

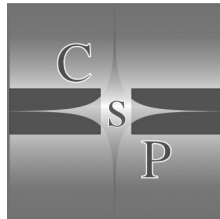
Santayana and America.  
Values, Liberties, Responsibility



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By

Krzysztof Piotr Skowroński



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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface . . . . .	ix
Acknowledgments . . . . .	xii
List of Abbreviations . . . . .	xiv

## Chapter 1

<b>A Spaniard in New England: Santayana's In-Betweenness . . . . .</b>	<b>1</b>
Cosmopolitan Background . . . . .	2
Between Castile and New England . . . . .	6
The Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Problem of Loyalty . . . . .	8
Spanish Affection and American Friends . . . . .	11
The Quixotic Imagination versus the Genteel Intellect . . . . .	13
The Ethos of Chivalry versus Mercantile Morality . . . . .	16
William James and Moribund Latinity . . . . .	20
Farewell to New England . . . . .	21
Spanish-American Philosopher . . . . .	24

## Chapter 2

<b>Santayana at Harvard: Liberal Arts and the Meaning of Education . . . . .</b>	<b>29</b>
Santayana's Career at Harvard . . . . .	30
Educational Controversies at Harvard . . . . .	37
Education as the Formation of Character and Taste . . . . .	43
Depersonalization and the Importance of the Liberal Arts . . . . .	45
Athletics as Art . . . . .	49
Santayana and Dewey on Education . . . . .	50
Education as a Transmission of Tradition . . . . .	52

## Chapter 3

<b>American Tradition and Sentimental Time . . . . .</b>	<b>54</b>
Sentimental Time and Multiple Realities . . . . .	55
Santayana's Methodology in Approaching America . . . . .	57
Sentimental Time and the Ontological Status of the American Past . . . . .	61
America and Pictorial Space . . . . .	64

The Art of Composing History . . . . . 66  
 Axiological Assumptions . . . . . 69  
 Egotism . . . . . 72  
 American Tradition in Santayana . . . . . 74

**Chapter 4**

**American Heritage as a Source of Values . . . . . 75**  
 The Axiological Perspective . . . . . 76  
 The Genteel Tradition as a Source of Values . . . . . 81  
 Crude but Vital America as a Source of Values . . . . . 87  
 The America of Non-Human Beauties and Spiritual Goods . . . . . 93  
 Santayana’s Impartiality . . . . . 98

**Chapter 5**

**Vital Liberties in American Democracy . . . . . 99**  
 Vacant Freedom and Vital Liberty . . . . . 100  
 American Democracy Against Vital Liberties . . . . . 102  
 Classic Liberty . . . . . 105  
 Is the Self-Made Man Really Self-Made? . . . . . 107  
 The Declaration of Independence: A Salad of Illusions . . . . . 110  
 Lincoln’s Ideals Undermined . . . . . 112  
 Harvard: the Illusion of Self-Government . . . . . 115  
 Partial Tolerance in Religion and Morals . . . . . 117  
 Santayana versus James on Happiness in America . . . . . 119  
 Weaknesses in Santayana’s View . . . . . 121  
 Santayana’s non-Americanism . . . . . 123

**Chapter 6**

**Santayana and American Pragmatists: a Dispute over  
 Americanism . . . . . 125**  
 Americanism . . . . . 127  
 The Problem of Anthropocentrism . . . . . 129  
 Solitude and Society . . . . . 134  
 The Philosophy of Enterprise . . . . . 138  
 Truth, Opinion, and Disinterestedness . . . . . 141  
 The Democracy of Metaphysics and the Metaphysics  
 of Democracy . . . . . 143  
 Contextualizing Santayana’s Thought . . . . . 146

**Chapter 7**

<b>Santayana and the Problems of Americanization</b> . . . . .	148
Encounter, Meeting, Confrontation . . . . .	149
Spain's Generation of 1898 Movement . . . . .	151
Santayana In Between . . . . .	154
America's Religious Exceptionalism . . . . .	156
Santayana's Naturalism in Political Religion . . . . .	158
America's Political Expansionism . . . . .	160
Santayana: America as the Next Superpower . . . . .	163
America's Moral Superiority . . . . .	165
Santayana's Variety of Perfections . . . . .	167
Americanization: a Burden or a Resource? . . . . .	170
Santayana's Message on Americanization . . . . .	172

**Chapter 8**

<b>The Responsibility of the Philosopher in Modern Times: American Neo-Pragmatists and Santayana</b> . . . . .	173
Should the Philosopher Be Someone Special? . . . . .	174
Philosophers versus Professors of Philosophy . . . . .	177
Wisdoms versus Knowledge . . . . .	179
The Specific Responsibilities of Philosophers . . . . .	181
The Responsibility of an Impotent Mind . . . . .	187
The Philosopher and Public Affairs . . . . .	189
Social Amelioration . . . . .	191
Conclusion . . . . .	196
Bibliography . . . . .	202
Index . . . . .	209





## PREFACE

George Santayana (1863–1952), a Spanish-American philosopher, is an influential personage on the cultural stage in English- and Spanish-speaking countries. His numerous books and papers on topics as varied as epistemology, ontology, aesthetics, ethics, anthropology, value theory, and American studies, along with his best-selling novel, his sophisticated poetry, and his famous autobiography, make him a vivid and profound source of reflection on the history of American and European thought, as well as a stimulus for future work. Santayana's exceptionality was appreciated by William James and Josiah Royce, his most eminent colleagues in Harvard University's Department of Philosophy, and has been discussed by such respected authors as John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Charles Hartshorne, Eric Voegelin, Alfred Schutz, Richard Rorty, Hilary Putnam, Arthur Danto, and Ferdinand Savater, among others.

This book aims to understand Santayana by considering his often provocative views on America. Other scholars have reconstructed his thought at various times and in a variety of ways, but no one has yet considered Santayana's approach toward America in a serious and profound way (at least not in the English language). I am convinced that the impartiality of Santayana's philosophy, its transcendence of cultural limits and mental borders, makes it a living philosophy, and that this is the strongest aspect of Santayana's thought.

My central claim is that Santayana can be seen as a thinker who approached America, its cultural life, and its tradition from the viewpoint of values, liberties, and responsibility. In other words, I aim to show that Santayana's criticism of America had a philosophical, moral, and axiological character: it dealt with values rather than tastes; with human liberties, not just local traditions, and with the responsibility for shaping human minds, rather than simply national or social habits. From this point of view, Santayana becomes important in thinking about modern America, and his texts on America (as well as on other issues) should be read with utmost attention. He was deeply engaged in American cultural life, being non-American by birth, by spirit, and by choice; he criticized American culture but admired America and loved Americans; and he wrote in English but retained a classical spirit, Latin sensitivity, and ancient detachment. Thus, it is Santayana as a participant in American intellectual life, Santayana as its commentator, a foreigner, a witness of cultural clashes, and most of all Santayana as a philosopher and a theorist whom I have chosen as a source of inspiration.

Let me explain my stance more broadly. The United States attracts millions of people from all corners of the globe, and Americans claim that their country is ever more tolerant, pluralistic, and cosmopolitan. Santayana's philosophy shows that this is hardly the case: the Poles, Hispanics, Arabs, and others who want to enjoy life in the United States are *not* the same Poles, Hispanics, Arabs, and others who are ready to fight and even die for their home traditions, the religions of their hearts, their local hierarchies of values, and their own understandings of liberty and responsibility, so often incompatible with those prevalent in America. Santayana's philosophy offers an anthropological, metaphysical, ethical, and political justification for all of the world's peoples' traditions, religions, values, and understanding. His notion of social atomism and his concept of "entelechy," meaning one's own perfection, showed that each living body has a right to grow and develop in its own way, albeit within a well-established orthodoxy and moral order.

U.S. hegemony in the global arena evokes moral challenges: Is America just the latest superpower to impose its own values on other, less expansive countries, or does America offer universal values, equal liberties, and clear responsibilities to all human beings? In this era of globalization, cross-cultural contacts, and the overwhelming influence of the United States, such questions cannot be ignored, especially by philosophers. I am convinced that Santayana's "in-betweenness" gives us a remarkable chance to look these problems more deeply.

The methodological method that I have employed in this work is a one, by means of which I have used Santayana's philosophy as a key to penetrate America's intellectual history, to understand the intricacies of its philosophical development, and to participate in its most important debates on values, liberties, and responsibility. I do not offer the book's thesis in a systematic and all-embracing way, because Santayana did not produce a fully developed theory on such issues as American democracy, American "historiosophy," and social development in America. Instead, I propose a multidimensional outlook that embraces all the American themes broached by Santayana and gives, I hope, a panoramic view of a variety of topics and opinions held by one of the most important representatives of modern American thought.

The book will proceed in the following way. After the introduction, where a biographical sketch is outlined, Santayana's concept of the liberal arts along with the meaning of education is presented as well as his Harvard career. It is followed by an examination of his methodological approach towards America, which is specific and unique, because it is imaginative rather than historical, sociological or political. Then, American heritage is seen as a source of values and the limits of liberty in the modern U.S. are investigated, examined, and commented upon. Next, dispute over Americanism is discussed in the light of the debate between

Santayana and the Pragmatists and, later, over the philosopher's responsibility in the light of the Neo-Pragmatists' comments on Santayana; between these two chapters, one devoted to the problem of Americanization is presented.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Let me add that chapter “Santayana and the Problems of Americanization” is a modified version of the paper published in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society. A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, Winter 2004, Vol. XL, No. 1, pp. 107–134. Chapter “Vital Liberties in American Democracy” is a modified version of the paper published in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society*.

*A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, Summer 2004, Vol. XL, No. 3, pp. 513–541, and chapter “American Heritage as a Source of Values” in a modified version of a paper published in *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society. A Quarterly Journal in American Philosophy*, Spring 2005, Vol. XLI, No.2, pp. 367–394, and its Spanish translation was published in *La Torre de Virrey. Revista del Estudios Culturales*, Numero Cero (L’Eliana 2005/2006), pp. 41–51. Also, a small part of chapter one was used in a paper published in Spanish as “El cosmopolitismo de Santayana” in *Archipiélago. Cuadernos de Critica de la Literatura*, 70/2006, pp. 81–85.

# LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

## of Santayana's works

To be cited by the number of the Volume (I–V). *The Works of George Santayana*. The Critical Edition. Edited by William G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp, Jr. Cambridge and London: The MIT Press, 1986–

*AFSL* – *Animal Faith and Spiritual Life. Previously Unpublished and Uncollected Writings by George Santayana with Critical Essays on his Thought*. Edited by John Lachs. New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967.

*BR* – *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*. Daniel Cory (ed.). New York: Columbia University Press, 1968.

*COUS* – *Character and Opinion in the United States with the Reminiscences of William James and Josiah Royce and Academic Life in America*. New York: Scribner's, 1920.

*DL* – *Dialogues in Limbo*. New York: Scribner's, 1926.

*DP* – *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government*. New York: Scribner's, 1951.

*EGP* – *Egotism in German Philosophy*. London and Toronto: Dent; New York: Scribner's, 1915.

*GSA* – *George Santayana's America. Essays on Literature and Culture*. Collected and with an Introduction by James Ballowe. Urbana-Chicago-London: University of Illinois Press, 1967.

*GTB* – *Genteel Tradition at Bay*. London: The Adelphi, 1931.

*ICG* – *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels or God in Man*. New York: Scribner's, 1946.

*IW* – *The Idler and His Works, and Other Essays*. Edited by Daniel Cory. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1957.

*IPR* – *Interpretations of Poetry and Religion*. New York: Harper, 1957.

*L* – *The Letters of George Santayana*. Edited with an Introduction and Commentary by Daniel Cory. New York: Scribner's, 1955.

*LE – Little Essays Drawn from the Writings of George Santayana.* Edited by Logan Pearlhall Smith. New York: Scribner's, 1924.

*LR – The Life of Reason.* One Volume Edition. New York: Scribner's, 1953.

*OS – Obiter Scripta. Lectures, Essays, and Reviews.* Edited by Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz. New York: Scribner's, 1936.

*POML – Physical Order and Moral Liberty. Previously Unpublished Essays.* John and Shirley Lachs (eds.). Vanderbilt University Press, 1969.

*PGS – The Philosophy of George Santayana.* The Library of Living Philosophers, Volume II. Edited by Arthur P. Schlipp, La Salle: Open Court, 1951.

*RCS – Reason in Common Sense.* New York: Scribner's, 1905.

*RE – The Realm of Essence. Book First of Realms of Being.* New York: Scribner's, 1927.

*RM – The Realm of Matter. Book Second of Realms of Being.* New York: Scribner's, 1930.

*RS – The Realm of Spirit. Book Fourth of Realm of Being.* New York: Scribner's, 1940.

*RT – The Realm of Truth. Book Third of Realms of Being.* New York: Scribner's, 1938.

*SAF – Scepticism and Animal Faith. Introduction to a System of Philosophy.* New York: Dover, 1955.

*SB – The Sense of Beauty: Being an Outline of Aesthetic Theory.* New York: Dover, 1955.

*SE – Soliloquies in England and Later Soliloquies.* London, Bombay, Sydney: Constable, 1922.

*T – The Works of George Santayana.* Triton Edition. New York: Scribner's, 1936–1940.

*TPP – Three Philosophical Poets: Lucretius, Dante, Goethe.* Harvard Studies in Comparative Literature, Volume 1. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1910.

*WD – Winds of Doctrine, and Platonism and the Spiritual Life.* New York: Harper, 1957.





## CHAPTER ONE

### A SPANIARD IN NEW ENGLAND: SANTAYANA'S IN-BETWEENNESS

I have been involuntarily uprooted. I accept the intellectual advantages of that position, with its social and moral disqualifications. And I refuse to be annexed, to be abolished, or to be grafted onto any plant of a different species. (*I*, 363)

George Santayana spent over forty years in the United States. His place of residence was Boston, where his mother lived, and Cambridge, where he studied and, later, taught at Harvard University until 1912. It was after that time, however, that his major works on America were published: *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920), *The Genteel Tradition at Bay* (1931), and *The Last Puritan* (1935), as well as the first two parts of his autobiography, *Persons and Places* (1944) and *The Middle Span* (1946). While in the United States, he gained experience and maturity and prepared and shaped his opinions for a full and well-formed criticism of America, which he disseminated in part through the lesser publications on American culture, philosophy, and literature that were later collected in *George Santayana's America* (1967) and *Santayana on America* (1968). He also actively participated in New England's academic life; today, we have access to the comments, recollections, and observations of those who remembered him.

In this work, I look at Santayana from the point of view of his early contacts with New England and investigate the interconnected problems of how the cultural confrontation between his old motherland and his new country formed his philosophical stance and how the philosophical position that he assumed influenced his way of perceiving this connection. I do not wish to imitate John McCormick's masterpiece *George Santayana: A Biography* (1988), the very best biography yet written on Santayana, nor will I copy Timothy Sprigge's excellent systematic and technical presentation of Santayana's system of philosophy in *Santayana: An Examination of His Philosophy* (1974, 1995) or John Lachs's terse exposition of all major aspects of this system in *George Santayana* (1988). Instead, I concentrate my attention almost exclusively on the confrontational and con-

trastive dimension of his thought, especially at the time of its initiation – the dimension that evokes his *in-betweenness*.

First, however, allow me to sketch Santayana's background from the point of view of multicultural contacts and multiphilosophical influences upon his family and upon himself, as well as of the intellectual climate to which he was exposed during his early years. I do this in the conviction that these influences had tremendous consequences for his philosophical growth and his philosophical message.

## **Cosmopolitan Background**

Santayana's maternal grandfather, Jose Borrás y Bufurull, a Catalanian from the city of Reus, was a political emigrant who, after the French army entered Spain in 1823, found himself first in the Balearic Islands, where he married Teresa Carbonell (probably of Barcelona), and then in Glasgow, Scotland, where his daughter was born. Several years later, he came across the Atlantic and settled in Winchester, Virginia. He apparently flourished there to some degree: though he was not an American citizen, he was appointed the U.S. consul in Barcelona in 1835 by American president Andrew Jackson. After about ten years in Barcelona, he moved to the Philippines to govern a small island, where he died.

Borrás's daughter, Josefina Borrás (1826–1912), traveled with her father from the place of her birth to Virginia, where she acquired her accent; she spoke “quaint, perhaps Virginian, English” all her life (I, 9). From America, she moved with him to Barcelona and then to the Philippines, where she married an American merchant, George Sturgis of Boston, whom she met in Manila. After his premature death, she married for the second time in Madrid (c. 1862), this time to Agustín Ruiz de Santayana (1812–1893), whom she had also met in the Philippines. Agustín was a native of the city of Zamorra in Castilla-León, although his father came from Galicia in northwestern Spain. He was a Renaissance man: he studied law and philosophy at the University of Valladolid, and he was a lover of painting (he painted pictures like those of Goya), of classics (he translated Seneca's tragedies into Spanish), and of geography (he wrote a book about the Island of Mindanao, traveled three times around the globe, was once, during his colonial service, the governor of a province in the Philippines, and was later a financial secretary to the governor-general there). The cosmopolitanism of the whole family seems to have been well established. The graves of George Santayana's family are scattered about on three continents and in four countries: in the Philippines (grandfather), the United States (mother), Spain (father), and Italy (George Santayana).

It is not surprising, then, that George Santayana himself was cosmopolitan. He was born in Madrid on 16 December 1863, and when he was three years old his family moved to Avila in the heart of Castile. When he was nine, his father took him to Boston in order to put him in the care of his mother, who had gone there with the rest of their children a few years earlier. (Santayana's father shortly thereafter returned to Spain.) Santayana remained in Boston until he was forty-nine, at which time he returned to Europe for good. In the meantime, however, he crossed the Atlantic thirty-eight times, paying innumerable visits to England, Spain, France, Italy, and, on one occasion, to the Middle East, Greece, and Central Europe.

His cosmopolitanism extended beyond traveling, moreover. The trips of his grandfather and his mother to the Philippines and the charm of their exotic stories helped him to think in a cosmopolitan fashion, to assume a disinterested mood, and to develop unprejudiced convictions in various areas of life. Yet it was his extraordinarily vivid imagination and the subtlety of his mind that made it possible for him to embrace sympathetically the many sundry manifestations of the human mind and of human passion.

Santayana's unusual openness, tolerance, impartiality, and respect for the representatives of different cultures, traditions, moralities, philosophies, religions, and styles of living are apparent in much of his work. His reservations about family life as the best option for everyone may have been the result of his early reflections about the primitive tribes, so different from the "civilized" nations yet so noble in their own way. "Are those blameless children of nature . . . promiscuous in their loves?" he asked, and answered his question in the negative, concluding that in certain cultures, "promiscuity may be virtuous no less than a fidelity imposed by oaths and fertile in jealousy and discord" (*I*, 34). On another occasion, while talking about simple people in his own native land, he did not lament their technological backwardness, nor did he feel sorry for the everyday burdens they had to bear. Instead, he focused on the moral costs they would have to pay if they chose to reject their traditional way of life. If they did so, he commented, "They would have fallen into confusion and moral anarchy," while "their lives would have been no better, and their judgments much worse" (*I*, 109).

Santayana esteemed other peoples' courage in the face of the overpowering infinity of the universe, including the peoples of extinct civilizations, whose material remnants evoke humankind's striving to establish moral orientations. While in Greece, he was fascinated to see Doric temples, the "symbols of severity, simplicity, harmony, and strength." Doric purity, he wrote, "indicates a people that knows its small place in the universe and yet asserts its dignity." Santayana admired "the courage and the dignity with which the Dorians recognized their place in nature, and filled it to perfection" (*I*, 451–53).

His stance of friendliness and understanding extended also to religion. The great religious systems, both present and extinct alike, seemed to him all similar in offering particular visions of human destiny against the might of natural forces. While in Egypt, he took the opportunity to see the monumental temples and mysterious sanctuaries, steeped with the spirit of the past ages, and these were profound enough to impress him favorably. "I envied the priests that once officiated there, faithful to immemorial traditions, and learned in mysterious conventions," he wrote. "It was somnambulism," he judged, "but in a noble setting, healthful, protective, capable of perpetuating itself for generations, and of rendering human life humanly better rather than worse" (*I*, 165).

Admiration for the Orient, too, can be found in Santayana's works. His familiarity with such masterpieces of Arabic culture as *A Thousand and One Nights* and his acquaintance with the spirit of Islam as conveyed in the Koran were perhaps facilitated by the fact that Spain had once been under Moorish rule for over seven centuries, and thus many of elements of Moorish culture, language, spirit, and architecture were inherited by modern Spain. It was at historical Baalbek, close to Damascus, that he gave a his cosmopolitanism and tolerance a definite and terse articulation: "The full grown human soul should respect all traditions and understand all passions," he wrote, but "at the same time it should possess and embody a particular culture, without unmanly relaxation or mystical neutrality" (*I*, 464).

Santayana's cosmopolitanism had, within his own philosophy, an anthropological justification. Following Aristotle's concept of *entelechia*, he claimed that each individual possesses his or her own vital liberty, or inner power to thrive, and this vital liberty is biologically predisposed and socially activated in one way or another. The flourishing of each individual's vital liberty is morally vindicated in the name of the individual's own specific completion and unrepeatable excellence.

According to Santayana's philosophy of travel, which complements these arguments, the traveler's transcending of boundaries and experiencing of otherness should be accompanied by his or her own axiological, cultural, and philosophical points of reference. Otherwise, traveling becomes rambling, wandering, drifting, or tramping. The traveler, in other words, "must be somebody and come from somewhere, so that his definite character and moral traditions may supply an organ and a point of comparison for his observations." Santayana explained: "He must not go nosing about like a peddler for profit or like an emigrant for a vacant lot. Everywhere he should show the discretion and maintain the dignity of a guest. Everywhere he should remain a stranger no matter how benevolent, and a critic no matter how appreciative" (*I*, 449). From Santayana's philosophical point of view, then, traveling required making an attempt "to overcome moral and ideal provinciality, and to see that every form of life had its own perfection, which it was

stupid and cruel to condemn for differing from some other form, by chance one's own" (*I*, 170). Sometimes, this attempt takes the form of a struggle against social, religious, cultural, and other forms of prejudice, as respect for the deep wisdom of the past cannot be limited exclusively to *our* wisdom. Thus, Santayana asserted, for the humanist or philosopher or for any unprejudiced person, "there is no more reason for swearing by the letter of the Gospels than that of Homer or the Upanishads or the Koran" (*ICG*, 5).

Santayana put this view into practice when he studied Indian thought (early Buddhist and Hindu) in Germany under Paul Deussen.<sup>1</sup> In his later years, he saw this body of thought as the greatest achievement in philosophy and regretted his inability to overcome the language barrier in order to study it more closely. He attributed to Buddhists and Hindus an elevated spiritual position and a disinterested approach to ethics. He quoted the Upanishads and cherished the Mahabharata, in which the battle is a background to a poetic story, eighteen chapters long, after which the battle is allowed to proceed. He wrote: "I honour their courage in bidding the sun stand still, not that they might thoroughly vanquish an earthly enemy but that they might wholly clarify their own soul" (*SE*, 125–26). He also had great esteem for classic Chinese thought. While discussing social psychology with Victor Francis Calverton, his adversary, he was skeptical regarding Calverton's book on the topic and seemed to favor the old Oriental solutions. "I happen to be reading Lao Tse at odd moments," he declared, and said, "I wonder if we have any better solution to propose than he proposed long ago" (*V*, 5:400).

While the above list might suggest that Santayana's cosmopolitanism had an exclusively international character, this is not the case. He also observed the varieties of cultural life within the United States. One of his earliest American friends, for example, appeared to him a man of the world, possessing "a kind of cosmopolitan competence or normality" that Santayana had "noticed in the best people of the American West." Such people, he explained, "moved swimmingly in the midst of all the current conventions and noises, but they seemed to make light of them, as your good Bostonians never could. They were not 'taken in' by the tastes, opinions, and pleasures that they played with as in a carnival" (*I*, 190).

Unfortunately, cosmopolitanism does not preclude prejudice, and Santayana's ambiguity toward Jews, taken collectively or ideally, is a curious example.<sup>2</sup> He called Jews "sheenies" (*V*, 5:364) and was convinced that "the Jews frankly cared

<sup>1</sup> See John M. Michelsen, "The Place of Buddhism in Santayana's Moral Philosophy," *Asian Philosophy* 5 (1995): 39–46, and Van Meter Ames, *Zen and American Thought* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1962), pp. 182–213.

<sup>2</sup> See chapter 25, "Moral Dogmatism: Santayana as Anti-Semite," in John McCormick, *George Santayana: A Biography* (New York: Paragon House, 1988).

for nothing but prosperity” (*I*, 425), but he also held the Jewish philosopher Baruch Spinoza in the highest veneration,<sup>3</sup> and he had Jewish friends for decades, including philosopher Horace Mayer Kallen, critic and art historian Bernard Berenson, art connoisseur and collector Charles Alexander Loeser, and philosopher and publisher Max Forrester Eastman. Perhaps Santayana’s ambiguity in this respect can be better understood – but not excused – if we take into consideration the long history of persecution of the Jews in Spain, which dates back to the fourteenth century and officially ended only in the 1860s, during Santayana’s lifetime. In the Middle Ages, tens of thousands of Jews were murdered by mobs, and in 1492 they were forced to choose between becoming baptized Christians or leaving Spain. As a result, hundreds of thousands migrated to Central and Eastern Europe, and tens of thousands converted in the following two centuries or so, becoming so-called New Christians or *Marranos*, meaning “dirty swine.” The division between Old and New Christians was abolished in 1860, and the principle of religious toleration was incorporated into the Spanish Constitution in 1869, yet Spaniards’ mental divisions and prejudices remained difficult to eradicate over the next few decades.

## Between Castile and New England

In considering this subject and others, it is helpful to recall Santayana’s deep connections to Spain and its culture. Avila, a provincial town in Castile, was the microcosm in which his first international contacts took place. His biography allows us to contrast the Western European influences on his hometown with the American ones. In *Persons and Places*, he revealed that an Englishman lived in Avila, having come to the town as a railway foreman or contractor and then settled down and established a hotel. The other Western European resident was an Alsatian tutor, a native speaker of French and German who was brought to Avila and employed as an educator. American influences on Avila, on the other hand, were imperialistic rather than cultural. A shrewd Chicago millionaire bought the damask hangings from the interior of the nine-hundred-year-old cathedral in Avila for \$20,000, and John D. Rockefeller, while talking to Santayana, immediately converted the number of Spain’s population into the amount of oil that he might sell there.

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<sup>3</sup> See Timothy L. S. Sprigge, *Spinoza and Santayana: Religion without the Supernatural*, Mededelingen vanwege het Spinozahuis no. 69 (Delft: Eburon, 1993), and Angus Kerr-Lawson, “Freedom and Free Will in Spinoza and Santayana,” *Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 14 (2000): 14–25.

Santayana was always proud of the old Castilian culture, appreciative of *abulense*<sup>4</sup> tradition, and enchanted with Avila, where, he said, “the walls, the streets, the churches, the language, still bore witness to a faded but abiding civilisation” (*I*, 109). The medieval city possessed many gothic monuments, each with its own history and mystery, all with the grandeur and splendor of an ancient yet still living religion. His house in Avila, although not luxurious, was splendidly situated opposite a centuries-old church and the convent of Santa Ana, and it was within walking distance of a thousand-year-old gothic cathedral, all surrounded by city walls intact since the fifteenth century. This civilization had a much different character than that of the New Land. The abundance of historical monuments certifying the antiquity of the place, the architectural attractions telling of local specificity, the lack of modern conveniences, and the scarcity of technological devices did not tell the whole story, in Santayana’s view: the moral dimension mattered. The pursuit of material aims and the advancement of social institutions (especially corporations and companies) so boasted of in America remained marginal in Castile. Santayana juxtaposed the “Castilian indifference to circumstances and to externals” as well as Castilian “independence and capacity to live content with little and quite alone” (*I*, 27) to the symbols of Yankee spirit: ingenuity and haste (*I*, 130).

Santayana’s very first impression of America when he landed there in 1872 was far from enthusiastic. “It was a sordid scene,” he wrote: “I saw no stone quays. ... No docks; only a wooden pier raised precariously on slimy piles, with the stained sea-water running under it; and on it a vast wooden shed, like a barn, filled with merchandise and strewn with rubbish” (*I*, 129). After he settled down in his mother’s house at 302 Beacon Street in the center of Boston, his everyday life was concentrated around half-built, sordid back streets and ugly houses like his family’s. He complained in his autobiography that even the architect of the Church of the Immaculate Conception, which became his oasis for meditative purposes, was guilty of some solecism in design. The school building of the famous Boston Latin School, which he attended for eight years, was, like everything around, dingy and red brick, bare and worn, and “forlorn to the point of squalor” (*I*, 150). Harvard’s buildings, which he frequented as a student, also seemed to him to lack picturesqueness and novelty. Santayana wrote that their architecture “adequately” rendered the intellectual and spiritual climate of New England, which he called “staunch and narrow” as well as “flimsy and rich” (*I*, 184). Both Boston and Cambridge reminded him of the London of Dickens, with its dismal wealth and its “air of shiftlessness and decay” (*COUS*, 50).

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<sup>4</sup> *Abulense* is the adjective form of Avila (*abula* in Latin) in Spanish.

Though Santayana traveled to America to be educated, he later wrote that his education in the United States was deficient. What he regretted many years later was not that his Boston and Cambridge education was far from satisfactory, because it would have been so in Spain, but that it was deprived of vitality, vigor, and honor (*I*, 10). Also, the psychological traits of New Englanders suited him much less than those of Castilians, due, he said, to “a terrible moral disinheritance involved” in the New England character, “an emotional and intellectual chill,” and “a pettiness and practicality of outlook and ambition” that he claimed he would “not have encountered amid the complex passions and intrigues of a Spanish environment” (*I*, 10). Despite the United States’ democratic rhetoric, moreover, he and his family felt that a new class division had appeared in America, that a new aristocracy of the rich had emerged to which the Santayanas did not belong (*I*, 86).

Santayana made many visits to Avila: at least a dozen during his American years and many more later. He did so not simply to see his family but also in order to participate in Spain’s native traditions and to cherish local ideals. But in order to experience Castile as he wished to, he also had to avoid Spain when it was troubled and when its international image was disreputable. During World War I, when Spain was generally pro-German in its sympathies, Santayana chose not to settle there despite his earlier wish to do so, explaining, “I don’t want to be disgusted with my own country” (*L*, 146).

Santayana understood that, philosophically, his in-betweenness was a blessing rather than a puzzle and a predicament. Being part of two separate milieus enhanced his creativity. “The extreme contrast between the two centres and the two influences became itself a blessing,” Santayana wrote, because “it rendered flagrant the limitations and the contingency of both.” He explained: “In each of these places there was a maximum of air, of space, of suggestion; in each there was a minimum of deceptiveness and of the power to enslave. The dignity of Avila was too obsolete, too inopportune, to do more than stimulate an imagination already awakened, and lend reality to history; while at Harvard a wealth of books and much generous intellectual sincerity went with such spiritual penury and moral confusion as to offer nothing but a lottery ticket or a chance at the grab-bag to the orphan mind” (*I*, 98). Thus, Santayana positioned himself neither as a Spaniard critiquing America nor as an American with ties to Spain, but as a philosopher situated in between the two places, with a unique view of each.

## **The Spanish-American War of 1898 and the Problem of Loyalty**

One may suppose that when the Spanish-American War broke out it was at the very least embarrassing for Santayana, a Spanish subject living in the United



States. The question of whether to remain loyal to his country, combined with a flare-up of anti-Spanish sentiment in the United States, may have caused him some tension or discomfort. Yet Santayana, who was an assistant professor at Harvard at the time, said nothing about such things, so we may presume that he did not face any significant inconvenience or repression during the war. One of his most eminent friends, Bertrand Russell, claimed that Santayana “found himself passionately on the Spanish side” during the war and that “whenever his Spanish patriotism was involved, his usual air of detachment disappeared.”<sup>5</sup> In Santayana's published work, however, his cosmopolitanism – his lack of patriotism in the traditional meaning of the word – is apparent.

Santayana was quite consistent in offering a naturalistic and biological interpretation of political events, an interpretation he later extensively elaborated in *Dominations and Powers*. He accepted the American imperialism of the period as obvious and at the same time accused Spain of meagerness. In one of his letters to his conservative sister, who was apparently pleased about the assassination of President McKinley, under whose leadership the United States went to war, he highlighted Spain's weakness and spoke with acceptance of the imperialist ambitions of the United States: “I see you look on McKinley's end as a judgment of heaven. There were other people probably more guilty in respect to the war, which I am afraid could not have been avoided in the end, given Spanish inefficiency and the sentimental and acquisitive instincts of the American public” (*V*, 1:237). He used the same type of argument in discussions of the Spanish Civil War of 1936, writing, “As to the Spanish row, the extreme feebleness of *all* Spanish governments has allowed the latent conflict which exists in all ripe countries to break out there openly” (*V*, 5:375).

The dissolution of the Spanish empire was a painful experience for the former colonial power, an experience that Santayana shared with the intelligentsia in Spain, which produced in response a great cultural and philosophical movement, the so-called Generation of 1898. It was due to this movement that a nationwide debate on the character of the country, as well as its values, future, and relation to the West, was held in the decades after the Spanish-American War. The movement produced internationally recognized artists and philosophers, with Miguel Unamuno and Jose Ortega y Gasset the greatest among them. As chapter 7 will show, Santayana was not a member of the movement, but he had much in common with its spirit and principles, and there are scholars who include him in it.<sup>6</sup> He cited the

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<sup>5</sup> Bertrand Russell, *Portraits from Memory* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1958), p. 86.

<sup>6</sup> See Ramon J. Sender, “Santayana y los castellanos interiores,” in *Unamuno, Valle Inclán, Baroja y Santayana: Ensayos criticos* (Mexico: De Andrea, 1955), pp. 139, 155, 167, and Ramon J. Sender, *Examen de ingenios: Los noventayochos, ensayos criticos* (New

political weakness of his motherland in his arguments in favor of strong, genuine, distinct, even militaristic regimes, which he felt that each nation requires to secure its position in the international arena – hence his sympathy for Italian Fascists and Russian Bolsheviks in the pre–World War II period.

It should be noted that, despite his affections (and Russell’s claim to the contrary), Santayana did not show strong patriotic feelings either for Spain or for America as political entities. In this respect, he was, like the Stoics, detached. His *patria* was not a country located geographically nor one defined by national association, communal membership, or language identity. His approach was very different from that of Josiah Royce, his dissertation adviser, who gave lectures on the problem of loyalty in 1906 and 1907 that were published the following year under the title *The Philosophy of Loyalty*. Royce followed a heroic style, steadfastly clinging to loyalty, which he understood to be one of the most significant moral notions. “A man is loyal,” according to Royce, “when, first, he has some cause to which he is loyal; when, secondly, he *willingly and thoroughly* devotes himself to this cause; and when, thirdly, he expresses his devotion in some *sustained and practical way*, by acting steadily in the service of his cause.” An individual must rely on the community to find a cause or a duty, Royce explained, because alone the individual “can never find a plan of life” and has “no inborn ideal naturally present.”<sup>7</sup>

Santayana knew Royce’s position on the issue of loyalty and referred to it in his reminiscences. He wrote that Royce “conceived love and loyalty to be divine obsessions refusing to be rationalised” and that “he saw their essence in the child who clings to an old battered doll rather than accept a new and better one” (*COUS*, 118). Santayana himself used the word “loyalty” very rarely. His reluctance to do so might have been due to the fact that loyalty degrades an individual in relation to the external idea or figure to which the individual is supposed to be loyal. The hierarchy inherent to loyalty is incompatible with Santayana’s monadism, according to which a particular agent – with its freedom to choose a historical heritage, philosophical ideal, and social setting – has a moral right to establish standards to which it wishes to be faithful or loyal, while aggregates like nations, states, and communities are secondary in origin and lesser in meaning. Whether it

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York: Las Américas, 1961), p. 175 nn. See also Pedro Garcia Martin, “Jorge Santayana y los acontecimientos de 1898,” in *Teorema. Revista internacional de filosofía*, XXI/1–3 (2002), pp. 133–143; Cayetano Estebanez Estebanez, “La recepción de la obra de Santayana en España,” in *Los reinos de Santayana*, ed. Vicente Cervera Salinas and Antonio Lastra (Valencia: Universitat de Valencia, 2002), p. 186.

<sup>7</sup> Josiah Royce, *The Philosophy of Loyalty* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1995), pp. 9, 16.

was due to “loyalty” or “staunchness,” however, it was the *abulense* that was the standard according to which Santayana evaluated New England, not vice versa.

## Spanish Affection and American Friends

Santayana's half-sister, Manila-born Susana Sturgis (1851–1928), was similarly unable to shake the influence of Avila on her moral judgments. Though she was a person of enormous vivacity and reasonableness, she was unable – much more so than Santayana – to acclimate to New England, where she was taken after having spent a few years in Avila. She was unhappy in America and could not find her way. Out of despair rather than faith, she entered a Carmelite nunnery in Baltimore, but she quickly left and eventually went back to Avila, married a former admirer who was a widower and a father of six, and settled down. Susana, who was twelve years older than Santayana, was extremely important to him. She helped him with the English language when he joined her in Boston, introduced him to the arts and architecture, and helped him to distinguish his religious sentiments through frequent discussions and even quarrels on the subject.

More than that, Susana was, as Santayana put it, his “spiritual mother” (*I*, 4) and “the greatest power, and certainly the strongest affection in [his] life” (*I*, 17). She was, he said, “psychologically my mother, and one might almost say, my wife.” He clarified: “Not that an incestuous idea ever entered my mind or hers; but Freud might have discovered things unsuspected by ourselves.”<sup>8</sup> Small wonder that his frequent visits to his hometown when she was there had a very special character, one he described in quasi-religious terms: “Avila never ceased to be a place of frequent pilgrimages for me so long as Susana was alive” (*I*, 93). Had she not married, he added, they would have “joined forces and lived very happily together, by preference in Avila” (*I*, 92). Such strong ties made him happy, and despite not having established his own family, he did not feel lonely.

Santayana's sense of satisfaction and emotional security was strengthened by numerous friendships, two of which were lifelong. In the volume of the Library of Living Philosophers devoted to him, Santayana wrote that the only element of his Americanism that he voluntarily chose and continued was friendship.<sup>9</sup> Indeed, his prolific correspondence reveals that the longest and closest relations he had were with Americans. First, there was Charles Augustus Strong (1862–1940), a philosopher of the American school of critical realism and a psychologist, as well

<sup>8</sup> Quoted in McCormick, *George Santayana*, p. 22.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Arthur Schlipp, ed., *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, the Library of Living Philosophers (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University, 1940).

as the author of a few books on epistemology, among which the most popular were *The Origin of Consciousness* (1918), *Essays in Critical Realism* (which he wrote together with Santayana, Lovejoy, Drake, and others, 1920), and *A Creed for Sceptics* (1936). Strong began his academic career as an instructor at Cornell (1887–88), then served as assistant professor of psychology at the University of Chicago (1892–95), lecturer at Columbia (1896–1900), and, finally, as professor of psychology at Columbia (1903–10). In 1889, he married the eldest daughter of John D. Rockefeller, with whom he had a daughter, Margaret Strong de Cuevas, the greatest joy and consolation of his tragic life. His wife died when their daughter was still an infant, and some years later Strong lost his health (his legs became paralyzed) and had to use a wheelchair.

Santayana and Strong were undergraduate students together at Harvard, and later they shared a James Walker Fellowship to complete graduate studies at Humboldt University in Berlin from 1886 through 1888. Their friendship lasted until Strong died in Italy in 1940. Santayana visited Strong frequently at his apartments in Paris at 9 Avenue de L’Observatoire just next to the Luxembourg Gardens and in Fiesole, near Florence, Italy. The former became Santayana’s headquarters for many years while in France, and he frequented the latter during his stays in Italy. Through their whole lives, they discussed theoretical concepts of cognition and shared various opinions on a whole variety of topics. Santayana also took care of Strong when he needed it and, occasionally, of Margaret when she was young. The hundreds of letters between them show that their friendship made it possible for both of them to fill an inner emptiness. In 1918, Santayana wrote about Strong, “In his quiet dull way he is the best of friends and the soundest of philosophers – good ballast to my cockleshell.”<sup>10</sup>

Another important relationship was with Daniel MacGhie Cory (1904–72).<sup>11</sup> Cory traveled to Rome in 1927 to meet Santayana, on whose philosophy he intended to write some papers while a student at Columbia. He was fascinated with the philosophy of his “master” – a word that indicates the tenor of their relationship. Cory became Santayana’s secretary and assistant while Santayana was writing many of his later works, and as time went on, Santayana needed more and more of Cory’s assistance with his literary work, as well as his occasional company. Santayana’s output grew larger and larger and his fame greater, while his health deteriorated as a natural consequence of aging. He was confident about the fate of his work after his death, as Cory became his literary executor; Santayana, in turn, became Cory’s main source of income in the decades to come. Santayana did

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid., pp. 284–85.

<sup>11</sup> See Krzysztof Piotr Skowronski, “C.A. Strong and G. Santayana in Light of Archive Material,” *Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, 24 (2006), pp. 23–27.

not have a very high regard for Cory's philosophical skills and cultural endowment, even calling him a "barbarian" when they first met.<sup>12</sup> Nevertheless, they cooperated, and in time Cory became the closest person to Santayana. After Susana's death, Cory was person one to whom Santayana tied himself most profoundly.

Cory deserves special recognition for his promotion of Santayana's works and papers, many of which he actually sold. He published letters (*Letters of George Santayana*, 1955), a sort of bibliography (*Santayana: The Later Years*, 1963), and inedita (*Idler and His Works*, 1957; *The Birth of Reason and Other Essays*, 1968). After his death, Margot Degen Batten Cory, who was introduced to Santayana in 1937, succeeded her husband as Santayana's literary executor, performing that function until her own death in 1995.

## The Quixotic Imagination Versus The Genteel Intellect

Santayana's in-betweenness can also be clearly seen in the sphere of the imaginary and the intellectual. Don Quixote, a fictitious personage created by the extraordinarily vivid imagination of the skilled writer Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra (1547–1616), is one of the greatest monuments to Castilian spirit. Like many major Spanish authors,<sup>13</sup> Santayana reflected on the mythical, symbolic, and axiological meaning of Don Quixote, and he was also very proud of his native land's cultural tradition, of which Don Quixote is an eminent part. "Spain is a great country for the imagination with a great power over spirit," he wrote (*PGS*, 602). Santayana realized that the quixotic mentality was by no means foreign to him, and he even called himself "Don Quixote sane" (*PGS*, 604). Imagination, so important in Castilian culture, became one of the chief psychological and anthropological categories of his thought, for a number of reasons. He argued that imagination, as a natural effect of our biological endowment, is "secretly suggested and controlled by shrewd old instincts of our animal nature, and by continual contact with things" (*SE*, 123). He posited that the world of imagination is a world of potentiality to be actualized in the realm of spirit, either as a vision of life or as a compensation for lack of realization in the realm of matter. When his ability to travel was limited, for

<sup>12</sup> See Daniel Cory, *Santayana: The Later Years; A Portrait with Letters* (New York: George Brazziller, 1963), p. 29.

<sup>13</sup> See Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Meditaciones del Quijote* (Madrid: Calpe, 1922); Miguel de Unamuno, *Vida de Don Quijote y Sancho* (Madrid: Catedra, 1988); and Salvador de Madariaga, *Don Quixote: An Introductory Essay in Psychology* (London: Oxford University Press, 1966).

example, Santayana engaged in “travels of the intellect,” which consisted of “admitting the opposite of all facts and of all beliefs to be equally possible and no more arbitrary” (*I*, 447). This statement also describes his way of philosophizing as a whole, his method of exploring images rather than analyzing concepts, of meditating rather than arguing, to borrow Michael Oakeshott’s terms.<sup>14</sup> Unlike Don Quixote, however, Santayana strongly emphasized the dangers of the unbridled imagination. “Cultivate your imagination, love it, give it endless forms, but [do] not let it deceive you,” he wrote (*I*, 427).

The importance of imagination to Santayana must not be underestimated. He felt that it “changes the scale of everything, and makes a thousand patterns of the world of nature, without disturbing a single thread” (*SE*, 126). It was, to him, an important way of filling life with sense and beauty. It was inescapable even in science, an area in which subjectivity is suspect and the role of imagination ambiguous. According to Santayana’s philosophy, it is impossible to deprive knowledge of imagination and focus exclusively on the hard facts of objective reality. His five-volume *The Life of Reason* (1904–05) was written to show how people cope with the external world and how they can accommodate themselves to external circumstances by means of the richness of their imaginations, especially in religion, science, and art.

In Santayana’s opinion, imagination has a quite different character in many Americans than it does in Castilians; in the United States, it has a practical meaning, and it works “in terms of number, measure, contrivance, economy, and speed” (*COUS*, 175). The enormous vital energy and unlimited optimism of the American people, he maintained, have hardly been translated into spontaneous and free works of imagination. Instead, this raw energy has been channeled into the realm of material concerns, whose main aim is conquering nature and making the institutionalization of social life more effective. Santayana complained that his Harvard education was “without fine imagination” (*COUS*, 51), and his admiration of William James for having a remarkable “fresh imagination and vitality” (*COUS*, 68) was an exception to the rule. “He did not agree with me,” Santayana wrote about James, “but he had a large outlook on life and was far more generous in his judgments than most men.”<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Michael Oakeshott, “Philosophical Imagination,” *Spectator*, November 2, 1952, p. 578.

<sup>15</sup> Quoted in Wilbert Snow, “A Last Visit with Santayana,” *American Mercury*, 1953, p. 32. Elsewhere (*OS*, 216, 217), he added that James, a spontaneous and rare person, was preoccupied with the varieties of the human imagination, and in his lengthy essay on James he articulated his appreciation of *Principles of Psychology*, saying, “This is a work of imagination; and the subject as he conceived it, which is the flux of immediate experience in men in general, requires imagination to read it at all” (*COUS*, 68).