

Santayana's Place in World Philosophy

DAVID A. DILWORTH

MATTHEW CALEB FLAMM AND KRYSZTOF PIOTR SKOWROŃSKI, eds., *Under Any Sky: Contemporary Readings of George Santayana*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2007.

In the Preface to his *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics* Kant remarked that “there are scholars for whom the history of philosophy (both ancient and modern) is philosophy itself; for these the present *Prolegomena* are not written” (KANT 1977, 1). This remark was an extension of a passage in the concluding section of his *Critique of Pure Reason* where Kant distinguished the nature of “the philosopher,” who is the lawgiver of human reason, from “the mathematician, the student of nature, and the logician,” who exhibit merely technical skills in the use of reason. He calls the latter the “technicians of reason.” The philosophers, he says, are engaged in producing the universal paradigms of human awareness—legislating, though ever falling short of, an ideal “cosmical concept.” The technicians of reason do not so legislate; rather they presuppose philosophical first-principles as they factor their subject matters in specific ways [Kant (1965), pp. 657-58].

The contents of this volume help the reader to appreciate that Santayana agreed with Kant's concept of philosophy. In writing philosophy that remains valid “under any sky” he joined the ranks of the world philosophers who legislate for human reason in universal terms. He aimed at formulating a world philosophy. In so doing he rejected, among other things, practically the entire gamut of post-Kantian historicist trends—the Hegelian and Marxist, Existentialist, Pragmatist and Neo-Pragmatist, Heideggerian and post-Heideggerian, trends in his day and in the professionalized academy today.

In the vocabulary of Karl Jaspers, every authentic philosophy can be regarded as falling under twin categories, the “historic” and the “historical.” The former refers to the shining Platonic Idea—the immortal worldview—achieved by the genuine philosopher, as his take on Kant's “cosmical concept.” The latter places the philosopher in his historical context. Jaspers establishes this in relation to his own explicit formulations of “world philosophy” and the “world-history of philosophy” [Jaspers (1986)]—concepts which are germane to my present endeavor, which is to survey a

rich tapestry of conference commentary on the philosophy of Santayana, here duly appreciated as having achieved “historic” significance and thereby illustrating his own doctrines of essence and truth [Flamm and Skowroński (2007)].

The difficult problem the conference raises and which I propose to take up here is how to characterize Santayana’s “place” in the world-history of philosophy, Attendant on that will be my estimation, however tentatively and fallibly tendered here, as to the quality of Santayana’s overall “career-text.” Was he a first-tier world-philosopher? And if so, in what sense?

The special feature of this conference volume, born out of the Second International Conference on Santayana convened in Opole, Poland in 2006, is that it brought forth twenty-three interpretative perspectives from an international field of scholars coming from eight countries. The two editors of this volume, Matt Flamm and Kris Skowroński, then faced the daunting task of organizing this panorama of scholarly presentations. (A problem for the reader, however, is that the articles are for the most part written by “professional philosophers,” who translate back into the terms of contemporary academic philosophy the notable achievement of Santayana’s long career, which consisted in transcending the business of professional philosophers in his writings.)

The volume is graced with a Preface by John Lachs who makes a set of cogent suggestions to the effect that today Santayana’s star is on the rise after an initial brief interval of decline [See also Lachs (2006)]. Matt Flamm’s Editor’s Introduction then astutely establishes the sheer scope of “philosophical plots” in Santayana’s writings,—ranging from “Platonistic materialism in ontology, scepticism in epistemology, rationality in social philosophy, naturalism in aesthetics, piety in materialism, and literary and poetic expressions as a sure means to cosmic understanding.” To manage the interpretive cross-sections of this wealth of philosophical plots, Flamm usefully divides the volume into three main segments: Part I, Ontology and Naturalism (which he says came to fruition in Santayana as the first free-form product of his intellectual freedom after permanently retiring from Harvard back to the Europe of his birthplace); Part II, Culture, Society, and America, in which Santayana is featured as a culture critic; and Part III, Aesthetics, Poetry, and Spirit, which deals with Santayana’s detached “life of the spirit.”

Let me now briefly return to Jaspers’ concepts of world philosophy and the world-history of philosophy as an approach to “placing” Santayana in the company of the historic philosophers. (Santayana set a precedent for this in his own *Dialogues in Limbo*.) Jaspers formulated a notion of the “periechontological” conception of truth, *an encompassing idea of the unity of being and truth*, which resonates with Santayana’s own “realm of truth.” To this notion Jaspers added his ideal of “communicative reason,” which is the presupposition of maximal illumination of human self-awareness—the equivalent of Kant’s sense of the “cosmical concept”—as furnishing the bottom-line perennial paradigms of human self-understanding. He then suggested

a set of heuristic categories with which to classify the “Great Philosophers” [Ehrlich (2003), pp. 19-33].

Jaspers established *the criteria of greatness in philosophy* in terms of two qualities: (1) *originality* as measurable by spiritual standards and (2) *historical impact* as a testimony to the recognition of such originality. Understandably he advises against attributing greatness to philosophers close to us in time, and this caveat would of course pertain to our present consideration of the “place” of Santayana among the philosophers now conversing on the lawns of Limbo. Still, his suggestion as to these two criteria will inform this present review. His grouping of the Great Philosophers provides an interesting schema for thinking about Santayana's rich but elusive career-text and for the panorama of interpretations encountered in this volume.

In a nutshell, Jaspers established three main groups. The *first main group* actually transcends philosophy proper. It is comprised of the shortest list of *die massgebenden Menschen*,— those venerables who afforded the loftiest measures and personally exemplified the highest standards of humanity—a list exclusively comprised of Socrates, the Buddha, Confucius, and Jesus. The *second main group* is comprised of those who traditionally have been regarded as philosophers proper. The *third group* are persons concerned with the dissemination of philosophical thought in such day-to-day endeavors as literature, natural science and the human studies, or who pursue careers in political thought, in cultural studies and literary criticism, in journalistic criticism, or in the day to day teaching of theology and philosophy (categories which include those who attend international conferences).

As we will see, all this is germane to our consideration of Santayana. We should note that while consciously rejecting the role and career of the “professional philosopher,” Santayana wrote as a poet, novelist, soliloquizing essayist, autobiographer, and system builder. His sustained output of over fifty years provides the valuable evidence with which the conference volume deals, namely of Santayana *as a philosopher proper*.

Now, in the second main group (the philosophers proper), Jaspers distinguishes three subgroups. The *first subgroup* he calls the Perennially Seminal Founders of philosophizing. This is for Jaspers a very small subgroup consisting of Plato, Augustine, and Kant, understood as having unique, open-ended impact on the history of thought. (It is a long shot, but Peirce may fit into this classification.) By contrast the second subgroup is large, comprising the “Visions of Thought” achieved by the world's many Metaphysicians who cast their systems into doctrines and dogmas—as for example in Leibniz, Spinoza, and Whitehead. Jaspers then distinguishes these Metaphysicians from *another small subgroup*, the Creative Orderers or Great Systematizers, namely, Aristotle, Aquinas, Hegel, Shankara, and Chu Hsi. These Creative Orderers have achieved an immense influence in the history of thought comparable to those of the Seminal Founders—the difference being that the Seminal Founders open up potential ranges of philosophical thought, while the Order-

ers gather all historically realized strains of thought and bring them to completion, thus becoming the rallying point for schools of thought that pass down systems that were truly original only to the original masters. A *fourth subgroup*, having its place between the Metaphysicians and the Creative Orderers, Jaspers identifies as the “Great Disturbers,” and he subdivides these into two further subgroups, the Probing Negators (as in the methodological projects of Nagarjuna, Abelard, Descartes, and Hume) and the Radical Awakeners, which he identifies with the personal suffering of the post-Kantians Kierkegaard and Nietzsche (and Jaspers explicitly sees himself as a disciple of these two Awakeners).

We can immediately note that much of what Jaspers says of Kierkegaard and Nietzsche is germane to Santayana. Jaspers speaks of the philosophies of the post-Kantian Great Disturbers as forged in internal suffering over the impact of modernity, the collapse of the stabilizing universalism of Christianity, the loss of faith, the preemptive rise of modern science and the boundless uses of technological rationality, the consequent abandonment and manipulation of the individual, and so on [Ehrlich (2003), pp. 19-30]. The writings of Santayana, like that of his compatriot Unamuno, ubiquitously call to mind these headings.

Of course, these grouping remain in fluid and overlapping tensions with one another, providing not for cast-iron pigeon-holing but rather a dynamic kaleidoscope of intertextual relationships. But as for Santayana, it will almost certainly come to mind that he “places” among the Great Disturbers, and indeed oscillates back and forth between the two sub-types, the Probing Negators and the Radical Awakeners. And, to the same point, I will argue below that his career-text has close resonances with those of Nietzsche and Emerson (another Great Awakener). It would certainly be a stretch, I think, to place him in the company of the Seminal Founders, Metaphysicians, or Great Systematizers whom he more often parodied than endorsed, while he can be given his due place in the world-history of philosophy as both a Probing Negator and Radical Awakener.

I pass on now to the second item on my agenda, which is to offer my own eminently fallible, and of course historically premature, assessment of Santayana’s long-range staying power. Certainly there will be little argument over his exceptionally smooth, often mesmerizing, “Edwardian” literary style. (One can argue that the technocratic professionalization of philosophy in the modern academy has as one of its subtexts to justify its own impoverished talent in this respect.) Returning to Jaspers’ general criteria of greatness, the question concerns Santayana’s philosophical originality as measured by spiritual standards as well as his historical impact that witnesses to the recognition of such originality.

Here, however, I will play the devil’s advocate, raising questions as to the degree of Santayana’s originality. My basic concern is that, as a great Disturber running the gamut of Probing Negation and Radical Awakening in the post-Kantian world of philosophy, Santayana appears to have been somewhat of a “retailer” of the ideas of

the other great Disturbers—especially of Emerson and Nietzsche (not to mention Hume), and in another respect of a Creative Systematizer, Schopenhauer. Connected with this there is the further question of whether some of Santayana's "disturbances" amounted to "mis-readings" (in the postmodern parlance) of the legacies of the other kinds of philosophers.

Pursuant of this critical agenda, let me work within the parameters of Matt Flamm's classification of the volumes' twenty-three essays into those of I, Ontology and Naturalism; II, Culture, Society, America; and III, Aesthetics, Poetry, and Spirit. As a schematization, I will contend that the first of these especially brings to mind Santayana's relation to Schopenhauer; the second to Nietzsche; and the third to Emerson.

Part I: Ontology and Naturalism

As hinted above, the necessarily succinct articles of this entire conference put a heavy burden on a reader who must experience the shifting kaleidoscope of their hermeneutical endeavors. And in the midst of these many transitions in thematic content, the reader must be reconciled to a degree of credulity concerning Santayana's philosophical stardom. Nowhere is this credulity more conspicuous than in the volume's overall taking for granted Santayana's "materialism," and more specifically, his "realm of matter,"—his ontological concept for which he gave himself special credit. For almost all of the articles it is as if it is conceded that there is an unopened "black box" containing this ontological concept which, working in tandem with the realms of essence, spirit, and truth, cogently drives his whole system. No one thought to look inside the box.

Was Santayana, after all, a genuine materialist? Can any philosopher be a materialist after Berkeley, Hume, Kant, Schopenhauer, Peirce, and other "historic" philosophers who have rendered the ancient concept of "matter" (or Descartes' modern version of "res extensa") obsolete and irretrievable? Santayana, we will come to see, was a shrewd psychologist as well as a gifted writer—which is to say, employing his own terms, a *literary psychologist*, who rang ironic changes on a post-Kantian "materialism" in a career-long debate with contemporary idealisms and empiricisms. His "materialism," in other words, was rhetorical and polemical, as befitting his role as a Great Disturber who took his stand against almost all aspects of Western modernity. But in view of the amount of subjective psychologism with which he invested it, not only in soliloquizing essays (which contain some of his best writing) but also in an obliquely self-referring novel, *The Last Puritan*, and an explicitly self-imaging autobiography, *Persons and Places*, it is perhaps ill-advised to take his "materialism" literally. There are other ways to take it. Or so I will suggest in the following.

Glenn Tiller's astute article, "Distance From the Truth," is a partial exception to this charge. It is honest in conclusion when it rehearses T.L.S. Sprigge's "puzzlement"

over how to make sense, on Santayana's own theory of truth as involving timeless essences instantiated in the flux of time, of the "element of illusion" in thinking that things do drop out of existence. (Peirce's idealistic doctrine of synechism appears to be relevant here.) In Tiller's article the overall problematic and its resolution seems to lead in the direction of a Hindu or Buddhist "two truth" theory (the relative and the absolute) to account for all the necessary variables. This "two truth" theory is also relevant to Angus Kerr-Lawson's "The Natural Claims of Spirit," which adduces late textual evidence concerning a "compatibility thesis" with respect to Santayana's alternating views of the moral and the spiritual life. Each of these articles, I submit, could be fruitfully developed along such a line of inquiry. (Brahma is Sat, but Sat is not Brahma.)

In this context let me recall that it was Schopenhauer who, as a Creative Orderer, synthesized Kant, Plato, and the Hindu/Buddhist philosophies in an overall metaphysics of the irrational substrate of the Will or Nature (*natura naturans*, the inner nature of the world), culminating in a metaphysics of art and metaphysics of morals. Schopenhauer's formulations dovetailed with the Buddhist "two truth" theory in several respects.

The implications of this suggestion are relevant to Matt Flamm's very well composed "The Piety of Materialistic Conviction and the Abnormal Madness of Western Idealism." Flamm begins by questioning Plato's idealism and Kant's transcendentalism, —which Schopenhauer had no trouble in synthesizing,—and ends with Santayana's sense of "normal madness" involved in his central doctrine of animal faith. Here Santayana's "regenerate and disillusioned piety [replacing] arrogant idealisms of the will" is recognized as "a voluntary delusion in its inception that becomes an involuntary delusion that manifests itself in the different abnormal forms of idealistic madness." Flamm compacts much of Santayana's essential philosophy in these sentences. But my point here is that all this has its provenance in Schopenhauer, whose metaphysical naturalism, which broadsided the regnant idealisms of the 19th-century, antedated Santayana's by a century, and is superior as a systematic formulation in a single world-philosophical classic, *The World as Will and Representation* (1818). To his credit, Santayana, from the earliest stage of his scholarly career, read Schopenhauer with greater application than most of his contemporaries. He ended up reprising its essential orientation more than any other writer except Nietzsche.

The Archimedian point of this consideration consists in Flamm's identification of Santayana's "materiality" with Schopenhauer's "will." Santayana came to call Schopenhauer's World-will a "metaphor" for his *Realm of Matter*; but of course the reverse is equally true. Discounting the various speed bumps Santayana set along the way—which slow down our pursuit of this relationship—Santayana from his early letters to his later autobiography acknowledged his debt to Schopenhauer's worldview. His "realm of matter" as an ontological category always bottoms out as the pragmatic "field of action" in the various manifestations of "animal faith," —concepts which reprise Schopenhauer's "affirmative will" of the instinctively imaginative ani-

mal in transaction with its physical world. In *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and other systematic writings Santayana simply—though brilliantly—rang the changes on Schopenhauer's doctrine of the "double consciousness of the body,"—namely, simultaneously as a causally determined body in physical space and time and as a vitally animated organism pursuing its contingent adventures in its will to live. In his *Realm of Matter*, Santayana's "realm of matter" is explicitly Schopenhauer's *natura naturans* [Santayana (1930), pp. 75-100]. It is decidedly not the atomistic concept of Democritus, though he draws on the laughing philosopher Democritus's dictum that "nature likes to hide." As well, Santayana's entire doctrine of the instinctual basis of the wind-blown and sporadic acts of spirit is ubiquitously found in Schopenhauer's text. Nietzsche and Freud also inherited Schopenhauer's substrative sense of nature subsuming animal consciousness.

Flamm actually highlights animal faith as animal will in action by reference to Schopenhauer on sexual love. This is correct and insightful as far as it goes, but in its specific focus it also distracts from estimating Santayana as one who retails Schopenhauer across the board. And here no pursuit is made of Schopenhauer's concomitant doctrine of "denial of the will" (with its affinities with Hindu/Buddhist conceptions) which is germane to Santayana's doctrines of disillusioned spirituality, the dis-established, symbolic but not literal, nature of religion, the substitute sublimations of the poetic life, and again to Glenn Tiller's reflections on his Platonic idealism in the realm of truth.

Part II: Culture, Society, America

The chapters of the middle section of this volume go on to portray Santayana as playing the role of the culture critic. Again and again, the contributors to this volume stress that Santayana valorized the historical tropes of cultural experience—reminiscent perhaps of Wm. James' valorization of the "varieties of religious experience." His is virtually canonized as a patron saint of today's multiculturalism.

Daniel Moreno Moreno's astute article "On the Structure of Santayana's Dominations and Powers," provides an illuminating rundown of the Powers, Dominations, and Virtues in Santayana's last work *Domination in Powers*. In addition, it positively contributes such a perspective on Santayana's sense of cultural relativity as well grounded in his major categories. Ramon del Castillo follows with another excellent article, "Portrait of an Anxiety: Santayana on William James," which, in addition to detailing Santayana's penetrating observation of his mentor, James, contributes—to my mind at least—to a related impression of a personal *psychologist* strain in Santayana's own text—an ironically *subjectivistic* strain that functions as a significant factor in his multicultural credo. With regard to James, Royce, Bergson, and a score of other authors of his generation, Santayana tended to inject his own personality in establishing the intertext—or anti-text—between them and himself. His

personalized his conversations with the philosophers, often to the point that his remarks took somewhat outrageously parodic forms. My point here is that such literary-psychologicistic factors were sense-constituting in Santayana's text; and indeed they fit the profile of him as one of the Great Disturbers in the post-Kantian world of modern philosophy

With regard to society at large, Santayana was always quick to point out that he was "in Boston, but not of it." Notoriously, his disillusioned animal faith turned up in a variety of embarrassing social and political non-commitments which in today's affirmative action world have been deemed as positively retrogressive. Richard Rubens' probing article, "How Can Someone Committed to Social Progress Read Santayana Sympathetically?," addresses this issue. It contrasts Dewey's philosophy of democratic activism with Santayana's doctrine of "the impotence of spirit," which was the objective correlate of his *unheimlich* temperament. Rubens' article reminds us of the somewhat curmudgeonly quality of Santayana's multiculturalism.

But on the other side, making for a fair and balanced approach, one of the high-points of the volume is the article of its co-editor, Kris Skowroński, who, while acknowledging the potentially scandalous character of Santayana's political views in today's multicultural world, stresses the overall net gain one gets in returning to the wisdom embodied in his culture criticism. His generous article, "Santayana Today: Problems and Hopes," reads as a positive *apologia*, stressing the ways Santayana's "strong individualism, intellectualism, aestheticism and egocentrism" contain significant hopes for various people in today's embattled world for achieving better understanding of one another. In Skowroński's words: "his cultural criticism has a solid metaphysical foundation, anthropological background, and ethical message, which makes it possible for us to follow him in treating American, Spanish, Hindu, Jewish, Muslim, Chinese, Roman, and Old Greek thought with equal respect as sources of wisdom and valuable models for a good life."

But to my mind these considerations of Santayana as culture critic lead to the matter of his affinity with Nietzsche. This relationship needs to be honestly explored on the merits, despite Santayana's generally heavyhanded treatment of his near contemporary (most conspicuously in *Egotism and German Philosophy* where Santayana out-disturbs the Great Disturber, Nietzsche). His spleen against Nietzsche was part and parcel of his aggressive culture criticism which produced a wholesale reactive "spin" on northern European modernity—things German, French, American, British—broad-siding not only Nietzsche and the other German philosophers of the 19th-century, but also Shakespeare, Goethe, Emerson, Walt Whitman, Sartre, Proust, Bergson, and many others, and also convicting such major philosophical authors as Hume and Kant of doctrines of "malicious theories of knowledge" ("malicious" being a particularly ill-chosen word, in my opinion). Excepting Spinoza, Santayana called all of modern philosophy a "*chronique scandaleuse*," but in fact his caricatures of this broad range of major figures are, to this writer, as problematic as his political views.

Santayana's actual close theoretical affinity with Nietzsche's own brand of cultural hermeneutics, however, puts them both equally on the world-historical map as Great Disturbers. In this regard, I take James Seaton's "George Santayana as a Cultural Critic" as one of the most decisive articles in the entire collection. While contrasting Santayana's positive appreciation of "English liberty" with Adorno's revolutionary neo-Marxist cultural criticism, Seaton also gives a very cogent picture of Santayana's "intellectual hedonism" which took the form of being "an observer rather than a participant" in the culture and political wars, crucially combined with "the pleasure he derived from clarifying his own thoughts." Seaton pointedly brings out this hedonistic dimension of Santayana's "mere aestheticism" which, he says, consisted in "the delight of understanding the pleasure of aesthetic appreciation or even sheer entertainment." He depicts these sense-making factors in Santayana's culture criticism as sometimes eventuating in a "misplaced aestheticism," which for example he finds in the preface to his last work, *Dominations and Powers*.

Now, here again we run up again against the question of the infrastructural presuppositions of Santayana's text. Seaton's article, I think, bears witness to Santayana's bottom line epistemic warrant as being of the same kind as Nietzsche's vaunted "autocritique" that manifested itself in their respective doctrines of the psyche's self-interested, self-absorbed, and self-justifying ethics. The evidence is that Santayana often flaunted his aestheticism and hedonism, gesturing against the Yankee and northern European establishments. In net effect, as Seaton's article also tends to corroborate, he displayed his own psychologism and literary psychology through his always self-referent culture criticism that took pride in being out of sorts with the times.

Related to their *personal psychologism*, let me also opine that Nietzsche's and Santayana's philosophical outputs can be regarded as having pioneered a tendency now rampant in the academy toward *cultural psychologism* in the form of philosophically expressed "differences" among nations. Nietzsche's writings are replete with labels about 'the Germans of the old stamp,' the *British*, the *French*, and the *Greek* philosophers, and so on. Santayana exercised his own literary psychology in portraying the *American* character and opinion, the *German spirit*, *British* traits, etc. These characterizations by the two philosophers were saturated with their personal temperaments. And unfortunately, a portion the contemporary philosophical academy has gone this same way of focusing the national identities of the philosophers as having theoretical significance. Santayana, who curiously has even been listed in the ranks of "the classical American philosophers," at times falls in with the historicist postmodern culture warriors in this baleful respect of reducing philosophy to regional context. This is one area where he did not follow his mentor Schopenhauer who wrote:

It should here be remarked... that patriotism when it wants to make itself felt in the domain of learning, is a dirty fellow who should be thrown out of doors. For what could be more impertinent than, where the purely and universally human is the only concern, and where truth, clarity and beauty should alone be of any account, to pre-

sume to put into the scales one's preference for the country to which one's own valued person happens to belong, and then, with that in view, do violence to truth and commit injustice against the great minds of other nations in order to puff up the lesser minds of one's own? [Schopenhauer (1970), p. 229].

While Santayana remained a man without a country, a cosmopolitan guest of "my host, the world," he also indulged this kind of polemical tendency to characterize philosophers by their national identities—a tendency that has reached the point of methodological reductionism in certain niches in the academy today.

Part III: Aesthetics, Poetry, and Spirit

I have suggested above that a possible stumbling block on which Santayana's future reputation will hinge is how readers come to understand his affinities with the precedent philosophies of Schopenhauer and Nietzsche. Back on the American side, the same problem of inventive originality looms with respect to Emerson. As Stanley Cavell has written, one of Santayana's most curmudgeonly accomplishments was (falsely) to consign Emerson to the Genteel Tradition of American letters, thereby obscuring Emerson's credentials as *America's greatest philosopher* [Cavell (2003), p. 66]. Worse, Santayana both distorted Emerson and reprised his essential philosophical ideas. This will be clear if one takes into account such "vintage" essays of Emerson's later career as "Experience," "Fate," "Power," "Beauty," "Worship," and "Illusions," among others. Then last five mentioned appeared in *The Conduct of Life* (1860e, arguably Emerson's greatest work). "Fate" harkens back to his "House of Pain" essay ("Tragedy") written in 1844. It features the Emersonian binary of the fatal contingencies of physical existence in creative tension with the human powers of intellectual and poetic transformations, and in self-reliant moral conduct. "Illusions" caps the volume, thematizing how imaginative perceptions can lead the wise religious soul onward and upward in symbolic appreciations of Nature's ubiquitous correspondences and higher unities.

In this connection H.G. Callaway's "Emerson and Santayana on Imagination" offers both a corrective to Santayana's procrustean reading of Emerson while also serving up valuable food for thought that links Emerson to Peirce at the expense of Santayana's dualistic ontology of matter and spirit. It begins by highlighting the Coleridge-Emersonian conception of the distinction between imagination and fancy. For his part, Santayana worked with a fanciful concept of the imagination—traceable to Hume, among others—that was tied to his methodological scepticism in which "no datum exists." Emerson's robust anti-nominalism and positive doctrine of the organic imagination reappears, according to Callaway, in the American "pragmatic pragmatist tradition," which valorize the theoretical and technological processes of scientific understanding. He reminds us that Emerson's sense of constructive imagination (both scientific and poetical) consists of a continuous thread

from his first work, *Nature*, of 1836 until his very late writing of 1875, *Letters and Social Aims*. And he insightfully suggests that this Emersonian conception of the imagination looms is the background of Peirce's logic of abduction—the heuristic logic of discovery at the basis of realistic scientific hypothesis-making and of poetical clairvoyance. In this regard he cites Emerson's 1875 essay "Poetry and Imagination" as an expression of the organic connaturality of the creative scientific imagination and the laws of the universe—laws that ultimately are both physical and moral—that was later played out in Peirce's pragmatism. Peirce himself declared that "The question of pragmatism is the question of abduction."

In a fuller treatment, not given here by Callaway, Peirce's fallibilism, anti-nominalism, doctrine of the three kainopythagorean categories and three normative sciences, and his metaphysical synechism can indeed be considered to have their natural seat in this same register of Emersonian formulations of the connatural imagination. Callaway rightly intimates that this intertextual interface between Emerson and Peirce needs to be explored to overcome a current tendency in the academy toward a disreputable "vulgar pragmatism" that perpetually foregrounds nominalistic and psychologistic concepts of experience.

Santayan's sense of the detached spirit, however, came to have something in common with Emerson. To give only one example, here is the final paragraph of Emerson's "Tragedy" penned in 1844:

The intellect is a consoler, which delights in detaching, or putting an interval between a man and his fortune, and so converts the sufferer into a spectator, and his pain into poetry. It yields the joys of conversation, or letters, and of science. Hence also the torments of life become tuneful tragedy, solemn and soft with music, and garnished with rich dark pictures. But higher still than the activities of art, the intellect in its purity, and the moral sense in its purity, are not distinguished from each other, and both ravish us into a region whereinto these passionate clouds of sorrow cannot rise. [Emerson (1983), p. 1295]

This typical passage in Emerson contains the essential lineaments of Santayana's disillusioned "life of the spirit" set within an appreciation of the irrational and fatal contingencies of physical existence. Santayana could have written it himself, and in fact he wrote equivalently on many occasions.

And yet, *as culture critics*, Emerson and Santayana turned out to be worlds apart. Compare, if you will, Emerson's extraordinarily insightful appreciations of Shakespeare and of Goethe in two separate chapters of *Some Representative Men* (1850) with Santayana's grumpy interpretations of the Bard in *Essays on Poetry and Religion* and of Goethe in *Three Philosophical Poets*, respectively. Many other examples of this contrast between the two philosophers' aesthetic sensibilities can be cited. It is fair to say that Santayana's rhetorical polemics against the modern world tended to overwhelm his aesthetic sensibility.

But as well, compared to Emerson, Santayana also comes off as the lesser “naturalist.” His “realm of matter” is an armchair philosopher’s abstraction when stacked up against Emerson’s ubiquitous descriptions of the resistances-cum-potentialities of the elemental forces of nature. As typified in the title of his *grand cru* work of 1860, *The Conduct of Life*, Emerson in fact wrote the script for the later Pragmatists—especially Peirce and Dewey—in emphasizing the demiurgic potencies of the human mind amidst the refractory laws of the physical world. In such essays as “Compensation,” “Experience,” “Fate,” “Power,” “Wealth,” and (my personal favorite) “Farming,” he splendidly thematized “Man as causationist” in his concrete natural settings (the woodsman, the hunter, the whaler, the farmer, the miller). These essays with such paeons to the robust life as Walt Whitman’s “Song of Myself,” “Song of the Broad Axe,” “Song of the Open Road,” “Song of the Exposition,” “A Song for Occupations,” “A Song of the Rolling Earth” [Whitman (1983)]. Both writers wrote of the symbolic “correspondences” between the physical laws and the moral laws. At the same time they realistically focused the deterministic, often fatal, aspects of physical and human existence. Emerson, echoing Melville, wrote: “the shipwrecked sailor is entitled to his eyes, and the rest is fate.”

But the young Santayana launched his career in *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion* by disingenuously characterizing Emerson as a “dilettante,” consigning him to the literary drawing rooms of the Genteel tradition, while characterizing Whitman as a “barbaric” poet. These self-serving characterizations were well wide of the mark. Whitman, America’s poet laureate, was on the same page as Emerson, the idealist of the religious sublime and naturalist of the scientific intellect. Santayana, who retired back to Europe never to return to the United States during the next forty years, never really came to grips with either of them or, for that matter, with the base-line realistic-idealistic temper of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century American life (as seen, for example, in the poetry of Wallace Stevens or William Carlos Williams). Today, I venture to say, it is hazardous to take his Europe-based characterizations of American life and letters *literally*—to do so would be anachronistically to exercise one’s own cultural psychologism and politics in alignment with Santayana’s [Skowroński (2007)].

Now, as several chapters in this section of the conference volume bring out, Santayana, apart from and inconsistent with his polemicized culture criticism, articulated a theory of the primacy of the aesthetic life. His “life of the spirit” apotheosized the aesthetic life as much as did Nietzsche, Heidegger, Proust, James Joyce, Emily Dickinson, and Wallace Stevens. But again, the provenance for these strands of philosophy that saw the aesthetic life as the redemption of besotten humanity (now that “God is dead”) is traceable to Goethe, Schopenhauer, Emerson. The two main influences on Nietzsche were Schopenhauer and Emerson, just as the three main influences on Proust, with whom Santayana has much in common, were Emerson, Schopenhauer, and John Ruskin. Santayana, I have argued, dovetailed with Nietzsche both in his agonistic method and in his temperamental epistemic perspective, while shar-

ing a sense of the contemplative spirit with Emerson. The question here is, do we adhere to the temperamental or the contemplative Santayana?

In these critical terms, Guiseppe Patella's article, "Santayana's Mediterranean Aesthetics," rehearses Santayana's cultural politics in drawing a sharp contrast between his reputed "Mediterranean aesthetics" and the supposed puritanical worldview of Harvard/Yankee New England. It would have been better if Patella adduced some of Santayana's actual aesthetic judgments to illustrate his thesis. Where, one would like to know, is Santayana's "Mediterranean aesthetics" stated in his text itself? Where precisely when he treats of Shakespeare, Goethe, Whitman, Emerson, Proust, Shelley, or modern art?

Patella's article is counterbalanced by two articles dealing with Santayana's relation to the American *modernist poet* Wallace Stevens. (The twenty-year old Stevens knew Santayana at Harvard, but thereafter they went their separate ways, no correspondence having been exchanged between them for the next fifty years.) Antonio Lastra's "Towards a Supreme Reading of George Santayana" obliquely works with Stevens' notion of an ever inviting, ever receding "supreme fiction" as the goal of the life of the imagination. Jacek Gutorow's "To An Old Philosopher in Rome: Wallace Stevens's Poetic Meditations on Santayana" is a substantial piece. It is particularly interesting in drawing parallels between Santayana's philosophy and Stevens' long poem "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven." I think, however, that it is only partially satisfying, remaining promising but unconvincing in certain respects because it does not take into account the full range of Stevens' chequered allusions to Santayana in his *Letters* and in his poetry. Nevertheless it is the antidote to Patella's stress on Santayana's purported "Mediterranean spirit."

There are other good articles in this last section on Santayana under the rubric of Aesthetics, Poetry, and Spirit. Daniel Pinkas's "Santayana, the Absurd, and Ultimate Humor" continues an approach to Santayana already found in the literature, as for example in Jessica Wahman's earlier article "We are All Mad Here: Santayana and the Significance of Humor." It focuses Santayana's "ethics of cheerfulness" in the tradition of the laughing philosopher Democritus. But this approach tends to confirm my Nietzschean reading of Santayana as well. And it takes us back to the influence of Schopenhauer on Santayana—as per Schopenhauer's remark, integral to his theoretical formulations, that "a life is comic in the short and tragic in the long run."

Till Kinzel's "Reflections on George Santayana, Aesthetics, and the Ancient Quarrel between Philosophy and Poetry" is another insightful article in this focus. It brings Santayana's intertwined comic and tragic sensibilities to the fore in comparison and contrast with the aphorisms of the Columbian writer Gomez Davila. Davila's form of aphoristic Romanticism, it is worth noting, is closer to the modernist Emersonian Wallace Stevens (who also composed in aphoristic form) than to Santayana who reactively rejected Romanticism together with the other of the four Rs, Renaissance, Reformation, and Revolution.

One of the finest article in the entire volume is Thomas Alexander's "Beauty and the Labyrinth of Evil: Santayana and the Possibility of Naturalistic Mysticism." Alexander first deals with Santayana's relation to Neo-Platonism, indicating how his "close resemblance to the Gnostics' bleak view of nature" in effect turns on its head Plotinus' psychagogic flight of the soul to an inner and higher beauty. From this start Alexander critically takes up Santayana's problematic determination of the spiritual life as transcendent of the problem of evil. This consideration in turn leads to the question Santayana raises as to the inevitable descents of the spirit, and Santayana's own dilemma of oscillating between his naturalistic moral concerns and those of the spiritual life. In the end, writes Alexander, "the moral life and the spiritual life have little to say to each other: the spiritual life offers itself to the moral life as a potentially welcome distraction; the moral life threatens to disturb the spiritual life, even while making it possible in the first place. The more the two are brought into harmony, it seems, the greater the danger that the spiritual life will become confused with the moral life—with 'Platonism' being the unhappy result." Rejecting this conflicting dualism in Santayana's thought, Alexander then offers a brilliantly perceptive disquisition on the Buddhist Idea of Compassionate Insight as having achieved a true blend of detached wisdom and moral practice.

Among other things, I consider that Alexander's analysis reinforces the point that Santayana's concept of morality is egocentric, involving vital affirmations of the individual psyche, and is therefore to be distinguished from the morality of "denial of the will" in Schopenhauer. Schopenhauer aligned his ethics with the Buddhist teaching, while Nietzsche consciously denounced Schopenhauer's non-egoistic ethics of justice and compassion. Santayana's ethics is in the same case as Nietzsche's, not going beyond the principle of the self-interested psyche. At the same time, while he has a concept of the disinterested "life of the spirit," but this does not go beyond Nietzsche's autocritique of the artistic life as having the sole redemptive value in this suffering world. In effect, Santayana retained the teaching of Schopenhauer's metaphysics of art, but not of his metaphysics of morals, which essentially dovetailed with the Hindu and Buddhist ethics [Schopenhauer (1970), pp. 133-47; (1995), pp. 199-216].

We recall that Jaspers placed the Buddha, together with Socrates, Confucius, and Jesus, in a category apart from and above the philosophers proper. Alexander's analysis can be read as confirming that, and tends to reinforce my placing Santayana alongside Kierkegaard and Nietzsche among the post-Kantian Great Disturbers. Alexander is on target when he describes Santayana's concept of morality as threatening to "disturb" his own view of the contemplative life!

In this review I have stressed how the panoramic contents of this international conference volume can be understood as illustrating a categorization of Santayana's overall philosophical achievement as one of the Great Disturbers. At the same time I have opened up an inquiry as to his long-range "historic" significance in view of the fact that his thought consciously and unconsciously *retailed* the precedent

worldviews of three major thinkers, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Emerson. He also *mis-read* them and a whole range of other authors, including major figures such as Goethe, Hume, and Kant. The reputation of Santayana in the world-history of philosophy hangs in the balance, and only time will tell. Meanwhile this conference volume has taken a laudable step in promoting him as one of the rare cosmopolitan philosophers of the 20th-century. The contributors and especially the two editors should be congratulated for their mission accomplished.

Philosophy Dept., State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Email address: dd9414@aol.com.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- CAVELL, Stanley (2003), *Emerson's Transcendental Etudes*, Stanford University Press.
- KANT, Immanuel (1965), *Critique of Pure Reason*, trans. Norman Kemp Smith. New York: St. Martin's Press.
- (1977), *Prolegomena to Any Future Metaphysics*, trans. James W. Ellington. Indianapolis: Hackett.
- FLAMM, Matthew Caleb and SKOWROŃSKI, Krzysztof Piotr (editors) (2007), *Under Any Sky: Contemporary Readings of George Santayana*. Cambridge Scholars Press.
- EHRlich, Leonard H. (2003), "Philosophy and Its History: The Double Helix of Jaspers's Thought," in *Karl Jaspers on Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S. J. and Raymond J. Langley. Humanities Books.
- EMERSON, Ralph Waldo (1983), *Essays and Lectures*, ed. Joel Porte. New York: The Library of America.
- JASPERS, Karl (1986), *Basic Philosophical Writings: Selections*, ed. Leonard H. Ehrlich, Edith Ehrlich, and George B. Pepper. Ohio University Press.
- (2003), *Karl Jaspers on Philosophy of History and History of Philosophy*, ed. Joseph W. Koterski, S. J. and Raymond J. Langley. Humanities Books.
- LACHS, John (2006), *On Santayana*, Thomson Wadsworth.
- PIERCE, Charles S. (1940), *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler. N.Y.: Dover.
- SANTAYANA, George (1930), *The Realm of Matter: Book Second of Realms of Being*, London: Constable and Company LTD.
- SCHOPENHAUER, Arthur (1969), *The World as Will and Representation*, 2 volumes, trans. E.F.G. Payne. New York: Dover.
- (1970), *Essays and Aphorisms*, transl., R. J. Hollingdale. Middlesex: Penguin Books.
- (1995), *On the Basis of Morality*, trans. E.F.G. Payne. Oxford: Berghahn Books.
- SKOWROŃSKI, Krzysztof Piotr (2007), *Santayana and America: Values, Liberties, Responsibility*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- WHITMAN, Walt (1983), *Leaves of Grass*, Bantam Classic.