karl Jaspers, and George Santayana*

Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred: Justus Buchler, Karl Jaspers, and George Santayana

Martin O. Yalcin (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2013)

“**T**he book that you are holding in your hands is both brilliant and revolutionary. I do not use these terms lightly, nor am I prone to inflated rhetoric” (ix). So begins the Foreword, by Robert S. Corrington, to Martin O. Yalcin’s discussion of religious ethics and metaphysics. The enthusiastic praise found in the Foreword is indicative of what follows. Part philosophical analysis, part religious inspiration, Yalcin’s book aims to find a place for “the sacred” in the natural world. It is an ambitious goal. But even if one has strong doubts, as I do, about Yalcin’s attempt to coherently combine the philosophies of Buchler and Santayana in order to meet this aim, there is no doubt that he grapples imaginatively with some far-reaching ideas.

Yalcin is most troubled by the fact that traditional monotheistic religions metaphysically separate god or the sacred (he does not sharply distinguish these two terms) from nature and thereby morally elevate one part of reality over another. This engenders “abjection” from the divine that is manifested in a host of vices. He focuses on what he calls the “twin vices” of monotheism: (1) demonization of the abjected object and (2) idolization of that which takes the place of the abjected object. We are told that Plato “provides the archetypal philosophy and theology of purification” with its dichotomy between the sacred and non-sacred: the rational and good as opposed to the “dark, ugly, disorderly, and unstable” (2). In order to avoid intellectual and moral debasement, Plato requires that “the self and its products imitate as far as possible the rational goodness in the cosmos which orders and measures all things” (2).

Yalcin rejects Plato’s hierarchical metaphysics and all of its sequels for the reason that “philosophies and theologies driven by ontological priority are intrinsically unethical” since they engender demonization and idolization (118). In order to avoid these vices, he turns to Buchler’s metaphysics of “ordinal naturalism.” This is the view that “nothing can be contrasted to nature. Nothing stands above, below, beyond, or beneath nature to which the labels non-natural, super-natural, or supra-natural could be applied” (9). Instead, everything that exists is on the same monistic ontological plane. Further, what exists is made up of “complexes” or “traits.” Yalcin writes that “[c]entral to Buchler’s philosophy is this description of nature as indefinitely ramified, indefinitely divisible, radically complex, and radically plural” (11). Since no complex is ontologically primary, the result is “ontological parity”: “no complex or order is essentially, substantially, or foundationally more or less than any other” (15). This makes god or the sacred not a being that transcends nature,

but rather a being amongst the infinite number of complexes or traits that make up the natural world.

The second chapter is devoted to Jaspers, whose views are presented mainly as a foil to Buchler's. According to Yalcin, Jaspers offers a "form of sacred engagement that retains the deity's traits jettisoned by Buchler, but also seeks to eradicate the sort of abjection within sacred engagement that demonizes nature and the non-believer" (45). For Jaspers, the "mystery" of existence provides the reason for one to (somehow) try to transcend the world and engage with the sacred. "Paradoxically," Yalcin writes, "Jaspers embraces the ineradicable mystery as the reason and stepping stone for transcending the mystery" (52). Yalcin finds much to admire here, but in the end he rejects Jaspers' view of sacred engagement since it rests on faith in a god that transcends nature.

If the sacred is not a transcendent reality but something existing on the same ontological plane as everything else, then how should it be understood? Yalcin appeals to Santayana's philosophy to answer this question. His proposal is unusual. He states that the "sacred is not an independently existing God or gods entirely or partly transcending nature or even God or gods permeating nature. The sacred *is* the human response to the orders of nature. The sacred *is* the interpretation or translation of the orders of nature by the human order" (82). This proposal is unusual since it is not clear why the signs and symbols of human cognition should be identified as engagement with "the sacred" rather than, as Santayana would have it, engagement with the realm of matter. Yalcin's bald assertion that "theologies can be reformed and replaced" (118) does not take us very far in explaining why the mundane fact of non-literal or symbolic knowledge *is* "the sacred" — however divine — spirit's chosen themes might be.

Yalcin gets much of Santayana's philosophy correct, but he also freely grafts Santayana's ideas and terms onto his concerns. In doing so, he vitiates Santayana's basic philosophical views. For example, Yalcin rejects the distinction between existence and essence (117). However one cannot reject this distinction and accept, as Yalcin purports to do, Santayana's notion that religion has an essentially aesthetic or spiritual value. For Santayana's account of aesthetic or spiritual values crucially depends on the distinction between existence and essence.

Yalcin's selectivity with Santayana's philosophy is part of a larger problem of philosophical methodology that runs through his book. The problem is his insistence that ethical concerns dictate metaphysical views. He repeatedly states that Buchler's metaphysics of ordinal naturalism and ontological parity "have been embraced . . . chiefly to counter the twin vices of demonization and idolization that are so pervasive in Western monotheisms" (45). For Santayana, this gets things backwards. Metaphysics should not be based on ethical considerations, religious or otherwise. Instead it is metaphysics, and in particular materialism, that provides the basis for both rational ethics and sober spirituality. Put another way, ethics begins by acknowledging *the truth*: a realm of being that is also predicated on the distinction between existence and essence and that goes largely unmentioned in Yalcin's book.

GLENN TILLER

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL CHECKLIST

THIRTIETH UPDATE

The items below will supplement the references given in *George Santayana: A Bibliographical Checklist, 1880–1980* (Bowling Green: Philosophy Documentation Center, 1982) prepared by Herman J. Saatkamp Jr. and John Jones. These references are divided into primary and secondary sources. Except for the book reviews and dissertations, the following articles and books are classified according to their years of publication. Readers with additions or corrections are invited to send these to Kristine Frost, Santayana Edition, Institute for American Thought, School of Liberal Arts, IUPUI, Indianapolis, IN 46202-5157, or by email to santedit@iupui.edu.

A special thank you to Daniel Moreno for his time and effort in researching and compiling entries for this year's update.

CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF PRIMARY SOURCES

2014

“Arte penitente.” Translated by Daniel Moreno. *Claves de razón práctica* 232 (2014): 184–93.

Diálogos en el limbo. Con tres nuevos diálogos. With an Introduction by Manuel Garrido. Translated by Carmen García-Trevijano [Dialogues I–VIII, XII–XIII] and Daniel Moreno [Dialogues IX–XI.] Madrid: Tecnos, 2014, 232pp.

El egotismo en la filosofía alemana. Edited and with an Introduction by Daniel Moreno. Madrid: Biblioteca Nueva, 2014, 232pp. [This book includes an Appendix with “¿Qué es el ego?” (from BR) and *Apologia Pro Mente Sua*. VIII. “La crítica,” by Santayana, and “Afirmaciones de Santayana sobre la filosofía alemana,” by Edward L. Schaub (from PGS).]

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CHRONOLOGICAL LISTING OF SECONDARY SOURCES

2014

George Santayana at 150: International Interpretations. Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2014, 280pp. Edited by Matthew Caleb Flamm, Giuseppe

Patella, and Jennifer A. Rea. (Papers presented at the Santayana congress held in Rome in October 2012.) This work includes the following essays:

- “Bifurcation of Materialism,” Daniel Moreno Moreno, 7–16
- “Free Will for a Materialist,” Matthew Caleb Flamm, 17–42
- “Nature and the Ideal in Santayana’s Philosophy,” Leonarda Vaiana, 43–51
- “Mediterranean Aestheticism, Epicurean Materialism,” David A. Dilworth, 53–87
- “Santayana: Cosmopolitanism and the Spiritual Life,” Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr., 93–110
- “Poetic Italy in the Works of Santayana,” Cayetano Estébanez, 111–24
- “A Traveling Philosophy,” Giuseppe Patella, 125–38
- “Ruins as Seats of Values,” Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński, 139–48
- “Santayana’s Theory of Art,” Ampara Zacarés Pamblanco, 149–58
- “Scientific Ethics,” Glenn Tiller, 163–74
- “On Celebrating the Death of Another Person,” Martin A. Coleman, 175–91
- “The Realm of Truth in Santayana,” Michael Hodges, 193–202
- “Was Santayana a Stoic Pragmatist?” John Lachs, 203–7
- “Santayana’s Epicureanism,” Daniel Pinkas, 213–24
- “The World, a Stage,” José Beltrán Llavador, 225–40
- “Transcending Means and Ends Near the End of Life,” Michael Brodrick, 241–48
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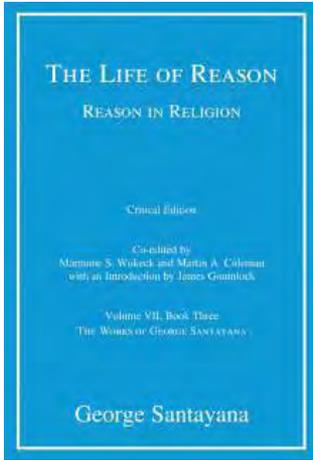
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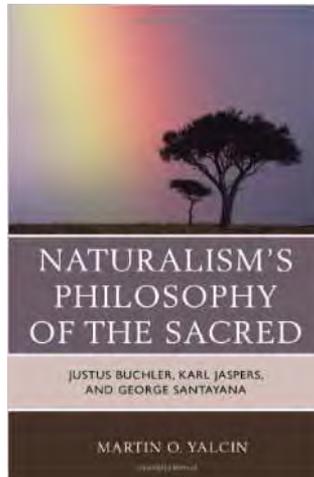


*The Life of Reason:
Reason in Religion*
George Santayana
The MIT Press
2014

The critical edition of *Reason in Religion*, Book 3 of *The Life of Reason*, Volume VII of *The Works of George Santayana* features an introduction by James Gouinlock and a scholarly apparatus including a list of variations found in the posthumously published one-volume edition of *The Life of Reason*.

Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred: Justus Buchler, Karl Jaspers, and George Santayana
Martin O. Yalcin
Lexington Books
2013

Naturalism's Philosophy of the Sacred seeks to find common ground between theists and atheists by arguing that religious beliefs should be retained because they provide a poetic response to nature's mysteries. This book suggests an alternative aesthetic form of sacred engagement that is inspired by Santayana's thoroughly natural poetic rendition of the sacred.



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The editors of *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* invite submission of articles and essays about George Santayana from any discipline. Letters to the editors (not exceeding 300 words) are also welcome.

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Some Abbreviations for Santayana's Works

Page numbers refer to the critical edition of Santayana's work, where this exists, or to the Scribner/Constable edition in most other cases.

AFSL	<i>Animal Faith and Spiritual Life</i> , ed. John Lachs	PGS	<i>The Philosophy of George Santayana</i> , ed. P. A. Schilpp
BR	<i>Birth of Reason and Other Essays</i>	POML	<i>Physical Order and Moral Liberty</i> , ed. J. and S. Lachs
COUS	<i>Character and Opinion in the United States</i>	PP	<i>Persons and Places</i>
POEMS	<i>Complete Poems</i>	PSL	<i>Platonism and the Spiritual Life</i>
DL	<i>Dialogues in Limbo</i>	RB	<i>Realms of Being</i> (one-volume edition)
DP	<i>Dominations and Powers</i>	RE	<i>The Realm of Essence</i> RB Bk. I
EGP	<i>Egotism in German Philosophy</i>	RM	<i>The Realm of Matter</i> RB Bk. II
ICG	<i>The Idea of Christ in the Gospels</i>	RT	<i>The Realm of Truth</i> RB Bk. III
IPR	<i>Interpretations of Poetry and Religion</i>	RS	<i>The Realm of Spirit</i> RB Bk. IV
LGS	<i>The Letters of George Santayana</i>	SAF	<i>Scepticism and Animal Faith</i>
LP	<i>The Last Puritan</i>	SB	<i>The Sense of Beauty</i>
LR	<i>The Life of Reason</i>	SE	<i>Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies</i>
LR1	Bk. 1, <i>Reason in Common Sense</i>	TTMP	<i>Some Turns of Thought in Modern Philosophy</i>
LR2	Bk. 2, <i>Reason in Society</i>	TPP	<i>Three Philosophical Poets</i>
LR3	Bk. 3, <i>Reason in Religion</i>	WD	<i>Winds of Doctrine</i>
LR4	Bk. 4, <i>Reason in Art</i>		
LR5	Bk. 5, <i>Reason in Science</i>		
OS	<i>Obiter Scripta</i>		