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Lydia Amir
Tufts University, Boston, USA
ORCID: 0000-0001-6958-7055
e-mail: Lydamir@mail.com

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Individual Liberation in Modern Philosophy: Reflections on Santayana's Affiliation to the Tradition Inaugurated by Spinoza and Followed by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche

This article aims at evaluating the significance of the personal liberation that Santayana proposes in relation to previous attempts in Western modern philosophy. To that purpose, I engage with modern philosophers whose goal has been similar, beginning with Spinoza, his "hero," "master and model"[1]; following with Schopenhauer, whose philosophy many commentators see as Santayana's own, yet with explicit modifications; and ending with Nietzsche, toward whom he had an ambivalent attitude.

Santayana follows Spinoza's original program: recapturing all past thought, ancient philosophy and the Judeo-Christian tradition, in order to recast *Christianity* in a philosophic form. Santayana rectifies what has

[1] George Santayana, *Persons and Places*. Based on the texts originally published in 1944, 1945, and 1953. The Santayana Edition; www.iupui.edu/~santedit/sant, 521–522; 235; *PP* hereafter.

been recently referred to as Spinoza's "philosophical religion"[2]; he criticizes it for being Jewish and Dutch ("too much merchant and artisan"[3]), and amends the Spinozistic significance of Christ for an immanent liberation.[4] Santayana endorses the Spinozistic view of (modern) philosophy's role: to propose a philosophic personal redemption as an alternative to established religion, which follows the model set by Christianity, that is, redemption through love with a version of eternal life. This explains Santayana's admiration for Spinoza. Yet Santayana also follows Schopenhauer (and Nietzsche) in his effort to amend Spinoza's attempt and replace it with his own proposal, which explains his critical approach to the tenets of Spinoza's philosophy.

The following account of Santayana's views, moreover, explains how his avowed scholasticism can sit well with his innovative philosophy, and helps clarify the relations he entertains with Schopenhauer: admitting to a short infatuation, he explains his later disinterest by explicitly reducing Schopenhauer's thought to Spinoza. Moreover, Santayana endorses the German philosopher's criticism of the Spinozistic system as Jewish (at the end of his main book, Schopenhauer compares Spinoza's with his own philosophy, which he deemed elsewhere "the most Christian," their relation being as the New Testament to the Old) and his association of Judaism with optimism; furthermore, he endorses Schopenhauer's view of the Indian rather than Jewish origins of Christianity, yet remarks on the similarities between Indian and Greek philosophies; finally, it is Schopenhauer's philosophy that he partly endorses, once he highlights its resemblance to Spinoza's, except the latter's rejection of happiness and the very salvation that it offers. Following Spinoza, Santayana recasts this salvation in immanent terms, rather than denying the will, which denies spirit as well; he denies the will's fulfillment

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[2] "A philosophical religion" is "a distinctly philosophical interpretation of religions such as Judaism and Islam," as advocated respectively by Maimonides and Averroes. See Carlos Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza*: *Reason, Religion, and Autonomy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 5. Fraenkel maintains that the argument from Plato to Spinoza is that philosophical doctrines can be located in, but not learned from, a religious tradition. The transition from the literal to the allegorical content can only be made by someone with prior philosophic training. This implies that "philosophy is not only the foundation and the goal of religion, but also holds the key to its true content" (ibidem, 15). Religion thus becomes philosophy's handmaid. For the notion of a philosophical religion, see there, 5–24.

[3] Santayana, *PP*, 235.

[4] See George Santayana, *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels; or, God in Man, A Critical Essay* (New York: Scribner's; Toronto: Saunders, 1946); *ICG* hereafter.

in reality or existence, and advocates its fulfillment in understanding existence. Many Spinozistic themes are reprised in amending the Schopenhauerian salvation, such as seeing things *sub specie aeternitatis*, the association between love and understanding, and the idea that which is true remains. Yet, more important than these themes, the very project undertaken by Spinoza is endorsed by Santayana and revised to fit what he sees as Christianity's truth, which lies not in a true revelation, but in its accurate description of the real relations of spirit to the world.

Santayana sets out to capture the true secret content of Christianity, he tells us at the end of *Realms of Being*. He thereby attempts to create a philosophic religion that recasts Christianity in philosophic terms – a project undertaken for Judaism and Islam by medieval philosophers, but not for Christianity since Clement and Origen. "A lay religion" of this kind, being also a philosophy, is necessarily also an alternative to established religion. In this ambitious project, which I believe captures the entirety of his philosophy, once the reader understands that inner salvation crowns a thought rather than reduces it to a narrow religious issue, Santayana is heir to both Spinoza and Schopenhauer (whom he insightfully reduces to Spinoza), and aims to replace Nietzsche (whose philosophy announces his own, as he argues in his mature evaluation of the German thinker), in being the affirmative thinker who, refuting Schopenhauer's pessimistic redemption of the will, follows Spinoza in offering an immanent and joyful personal liberation.

I conclude this article by gesturing first toward Georg Simmel, Santayana's esteemed teacher in Berlin, who related Nietzsche and Schopenhauer to Spinoza and attempted to answer both German philosophers; and secondly toward Pascal, Hamman, and Kierkegaard, because this tradition of unorthodox Christians and unorthodox philosophers may also help us illuminate the role of Santayana in Western philosophy and the liberation that he offers.

1. Spinoza

I will not attempt to describe here the many lessons that I learned in the study of Spinoza, lessons that in several respects laid the foundation of my philosophy.[5]

[5] Santayana, *PP*, 233–234.

> Spinoza was not only a complete naturalist, but, by a rare combination, also a spiritual man, seeing and accepting the place of the human heart in the universe.[6]

Ancient philosophers' views of the good life were the best, as Santayana understood it. Describing himself as a scholastic at heart, he criticized all modern schools of philosophy, but indicated in *Scepticism and Animal Faith* and on additional occasions, including in his own autobiography, that out of all the moderns, only Spinoza is worthy of consideration: "As I have said elsewhere, I regard Spinoza as the only modern philosopher in the line of orthodox physics, the line that begins with Thales and culminates, for Greek philosophy, in Democritus."[7] Yet devising a physics was not philosophy's task according to Santayana; rather, after noting matter's primacy and insisting on the piety it required, he gladly left scientists to discover what it is while turning to what seemed to him morally significant in life, that is, meaning and the aspiration toward the ideal and spirituality. The (non-reductive) materialism that he advocated was not Spinozistic as Spinoza was no materialist,[8] nor did he endorse any of the Jewish-Dutch philosopher's doctrines without significant changes.[9] Yet Santayana repeatedly refers to Spinoza in many of his

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[6] Santayana, *PP*, 235.

[7] Santayana, *PP*, 235.

[8] "Material competence and knowledge of fact are worth attaining," Santayana writes, "only for the sake of the free life" which is "the *Realm of Spirit*." "Facts for a living creature are only instruments; his play-life is his true life" (Santayana, *RB*, x–xi). Bertrand Russel notes that Santayana "uses the word matter in a somewhat peculiar 'sense' and he is less interested in the material world than in the realm of essence" and that there is not much about science in *Reason in Science* ["The Philosophy of Santayana," in: *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp, 453–474 (New York: Tudor, 1940), 456]. For Santayana's non-reductive naturalism, see Herman J. Saatkamp Jr., *A Life of Scholarship with Santayana: Essays and Reflections* (Leiden: Brill, 2021), chapter 3.

[9] A significant example is his rejection of Spinoza's determinism and explicit endorsement of a view of matter as contingent; yet as Angus Kerr-Lawson has aptly shown, Santayana further complicates the relations between determinism and contingency, and when the actual liberation of the individual is at stake he seems to be as close to Spinoza as he can (Angus Kerr-Lawson, "Freedom and Free Will in Spinoza and Santayana," *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy* 14(4) (2000): 243–267). Yet Spinoza is a strict determinist not because he holds an unfashionable view of science; rather, determinism plays an important part in the liberation that he offers: without endorsing determinism, one's liberation cannot take place because, for Spinoza, the peace of mind which constitutes its main content, cannot ensue from any other view of events. And, the Spinozistic liberation involves no free will. For additional examples, see my forthcom-

writings; he even begins and concludes such a significant work as *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels* with a dialogue with his precursor.[10] Let me elaborate on this relationship.

Santayana's sustained engagement with Spinoza's thought began early in life. In his first year as a lecturer at Harvard, he was asked by President Elliot to fill in for a course on Spinoza and other seventeenth century philosophers. He proudly discloses that he subsequently read him in the original (Latin) having for help only Frederick Pollock's commentary.[11] However, apparently his view of Spinoza was well-set before that. In *Persons and Places*, he recalls his studies in Berlin:

> Of the four professors to whom I listened Paulsen was the most important: not very important in himself – he was simply an excellent professor – but important for me as a medium and as a model of judicious and sympathetic criticism. *This semester he lectured on Greek Ethics, and in the next winter semester on Spinoza. In both subjects he helped to settle my opinions for good*.[12]

The engagement with Spinoza, which can be traced all throughout his life, was crowned by an invitation to lecture at the Spinoza tercentennial meeting at The Hague in 1932.[13] Earlier, he had written an "Introduction" to the *Ethics*, about which he quotes in *Realms of Being*.[14]

Despite this sustained engagement, Santayana had explicitly rejected most of Spinoza's doctrines. The ones he seems to endorse, e.g., his *naturalism* and view of *good and evil* as the outcome of human desires, are significantly altered following thorough criticism;[15] Thus, the question about the reason for Santayana's declared admiration of Spinoza should be posed. Rather than the philosophy, was it the person of Spinoza that impressed him? True, he eulogized him by calling him a genius, but

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ing essay, "The Ideal of a Philosophic Redemption: Spinoza's Place in Western Philosophy and in Santayana's Thought," in: *Scepticism and Animal Faith at 100*, ed. Glenn Tiller, Martin Coleman (London: Palgrave Macmillan).

[10] Santayana, *ICG*, 5–6; 207–209.

[11] Santayana, *PP*, 234.

[12] Santayana, *PP*, 257; emphasis mine. Later on, Santayana read Spinoza also in Josiah Royce's class.

[13] Published as "Ultimate Religion," in: *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Review*, ed. Justus Buchler, Benjamin Schwartz (New York: Scribner's; London: Constable, 1936); paper delivered at the Hague, 1932; *UR* hereafter.

[14] George Santayana, "Introduction," in: Everyman edition of Spinoza's *Ethics* and *De Intellectus Emendatione*, transl. Andrew Boyle (London: J. M. Dent & Sons, Ltd.; New York: E. P. Dutton & Co, 1910).

[15] See note 9 above for the contemporary debate on free will, contingency, and determinism, and for Santayana's position in relation to Spinoza's.

only to mean that "he was virtuous but not normal," hence, that "the nobility of Spinoza's simple and brave life, devoted to sublime speculation" cannot be followed since he is "a model neither for mankind at large nor for man in his wholeness."[16] How can a philosopher impress himself on another's mind if it is not for his doctrines, we may ask? Why dialogue expressly with him, a Spaniard with a Jew,[17] who maybe, is hardly disguised elsewhere as the "vermin" in "the lion's skin"?[18]

The following quote may give us a clue about Spinoza's significance for Santayana: "Spinoza was not only a complete naturalist, but, by a rare combination, also a spiritual man, seeing and accepting the place of the human heart in the universe."[19] In the commentary used by Santayana for studying Spinoza, moreover, we can read the report of a conversation between Lessing and Jacobi:

> Lessing. If I am to call myself after any master, I know of no other.
> Jacobi. Spinoza is good enough for me; but 'tis a sorry kind of salvation one can find in his name.
> Lessing. Well, so be it. But, after all, do you know of any better?[20]

In *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*, furthermore, Santayana alludes to the salvation Spinoza refers to, yet he distinguishes between two kinds of salvation. On the one hand, the religious, orthodox kind, and on the other, the salvation offered by Spinoza, which Santayana calls "happiness."[21] He notes that Spinoza searched for a happiness that would be his to eternity, yet the happiness he attained was not eternal; and he deems his pantheistic position, as well as that of Marcus Aurelius, one of a "moralism," and rejects it because, as he explains in his autobiography, "[…] The grandeur of the universe is physical only, cruel, and stained with every form

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[16] Santayana, *PP*, 235.

[17] Santayana, *PP*, 11; 235.

[18] "[…] if I cannot be mentioned without a smile in the same breath with Spinoza for greatness of intellect, he cannot be compared with me for Spanish blood. He was a Jew…" (Santayana, PP, 11); "I prefer the lion to the vermin in the lion's skin." [George Santayana, *Dominations and Powers: Reflections on Liberty, Society, and Government* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1995), Preface; *DP* hereafter].

[19] Santayana, *PP*, 235.

[20] Frederick Pollock, *Spinoza: His Life and Philosophy* (London: C. Kegan Paul, 1880), 392.

[21] Santayana, *ICG*, 222.

of baseness. The spirit within me says with the Indians and with the Romans: Maggior mi sento."[22]

Thus, great as Spinoza was, he "was not a complete humanist." That means that "he had no idea of human greatness and no sympathy with human sorrow. His notion of the soul was too plebeian and too quietistic…" The consequence is that "as a guide in the spiritual life, he was narrow and inadequate." Rebels, and disinherited solitary men can all be admired by the world, but cannot be followed. To be sane and authoritative, "the saint and the poet" should "embody a wide tradition,"[23] like the Greeks he admired, and which already in Paulsen's classes he came to see as superior to Spinoza, and like Catholicism, which is to be preferred to Judaism on all counts.

"Maggior mi sento."[24] With these words, Santayana sums up his quarrel with Spinoza's authority in morality, which follows from Spinoza's pantheism, his divinization of nature or his naturalization of God, rejected elsewhere.[25] He dismisses him as a mystic, yet also takes issue with his view of rationality as the true good to which we all could aim, with his view of essence as the sole existing substance, with his denial of free will, with his innovative view of body and mind as two aspects of the same process, with truth as the sole content of our eternity, and with a happiness (or personal redemption) to which the image of the incarnated God has nothing to contribute.

What, then, does Santayana owe to his hero, his master and model? And how does this relate to the personal liberation that Santayana offers? To further clarify these points, we need first to understand Spinoza's place in the history of thought.

Spinoza's philosophy is notoriously difficult to categorize and its (mis)uses have abounded ever since the German Romantics took hold of it. However, two interpretations converge in explaining its significance, both pointing to the relation of theology to religion. As the story goes, and as it has recently been repeated,[26] philosophy lost its role as a way of life in becoming the handmaid of theology in medieval times, the role appointed to it by Christianity, now the sole way to truth and wis-

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[22] Santayana, *PP*, 12–13.

[23] Santayana, *PP*, 235–236.

[24] Santayana, *PP*, 13.

[25] Santayana, *ICG*; see also George Santayana, *Realms of Being*, one-volume edition, with a new introduction by the author (New York: Scribner's, 1942); *RB* hereafter.

[26] See Stephen Gaukroger, *The Failures of Philosophy: A Historical Essay* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2020), chapters 3 and 4.

dom. Christianity recuperated pagan thought as preparing for Christ's way and offered the sole way to salvation, through Christ, by *caritas* and God's grace, culminating in an eternal afterlife in another world for the chosen human being.

Philosophy slowly began to regain its autonomy from the Renaissance onwards. Both Jonathan Israel and Harry A. Wolfson[27] emphasize Spinoza's radicalism, which was impressed on Schopenhauer's mind as well: philosophy replaces theology. However, Carlos Fraenkel's recent study describes Spinoza as formulating a Christian philosophic religion, based on Jewish and Muslim medieval precedents, yet his account lacks Christianity's history, from the followers of Philo to the Alexandrians Clement and Origen.

Whether as the first modern or the last medieval philosopher, Spinoza's alternative to, or reconstruction of, Christianity along rational lines has not been lost on my, and others',[28] reading of Spinoza. He proposes a personal philosophic redemption within one's lifespan, in this world, through love, and accompanied by an alternative view of one's eternity. He redefines philosophy's place: from now on philosophy's role is to recapture all that is true in religion and propose a practice which enables one to attain the blessedness and freedom which is offered by an immanent salvation, and which is all that we can get once we understand the human condition and the universe in which we live.

The details of this extraordinary doctrine, the way it fills traditional concepts with new meanings, and the path to human peace and happiness – the content of the sole personal redemption available to us – are discussed elsewhere,[29] and can only be broached here.

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[27] Jonathan I. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Harry A. Wolfson, *From Philo to Spinoza: Two Studies in Religious Philosophy* (New York: Berman House, 1977).

[28] See, among others, Yirmiyahu Yovel: "Spinoza expected philosophy […] to lead to the highest spiritual ideal, which Christianity calls salvation" [Yovel Yirmiyahu, "Transcending Mere Survival: From Conatus to Conatus Intelligendi," in: *Desire and Affect: Spinoza as Psychologist*, ed. Yirmiyahu Yovel, 45–59. Spinoza by 2000, The Jerusalem Conferences, *Ethica* III (New York: Little Room Press, 1999), 43]. See also Israel, *Radical Enlightenment*, 163–174; and Richard H. Popkin, "Baruch de Spinoza," in: *The Columbia History of Western Philosophy*, ed. Richard H. Popkin, 376–382 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

[29] See Lydia Amir, *Redemptive Philosophies*: *Spinoza* versus *Nietzsche*, Monographien und Texte zur Nietzsche-Forschung (Berlin: de Gruyter, work under contract).

Spinoza's project in the *Ethics* presupposes the criticism of superstition and the unravelling of fear feeding on ignorance that lies at its source. This is outlined in the *Theological-Political Treatise*, in which he addresses the contemporary problems that beset his country, interrupting his work on the *Ethics*. He continued later on to draw the conclusions that followed from its first part: The *Ethics* culminates in descriptions of the content of freedom, blessedness, salvation, and eternity, where, as usual with Spinoza, he takes notions that seem common enough only to infuse them with subversive meanings.

The religious terms he uses are not mentioned in vain and are not called for as mere measures of precaution – despite the "*caute*" engraved on his ring. Rather, in the same way that Hellenistic philosophers contended that happiness or *felicitas*'s true content lay from then on in peace of mind (*ataraxia*) rather than flourishing (*eudaemonia*); and following the Church's thirteenth-century decision to denounce earthly happiness as anathema to the otherworldly *salus* granted by God's grace alone, Spinoza redefines earthly happiness as encompassing previous ideals, pagan and religious alike. These include *ataraxia* – the wise man is hardly troubled in his mind, he acquiesces "in" himself – and salvation through love, without election or grace but through (non-narcissistic, enlightened, "metaphysical") self-love.[30] The last notion needs explaining. The highest good is the love of God; we cannot strive for God to love us back, however, as God loves himself, he necessarily loves us. God becomes a metaphysical means for effective, that is, non-narcissistic and enlightened, self-love. The eternity granted to the truth of the adequate ideas one conceives is the counterpart of the eternal life proposed by established religions.

Philosophy as the adequate idea of religion constitutes the post-medieval revitalization of philosophy that Spinoza proposes. He initiates in this way a branch of philosophy, whose purpose is to propose philosophic redemptions, such as those devised by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Santayana, as alternatives to religious salvations. These philosophers, amongst others, follow Spinoza by offering personal philosophic redemptions through love, as well as novel substitutes to established religions' views of eternal life.

Moreover, these thinkers maintain that their respective philosophies represent the true content of religion (Schopenhauer's statement

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[30] See Amélie Rorty, "Spinoza on the Pathos of Idolatrous Love and the Hilarity of True Love," in: *Feminist Interpretations of Benedict Spinoza*, ed. Moira Gatens (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2009).

is most striking in this respect, as he boasts that his philosophy is "the most Christian.") Nietzsche's exhortation, "Love yourself as an act of clemency – then you will no longer have any need of your god, and the whole drama of Fall and Redemption will be played out to the end in you yourselves!"[31] follows in Spinoza's steps, however, with less success as far as implementation in one's life is considered; and in this vein as well are Santayana's "living in the eternal," and inner redemption through contemplation of essences, which he considers "the secret interior source" of Christian theology and spiritual discipline,[32] or their esoteric content, which uniquely interested him, as he tells us in *Persons and Places*.

Spinoza proposes a path to worldly happiness that exchanges future promises with immanent blessedness. More than offering instructive examples of how to live meaningfully, his philosophy affords self-transcendence that answers Robert Nozick's definition of the meaning of life.[33] Although this transcendence of self does not involve a transcendent God or a personal afterlife, Spinoza's philosophy does provide an abiding place in the universe for human beings. Whilst this offer is graduated according to the understanding of ourselves and of the world that we attain, it is felt as a growing sense of peace and blessedness.

It is important to emphasize that Spinoza intends the goal he outlines to have objective value, which discloses its tension with contemporary relativism. It is nonetheless offered in principle to all. Thus, the viability of the Spinozistic path toward immanent happiness, which he emphasizes at the end of the *Ethics*, makes his proposal stand out. Yet, his claim that this is the true content of personal religious salvation makes it as subversive today as it was in his own time.

It is this lineage that Santayana follows, I argue, by making philosophy a lay religion and by offering a path to liberation and union, a personal redemption, which imbues all Christian notions with new meanings, including the love that leads to it and the version of eternal life that it grants. Many a commentator has noticed Santayana's engagement with Spinoza, and some have noted it in the contexts that I emphasize. For example, Angus Kerr-Lawson remarks that on the topic of libera-

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[31] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Daybreak: Thoughts on the Prejudices of Morality*, transl. Reginald J. Hollingdale, introduction by M. Tanner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), Part I, Section 79.

[32] Santayana, *RB*, 845.

[33] For self-transcendence in Spinoza, see Samuel Newlands, *Reconceiving Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018); for meaning of life as self-transcendence, see Robert Nozick, *Philosophical Explanations* (Cambridge: Harvard University, 1981).

tion the similarities between Santayana and Spinoza are most striking.[34] Santayana's view of love, as best described by Irving Singer in his monumental *The Nature of Love*,[35] is associated with the release he offered. Finally, quoting Santayana on eternity in his contribution to Arthur Schilpp's *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, Bertrand Russell noted the similarities between Spinoza and Santayana.[36] Further details on this personal philosophic redemption are disclosed at the end of the article, after Santayana's relation to Schopenhauer, the redemption he offers, and his criticism of Spinoza, are clarified.

2. Schopenhauer

> […] to which in Germany my passing enthusiasm for Schopenhauer may be added, because by that time I was able to discount the language of a system and *perceive from what direction it drew its inspiration.* The "Will" in Schopenhauer was a transparent mythological symbol for the flux of matter. *There was absolute equivalence between such a system, in its purport and sense for reality, and the systems of Spinoza* and Lucretius.[37]

For many a commentator, Schopenhauer's philosophy is the key to Santayana's.[38] Schopenhauer reads philosophers as *magistri vitae* and

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[34] Kerr-Lawson, "Freedom and Free Will in Spinoza and Santayana."

[35] Originally, this work is in three volumes, of which volume 3 is of relevance here. See Irving Singer, *The Nature of Love: The Modern World*, vol. 3 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[36] See Russell, "The Philosophy of Santayana," 469; see also Daniel Spiro, "Santayana and His 'Hero.'" Lecture Delivered on September 14, 2009 to the Washington Spinoza Society. In this essay, Russell immediately associates Santayana with Spinoza as philosophers who should be read on account of their respective views of "what constitutes the good life," and of the "standard of values in art and morals"; yet he clarifies that "neither his opinions nor his values resemble Spinoza's", who failed in Santayana's eyes to constitute the life of reason; rather, "the likeness to Spinoza consists in concern for the life reason, not in the theory as to what it consists of." "Fundamentally ethical" philosophies of this kind should be also evaluated for consistency and the importance of the point of view, Santayana's ranks high on both counts, and Spinoza on the latter (453–454).

[37] Santayana, *PP*, 239; emphasis mine.

[38] See, for example, Michael Brodrick, *The Ethics of Detachment in Santayana's Philosophy* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Matthew C. Flamm, "Santayana and Schopenhauer," *Transactions of the Charles S. Peirce Society* 38(3) (2002): 413–431.

learns Indian wisdom. A way of life and a spiritual exercise, philosophy is not merely theoretical. It is also a catharsis, a purification of life, which proposes a salvation for the individual who has abandoned the fallen world by denying his will.[39] Schopenhauer offers a "potential avenue of escape from the world," although "the salvation offered in the form of the denial or negation of the will is open to a tiny number of individuals."[40] His philosophy does not only answer the search for truth, but also "the attempt to satisfy the need for a kind of therapy or salvation, in the face of the difficulties that confront us all as human beings."[41] The truth found can "inspire our own individual search for consolation and salvation" and reveals "something of a positive soteriology" in which we are liberated from a life dominated by suffering and want.[42] "The soteriological aims of some of our intellectual endeavors and the role that philosophy potentially has to play in this quest" are examined in the fourth chapter of Jonathan Head's volume.[43] Especially important is the distinction between the role of aesthetics and that of philosophy in relation to the Schopenhauerian redemption that Head emphasizes, which is often overlooked by those interpretations which align art and philosophy.[44] Rather than aesthetic experience, it is the understanding of what reality is, either through knowledge or through the experience of a personal tragedy, which may lead to compassion, a step before the redemptive renunciation and the (non-individual) eternity that it grants.

Santayana offers explicit modifications to the Schopenhauerian redemption, the most important being the possibility of happiness and that one's redemption does not lie in denying one's will to live, which means one's non-existence, but in redirecting it toward contemplation rather than existence. By denying the fulfillment of one's allegiances

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[39] See Christophe Bouriau, "Conatus Spinoziste et volonté Schopenhaurienne", in: *Spinoza au 19th siècle*, ed. André Tosel, Jean Salem, Pierre-François Moreau, 163–180 (Paris: Editions de la Sorbonne, 2007) and Bernard Rousset, "L'image schopenhaurienne du spinozisme: *causa sive ratio cur*", in: *Spinoza au XIXe siècle*, ed. André Tosel, Pierre-Francois Moreau, Jean Salem, 181–191 (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2007).

[40] Jonathan Head, *Schopenhauer and the Nature of Philosophy* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2012), 165.

[41] Ibidem, xiv.

[42] Ibidem, xv.

[43] Ibidem, xvi. See also Christopher Ryan, *Schopenhauer's Philosophy of Religion: The Death of God and the Oriental Renaissance* (Leuven: Peeters, 2010).

[44] Ibidem, xvii.

rather than renouncing them, Santayana attempts an immanent salvation, with its own version of eternal life, one that differs from Schopenhauer's.

Before concluding his masterpiece, Schopenhauer surprisingly adds: "Therefore, I wish to indicate the relation in which my teaching stands to Spinozism in particular after I have explained its relation to Pantheism in general. It is related to Spinozism as the New Testament is to the Old." Santayana saves me much effort here in succinctly summing up the relation between Schopenhauer's system to Spinoza's in the quote above, as an "absolute equivalence."[45] While the significance of Spinoza for German idealism is established,[46] Schopenhauer's relation to Spinoza has hardly been probed.[47] Schopenhauer notes how all those who philosophize in Germany, including Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, eagerly appropriated Spinoza; he refers to them as "neo-Spinozists" and considers himself as Kant's sole follower; yet his own debt to Spinoza is seldom mentioned. Clément Rosset notes that "Schopenhauer's greatest mistake is to have thought himself a Kantian,"[48] and it may be more accurate to state, with Max Grunwald, that his philosophy is growing out of the trunk of Spinozism and that we can integrate Schopenhauer's philosophy in the chain of systems that start with Spinoza.[49] Especially in his metaphysics and his theory of redemption, Spinoza's influence is palatable.

In his epistemology, Schopenhauer distances himself from Spinoza by endorsing various ideas of the Kantian critique (the irreducibility of philosophy to mathematics, the ideal status of extension or space as a form of representation, the distinction between phenomena and the thing-in-itself). But Schopenhauer also differs from Kant by reducing phenomena to appearances and by claiming that intuition can reach the thing-in-itself.

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[45] Santayana, *PP*, 239.

[46] Hegel famously said that one has two philosophies, Spinoza's and one's own. To understand how Spinoza's systematic philosophy fills a gap in the philosophic crisis which was created by Kant's critique of all speculative philosophy, see Eckart Föster, Yitzhak Y. Melamed, ed. *Spinoza in German Idealism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

[47] See Otrun Schulz, *Schopenhauer's Shares in Spinoza* (e-book, Open Drive, 2019).

[48] Clément Rosset, *Schopenhauer, philosophe de l'absurde* (Paris: PUF, 1967), 51.

[49] "[…] se trouve être une pousse sur le tronc du spinozisme" [Max Grunwald, *Spinoza in Deutschland* (Berlin: Gekroente Preisschrift, 1897), 252–253; transl. Bouriau, "Conatus Spinoziste et volonté Schopenhaurienne," 2007, note 33].

In his ethics, Schopenhauer opposes Spinoza's *eudaimonism* and agrees with Kant in characterizing moral action by disinterestedness; yet he disagrees with both Kant and Spinoza in deposing reason in favor of compassion, the sole motive which can counteract egoism in his view.

In his metaphysical views, Schopenhauer is closer to Spinoza than to Kant, however. These include the unicity of being, desire as the prime human element, the subordination of representation to the effort of persevering in existence, and the search of redemption in transcending the spatio-temporal determinations of existence.

Schopenhauer did not care about the *Ethics*, as Santayana did. The reason he did not care is given in his "epiphilosophy," his concluding remarks at the end of the *World as Will and Representation*. Comparing himself with Spinoza, he notes that the God-creator is common to both, but while Spinoza has deprived his God only of personality, it is still Jehovah, "as regards its moral character and worth, who applauds his creation, and finds that everything has turned out excellently"; he adds the following revealing self-characterization of his own philosophy:

> With me, on the other hand, the will or inner nature of the world, is by no means Jehovah; on the contrary, it is, so to speak, the crucified Saviour, or else the crucified thief, according as it is decided. Consequently, my ethical teaching agrees with the Christian completely and in its highest tendencies, and no less with that of Brahmanism and Buddhism.[50]

As for Jehovah, everything is good, since "man has nothing further to do than," as Spinoza writes, that one "should live, act, maintain his existence, since ultimately he seeks his own advantage."[51] He should just enjoy his life as long as it lasts, wholly in accordance with Ecclesiastes IX, 7–10: "In short, it is optimism, hence its ethical side is weak, as in the Old Testament, in fact it is even false, and in part revolting."[52]

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[50] Arthur Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, 2 volumes, transl. E. F. J. Payne (New York: Dover, 1966), Volume II, 645. Santayana would in a similar vein say that "Christianity is completely reversed to the inspiration of the Jews in their frank original hope, and rather resembled Neo-Platonism and Buddhism" (Santayana, *RB*, 766).

[51] Benedict Spinoza, *Ethics*, in: *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and transl. Edwin Curley, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), Book IV, Proposition 67.

[52] See Schopenhauer, *The World as Will and Idea*, volume II, 645, note 7, for examples of the immorality of Spinoza, three of them taken from the *Ethics* and denouncing "chap. 16 of the *Tractatus Theologico-Political*" as "the true compendium of the immorality of Spinoza's philosophy."

"In spite of all this," Schopenhauer concludes, "Spinoza remains a very great man."[53]

3. Nietzsche

> I may be wrong, but I find great comfort in Nietzsche… He is not explicit, he is romantic, but he *implies* my world of two or more storeys, if he does not draw its plan and elevation, as my architectural propensities lead me to do – without, I admit, any technical accuracy; because I am really a self-indulgent impressionist, like Nietzsche himself, and wish to sketch my buildings in perspective.[54]

Santayana saw in Nietzsche a kindred spirit, despite being critical of him and suspicious of his laughter. Three chapters of *Egotism in in German Philosophy* (1915) address the thought of the German philosopher. Santayana rejects his romanticizing of evil: he objects to Nietzsche's call to accept evil in order to feel the intensity of our aggressive nature. Santayana refuses to acquiesce in any doctrine that deifies the exercise of power even if it leads to personal or others' happiness. Deemed "a keen satirist," "full of shrewd wit," Nietzsche is also insightfully diagnosed by Santayana: "Behind his 'gay wisdom' and trivial rhymes lies a great anguish. His intellect is lost in a chaos. His heart denies itself the relief of tears and can vent itself only in forced laughter and mock hopes that gladden nobody, least of all himself."[55]

To explain how Nietzsche relates to Schopenhauer is easy: Nietzsche sees himself as providing the affirmative answer to life that the latter is denying. He defines his task as the refutation of Schopenhauer after being his follower in his early years of intellectual evolution. He affirms life in the name of health, which does not permit him to be pessimistic anymore, and in the name of the world, whose will to power is to be embraced if one is to thrive in it. He endorses uncritically Schopenhauer's view of Christianity as otherworldly and ascetic, and rejects Chris-

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[53] Ibidem.

[54] George Santayana, *The Letters of George Santayana*, ed. William G. Holzberger (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2001–2008), Book Six, 277; *LGS* hereafter.

[55] George Santayana, *Egotism in German Philosophy*, The Project Gutenberg e-book (eBook #48431), 139, 143. For further details about Santayana's attitude to Nietzsche, see Lydia Amir, "The Democritean Tradition in Santayana, Nietzsche, and Montaigne, Part I–III," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* 38 (2020): 74–92; 39 (2021): 116–140; 40 (2022): forthcoming.

tianity for these very reasons. The affirmation that Nietzsche proposes comes in two waves, the first, in *The Birth of Tragedy*, a Schopenhauerian and Wagnerian text, the affirmative redemption proposed is through the anesthetization of the world, seeing it as a beautiful tragedy and learning to enjoy the disappearance of individuality that life entails. Later in his life, Nietzsche would deride this work and offer instead a Dionysian attitude toward the world as the content of his affirmative philosophy, which sanctifies suffering in the name of life, and exhorts us to love fate and ourselves through it, in order to redeem ourselves through self-love: "Love yourself as an act of clemency," he writes, as we noted above, "then you will no longer have any need of your god, and the whole drama of Fall and Redemption will be played out to the end in you yourselves!" The rejection of self as human-all-too-human, represented by that the overman is not fully incorporated in this affirmative vision. An alternative to eternal life is offered through the eternal recurrence of the same, whose tension with additional positive doctrines and with the critical period is not fully resolved.[56]

However, the relation to Spinoza is more complex; while it is explained in detail elsewhere,[57] it can only be broached here. It begins with an enthusiastic encounter: "I am utterly amazed, utterly enchanted. I have a precursor, and what a precursor!… my lonesomeness which, as on very high mountains, often made it hard for me to breathe and made my blood rush out, is now at least a twosomeness."[58] This initial enthusiasm is mitigated by various criticisms; despite Nietzsche's ambivalence toward redemption, however, as toward any other notion, he endorses the Spinozistic project of personal philosophic redemption, and in various places defines his task as offering redemption and rebirth through the transformation of fear, guilt and shame into the affirmative powers of *amor fati* and the eternal return of the same when seen as a challenging existential ideal: "Zarathustra once defines, quite strictly, his task – it is mine too – and there is no mistaking his meaning: he says Yes to the point of justifying, of redeeming even all of the past."[59]

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[56] See Lydia Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life: Montaigne, Nietzsche, Santayana, (Bergson)* (Albany: SUNY Press, work under contract), Chapter 2.

[57] See Amir, *Redemptive Philosophies*.

[58] Friedrich Nietzsche, "Postcard to Franz Overbeck, July 30, 1881," in: *The Portable Nietzsche*, ed. and transl. Walter Kaufmann (New York: Penguin Books, 1954), 92.

[59] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Ecce Homo: How One Becomes What One Is*, transl. Reginald J. Hollingdale (London: Penguin Books, 1979), Part IV, Zarathustra, Section 8.

Nietzsche's own positive philosophy is at odds with his critical philosophy, and his mature notions of the Overman, *amor fati*, and the eternal recurrence of the same, though influenced by Spinoza's attempt, and for some, mimicking his attempt,[60] do not cohere as Spinoza's notions do. Notably, Nietzsche's radical criticism of Christian values, for which he is known, is betrayed beyond coherence in the values he endorses in his positive philosophy.

Santayana's view of Nietzsche evolved throughout the years. He presents his philosophy in Nietzschean terms, which he finds in the Bacchae phenomena: in *Persons and Places*, he refers to his own contribution as the Apollonian aspect missing from the Dionysian (or mystical) aspect that defines many other worldviews. I believe that this encompasses also his view of Spinoza. Apart from similar concerns about enlisting the individual in the crowd's aims, that he shares with Nietzsche, the self-transcendence that Santayana proposes echoes the Nietzschean spiritual overcoming. Santayana seems to offer redemption through the aesthetization of experience that Nietzsche presented in his first book; and he certainly captures the play and the laughter that is the road to the spiritual life (also for Nietzsche), as testified by what he says of Russell: "It is when he derides the existent or plays with the non-existent that I find him admirable."[61]

4. Santayana: A Philosophically Religious Thinker or *The Philosopher* of Catholicism?

> What is philosophy, as the governance and appreciation of life, except religion liberated from groundless fear or anxiety, that is, from any form of superstition, and also from rage at honest illusions?[62]
> My philosophy is like that of the ancients: a discipline of the mind and heart, a lay religion.[63]

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[60] See William S. Würzer, *Nietzsche und Spinoza* (Meisenheim am Glan: Anton Hain, 1975).

[61] George Santayana, *Winds of Doctrine: Studies in Contemporary Opinion* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1926). For Santayana on play and laughter, see Lydia Amir, "I Stand in Philosophy Exactly where I Stand in Daily Life: The Special Case of Laughter," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the George Santayana Society* 37 (2019): 49–76.

[62] Santayana, *DP*, 285.

[63] Santayana, *RB*, 827.

> This brings me to religion, which is the head and front of everything… my vocation was clear: my earliest speculation was at once intimate and universal, and *philosophically religious, as it has always remained*.[64]

Santayana calls for an original mind that could do for his own time what Dante had done for high Christendom. That "supreme poet" would "compose a natural comedy as much surpassing Dante's divine comedy in sublimity and richness as it will surpass it in truth."[65] We may say with Paul Kuntz that he attempted to do so, especially since he describes *The Realm of Spirit* as having "fundamentally the same subject as that of Dante's *Divine Comedy*"[66]; at least, I believe, he thought that he targeted the philosophic truth that lies at Christianity's heart. By defining philosophy as religion naturalized, Santayana inscribes himself in the line of the Spinozistic project. Philosophy is a way of life,[67] for both philosophers, a "lay religion," as Santayana specified, in the style that all ancient authors offered. Yet such also is the nature of Christianity, when divested of superstition, and when its esoteric or secret core is disclosed by the philosopher. And, thus, necessarily, in "Ultimate Religion" among other places, Spinoza's philosophy and the redemption it offers are criticized for missing the target and being exactly what Spinoza intended them to be, remote from Christianity, or from the philosophical transposition of Christianity that Santayana offers.[68]

Already the first Chapter of *Reason in Religion*, "How Religion May Be an Embodiment of Reason," makes Santayana's views clear. And, as Edward Lovely has convincingly argued, Santayana's philosophy of religion is consistent throughout his work.[69] Though merely symbolic and

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[64] George Santayana, "A General Confession," in: *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. Paul Arthur Schilpp, 3–30 (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1940), 24, emphasis added; *AGC* hereafter.

[65] George Santayana, *Three Philosophical Poets, Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1910); *TPP* hereafter; quoted in Henry S. Levinson, *Santayana, Pragmatism, and the Spiritual Life* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 173.

[66] Paul G. Kuntz, "Santayana's Christian Neoplatonism," in: *Neoplatonism and Contemporary Thought*, Part I, ed. R. Baine Harris, 271–302 (Albany: SUNY Press, 2001). Santayana, *RB*, 604.

[67] See Daniel Moreno, *Santayana the Philosopher*: *Philosophy as a Form of Life*, transl. Charles Padrón (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 2015).

[68] For these criticisms, see Amir, "The Ideal of a Philosophic Redemption: Spinoza's Place in Western Philosophy and in Santayana's Thought," forthcoming.

[69] See Edward W. Lovely, *George Santayana's Philosophy of Religion: His Roman Catholic Influences and Phenomenology* (Lanham: Lexington Press, 2012), Chapter 4.

thoroughly human, Santayana argues that "this great business of the soul, which we call religion," in its intent "is a more conscious and direct pursuit of the Life of Reason than is society, science, or art," and that "the ends of rational life are attained by it."[70] Following Francis Bacon ("depth in philosophy bringeth men's minds about to religion"), he argues that the most comprehensive thinkers "give depth and universal application" to the religion of their times. Even heretics and atheists turn out to be forerunners of some new orthodoxy, while skeptics are soon brought face to face with "the mystery and pathos of human existence."[71]

Yet religion is not literally true: it "pursues rationality through the imagination," and thus, traditional conceptions "must be purified by the moralist and disintegrated by the philosopher."[72] Reflecting on the mature philosophy he developed later in life, he tells us in *The Idler and His Works*, that although his "turn of mind was always poetical and religious," he found himself

> […] reverting to a system like those of the first Greek philosophers, who looked at the world boldly, without religious preconceptions, yet found it to be much the same world that the Indians described in their religious meditations. But the Indian like the Christian philosophers were encumbered with fantastic notions… and it is necessary to remove these problems to the moral and the poetical sphere where they belong.[73]

When asking, what, in this natural world, is the nature and possible virtue of man, on what can he set his heart, he found that his answer, allowing for different backgrounds introduced by his naturalism, "was very like the reply given my most radical religious teachers, idealists, and mystics." Without reverting to the traditions that he had rejected and to the illusions that accompanied them, however, he maintained that he was "merely placing the spirit, the motives and the disciplines found in these traditions back where they belonged."[74]

Reflecting on the criteria that inspired his judgments in his early works, he tells us that they were "not Spanish or Catholic, yet they lay in that direction; in that direction and beyond, in the humanism not

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[70] Irwin Edman (ed.), *The Philosophy of George Santayana: Selections from the Works of George Santayana* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1943), 142, 144, 143.

[71] Ibidem, 141.

[72] Ibidem, 145, 141.

[73] George Santayana, *The Idler and His Works, and Other Essays*, ed. with a preface by Daniel Cory (New York: Braziller, 1957), 17, 10; *IW* hereafter.

[74] Santayana, *IW*, 17.

of the Renaissance but of antiquity," as pre-Christian, and as mere human standards "were even more Christian than the English standards of appreciation."[75] Santayana discloses in *The Idler and His Works* that the locus of his judgments was the spirit, yet he insists that "that center was truly "philosophical" insofar as spirit is "the light of understanding."[76] In his correspondence he is keen to dissociate himself from religious faith and from established Catholicism, and he tells us that he has an allegiance all of his own.[77] Yet elsewhere he confesses that the tone, the tenor, and the terms in his earlier writings not only "belonged to a fundamentally foreign morality," but "constituted a literary and diplomatic veil" to his "latent intelligence."[78] The more he retreated in time, and the farther east he looked, the more he discovered his "own profound and primitive convictions": Mankind "had forgotten their religion";[79] the Schopenhauerian view of Christianity originating in India, which he learned from Deussen, mingled with his own view of ancient Western philosophy as similar to Indian philosophy, brought about a view that makes of Christianity the heir of Antiquity more than of Judaism.

What is the content of this allegiance of his, this "innate" philosophy "latent" in his earlier works?[80] Santayana rejected all dogmatic supernaturalism, but maintained an abiding sense of piety before the "chthonic and cosmic powers" that, as Anthony Woodward rightly maintains, can

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[75] Santayana, *IW*, 12.

[76] Santayana, *IW*, 20.

[77] See the following correspondence which sheds light on Santayana's attitude toward Catholicism: Letter to Susan Sturgis de Sastre, 29 April 1906 (Santayana, *LGS*, Book One, 343); to William Roscoe Thayer, 29 May 1900 (Santayana, *LGS*, Book One, 218); to William Lyon Phelps, 1936 (Santayana, *LGS*, Book Five, 297). I am grateful to the reviewer who shared this information with me. However, by proposing the thesis that Santayana is the *philosopher* of Catholicism, I do not intend to argue that he *is* a Catholic, a believer in revelation and its literal truth, a practitioner of the Christian faith, etc. To the contrary: following Spinoza's example in relation to Christianity, I believe that Santayana attempts to disclose the *philosophic* (true) content that the Catholic myths hint at; and, it seems to me that it is this attempt, releasing the truth inherent in esoteric Catholicism, which constitutes his main achievement in his own eyes, the synthesis of his main allegiances, as he explains at the end of *Apologia pro Mente Sua*.

[78] Santayana, *IW*, 7.

[79] Santayana, *IW*, 8.

[80] "His judgements as to what parts of human life, which are set forth in *The Life of Reason*, are based upon a metaphysics which, in this book is implicit, but becomes explicit in *Realms of Being*" (Russell, *The Philosophy of Santayana*, 461), and, in the new preface to *The Life of Reason*, Santayana admits that his criterion was not clearly stated nor systematically maintained.

only be called "religious."[81] "There is something dynamic, obscure to the spirit, but overwhelmingly powerful and real, which I call matter, but which, if you prefer, you may call God," Santayana explains.[82] Yet the irrational source of all contingency does not have the attributes of God in a moral sense. There is no suggestion of a loving Father, only an unfathomable presence, best endured by being transmitted into the inwardness of spirit:

> Nature and history would thus gradually take shape before the distracted spirit and would reveal to it the secret of its own destiny. Anxiety and craving would dissolve before this redeeming knowledge, and the universe would be clarified into a complex essence, given pure and untroubled to intuition. Spirit, so enlightened, would be again at peace.[83]

Woodward views the spiritual intuition of essence as a redemptive feature of existence.[84] Rather than a theoretical explanation of the nature of things, Santayana's doctrine of essence recommends "a quality of attention to things that it is in our power to cultivate, and that, if cultivated, conduce to spiritual peace." For,

> it will be obvious at the outset that a man whose major philosophical work culminates with a long chapter entitled "Distraction," "Liberation," and "Union" is… in quest of salvation, not of solutions. Santayana's philosophy is a thoroughly practical pursuit, directed toward release from the Wheel in the manner of Buddhists.[85]

Various scholars emphasize Santayana's mysticism. Thomas Alexander sees Santayana's thought as dedicated to the overarching possibility of the spiritual life undertaken without religious faith or metaphysical dogma. Santayana offers a "naturalistic mysticism," a way out of the labyrinth of living.[86] The discipline of the spiritual life is Disillusion, a term Santayana has used ever since the beginning of his spiritual development. Pure intuition enables us to see the world under the form of

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[81] Anthony Woodward, *Living in the Eternal: A Study of George Santayana* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1988), 107.

[82] Santayana, *IW*, 9.

[83] Santayana, *RB*, 667–668.

[84] Woodward, *Living in the Eternal*, 83.

[85] Ibidem, 80.

[86] Thomas Alexander, "Beauty and the Labyrinth of Evil, Santayana and the Possibility of Naturalistic Mysticism," *Overheard in Seville: Bulletin of the Santayana Society* 18 (2000): 1–16, 1, 10.

eternity, as the "chronicles of ancient wars."[87] Kuntz notes that Santayana's thought "is of a Carmelite,"[88] and Santayana, despite his previous denunciation of mysticism, accepted the appellation "Castilian mystic… vowed to an unflinching realism about the world and an unsullied allegiance to the ideal." He, Santayana claimed, "is Don Quixote sane."[89] By endorsing this appellation, Santayana aligns himself both with the mystical fervor of a spirit aspiring to dwell, as best as it may, in the realm of essence, where all things may be contemplated in their beauty and their truth; as well as with an earthly Sancho Panza's acceptance of the gross contingencies of the realm of matter. The latter bred that harsh commonsense of Santayana, with its source in Spanish *desengaño*. John of the Cross, the Spanish mystic, is an important reference for Santayana, but also St. Francis of Assisi or Buddha, who can teach us "what the essence of liberation is… one would teach us the cheeriness of utter renunciation, and the other its infinite peace."[90] However, the supreme instance of "supreme spirit incarnate in a human creature" is Christ.

Santayana retained a keen sense for the symbolic power of his native, unpracticed, Catholicism. "Aesthetically and politically, though not theologically, a Catholic," Russell maintained that Santayana dislikes, in Christianity, "every innovation from the eleventh century to the present day, all of which he regards as due to the inability of Northern nations to assimilate the ancient wisdom which inspired the doctrine of Christian resignation."[91] Santayana has repeatedly criticized all forms of Christianity which are not Roman Catholic, especially, Protestantism. In Santayana's view, however, religious thought describes not external reality but the tribulations of the spirit as it deals with the human condition.[92] Its focus is moral in the sense that it deals with consciousness in its struggle to achieve clarity of purpose and self-mastery. All morality, in the end, is a matter of spirit finding some meaning in its life, for only moments of self-possessed consciousness have intrinsic worth. Ac-

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[87] Ibidem, 17.

[88] Kuntz, "Santayana's Christian Neoplatonism," 253.

[89] George Santayana, "Apologia pro Mente Sua," in: *The Philosophy of George Santayana*, ed. Paul A. Schilpp (New York: Tudor, 1940), 603–604.

[90] George Santayana, *The Realm of Spirit*, *Book 4 of the Realms of Being* (London: Constable, 1940), 243; *RS* hereafter.

[91] Russell, "The Philosophy of Santayana," 455, 467. Russell wrote this before *The Realm of Spirit* was published.

[92] On that significant point, see Katarzyna Kremplewska, *Life as Insinuation: George Santayana's Hermeneutics of Finite Life and Human Self* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2019).

cordingly, the function of religion is not to provide animal solace, but to aid in that liberation of the spirit without which the carefree delight of existence can never be savored. The proper aim of religion is not to prepare us for an everlasting existence of animal satisfactions, but to open our eyes to the eternal, to the abundance of the spiritual life possible today. Although spiritual immersion in the immediate is possible at any stage of life, full self-understanding on the part of consciousness is attained with difficulty through spiritual discipline and constant reflection, which not only understands but renounces the passions, as Santayana explains at the end of *Realms of Being*.

Spirit wants to be liberated from oppression by things not spiritual.[93] Santayana presents three stages of salvation: distraction, liberation, union. We are distracted or distraught when torn asunder by contrary and inescapable commitments. The chief agencies in this distraction, after the "picturesque manner of Christian wisdom," are the Flesh, the World, and the Devil.[94] The devil is "any enemy of spirit that is internal to spirit."[95] The devil and the spirit are one, so that one cannot be liberated fully from it; it tempts us with omnipotence and omniscience. Distraction by the devil reaches its height in insanity and suicide, on the way to which there are many stages and devious paths of sophistication, obsession, delusion, and fanatical pride.

By understanding, the spirit can be liberated from the world, that is, from distraction caused by it.[96]: "To be liberated… is not to lose or destroy the positive possessions to which the spirit is attached. It is merely to disinfect them, to view them as accidents, to enjoy them without claiming them, to transcend without despising them."[97] It is a disintoxication.[98] The spirit "by questioning everything liberates itself."[99] An exercise in self-knowledge is "an effort on the part of spirit to clarify and to discipline itself."[100] The liberation of spirit that is internal and essential to it has nothing to do with death or with another life, but comes at any moment and pervades all times when intuition supplants convention and passion rises into self-knowledge.[101]

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[93] Santayana, *RS*, 193.
[94] Ibidem, 119.
[95] Ibidem, 165.
[96] Ibidem, 194.
[97] Ibidem, 200.
[98] Ibidem, 202.
[99] Ibidem, x.
[100] Ibidem, ix.
[101] Ibidem, xi.

Psyches, some more than others, have an affinity for contemplation. The spiritual life consists only of those moments when the intuition of an essence remains pure, untainted by the cares of the psyche beneath it. The native affinity of mind is, according to Santayana, to essence and not to fact. As such, consciousness may play with appearances apart from the believing intent of psyche (the organic manifestation of mind); to the extent that it does so play, the spiritual life has been lived. Spirit is the ability of mind to turn natural events and experiences into appearances of themselves, and allow a healthy cosmic repose even as nature moves ceaselessly, beautifully, and sometimes destructively along.

Spirituality, as Santayana characterizes it, is a function that makes human consciousness felicitously double. It is the "second insight," that lets us "identify ourselves not with ourselves."[102] The disillusioned sympathy or charity that Santayana proposes is a perception and a love of "the possible perception in all other things," letting people simultaneously take themselves and their own with a grain of salt while appreciating the alien other.[103] It brings a sense of well-being by "detaching us from each thing with humor and humility, and attaching us to all things with justice, charity, and pure joy."[104] So far as they engage in spiritual discipline, people need to suspend the practice of judgment for the sake of understanding, for the sake of seeing and appreciating things for their own sake and, when these things are people, to understand as they understand themselves and their circumstances. The spiritual life is necessarily irresponsible because its function is to cure the blindness that social, economic, and political responsibilities bring about: "Political zeal, even in the true friends of spirit is not spiritual… The spirit… is not essentially learned or social; its kingdom is not of this world."[105]

Morally, the whole natural world, with us as people in it, will be removed to a distance. It will have become foreign. It will touch us, and exist morally for us, only as the scene of our exile, and as being the confusion from which it hopes to be delivered.[106] Spirit has chosen intelligence, sympathy, universality. For itself it has chosen renunciation, not to be preached but practiced inwardly in its own solitude. The first thing to renounce is any claim to domination. The other world is the

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[102] Santayana, *RB*, 741.

[103] Ibidem, 759.

[104] Ibidem, 745.

[105] George Santayana, *Platonism and the Spiritual Life* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1957), 39; *PSL* hereafter.

[106] Santayana, RS, 188.

very emancipation and dominion of spirit over itself. Suffering is not abolished as long as spirit lives in the world, but is accepted and spiritually overcome by being understood. And this is preferred over the easy injustice of sharing only one craving.[107]

Moral freedom for Santayana lies in a detachment from social and political ties, which the free mind must view with "resigned courtesy,"[108] and in the ability to live spiritually in what he called the realm of essence, which he sharply contrasted with material existence. At the end of *Realms of Being*, the spirit dwells in solitary self-communion with the essences congenial to it. "If belief and anxiety be banished from the experience of things," Santayana wrote, "only its pure essence remains present to the mind."[109] Apart from the events they may influence, these essences have no existence.[110]

As *Scepticism and Animal Faith* asserts, spirit is going toward salvation. This salvation is personal, as spirit is solitary. There is an ascent of spirit described in *Platonism and the Spiritual Life*, which is reprised in *Realms of Being*: escaping from the realm of existence to the eternal picture of the realm of truth, and then to the realm of essence.[111] Intuiting essences is good, Santayana explains, because

> a mind enlightened by scepticism and cured of noisy dogma, a mind discounting all reports, and free from all tormenting anxiety about its own fortunes or existence, finds in the wilderness of essence a very sweet and marvelous solitude. The ultimate reaches of doubt and renunciation open out for it, by an easy transition, into fields of endless variety and peace, as if through the gorges of death it had passed into a paradise where all things are crystallised into the image of themselves, and have lost their urgency and their venom.[112]

By sublimating all things and persons into essences, Santayana attempted to exist with exalted impartiality in detached contemplation of the varied imaginative goods that the world offers, distilling their qualities in the crucible of his own spirit, integrated and folded upon itself. This state is characterized not by egoism but by a disillusioned sympathy with all things for the sake of the goods they seek and may fleeting-

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[107] Ibidem, 90.
[108] Santayana, *PSL*, 281.
[109] Ibidem, 301.
[110] Santayana, *AGC*, 28–29.
[111] Santayana, *PSL*, XIX, 71.
[112] George Santayana, *Scepticism and Animal Faith: Introduction to a System of Philosophy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923), 76.

ly embody. This is what Santayana calls charity[113] and he sees it as constitutive of spirit, as "it is the essence of spirit to see and love things for their own sake."[114]

This morality is part of the *Life of Reason* and at the heart of *The Idea of Christ in the Gospels*. Essences are also objects of love, a love of all things impartially, as ideas, essences, not things. Rather than following Platonic love, which is no love of nature but "a political, human good,"[115] Santayana likens spiritual love to Christian charity, which in its pure form has nothing to do with acts of beneficence. Charity is universal sympathy at the spiritual level. It implies sympathy with universal suffering, but not actual action on behalf of the philosopher.[116] In eternity the most opposite goods are not enemies; they are rather like brothers and sisters, as all odd things were to St. Francis of Assisi.[117] As spirit is essentially synthetic,[118] it permits a unification of goods which are contrary in their existence.

Santayana rectifies Spinoza's redemption on many points, as well as the love that enables it and the kind of eternity it grants. Most notable, in my mind, is the role of God in man in Christianity and as an ideal for the Christian man. Indeed, as Fraenkel explains, Spinoza offers a Christian philosophy, living in a Christian country and addressing himself to Christians. His Christology, which is described in Pollock's book,[119] was not lost on Santayana, who charitably identifies Spinoza's unpoetic nature and his fated lack of Christian culture or tradition as the reasons for his misunderstanding the significance of Christ's incarnation and for recapturing only his presence as God's Intellect.[120]

Santayana redefines spirit in accordance with the view of Christ as ideal, which mythologically represents God in each of us; but he also

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[113] Santayana, *RB*, 795; "intellectual charity" in Santayana, *UR*, 577.

[114] Santayana, PSL, XXV, 93.

[115] Ibidem, 92.

[116] See Santayana's rejection of the demands of the world on him in *Realms of Being* and his example of experiencing "the pity of it" when seeing a beggar rather than an actual action on its behalf (Santayana, *RB*, 714–716; 48).

[117] George Santayana, *Obiter Scripta: Lectures, Essays and Reviews*, ed. Justus Buchler and Benjamin Schwartz (New York: Scribner's; London: Constable, 1936), 255.

[118] Santayana, *ICG*, 255.

[119] For Spinoza's Christology, see also Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza*, 265–267.

[120] Santayana, *ICG*, 6. But Santayana misses the following point: this was also the way that Origen recaptured Christ's significance, according to Fraenkel, *Philosophical Religions from Plato to Spinoza*, 166.

redefines the trinity, the Devil, sin, suffering and rational prayer; distraction, liberation and union are redescribed in his works;[121] idolatries and heresies are denounced in many of his (humanistic) writings; most importantly, Christianity is recast as naturalistic,[122] as paganism spiritualized;[123] and as humanistic,[124] a "civilized and civilizing religion" yet necessarily militant, as *Dominations and Powers* explains.[125]

The path Santayana offers, which he describes as the esoteric truth of Christianity, and which alone interests him,[126] leads to liberation and union of the solitary "spirit within itself," that is, with its own good, a new relation with the world that enables a transcending of the world by understanding it, rather than a "union between two spirits,"[127] through love toward the beautiful and toward all good (a revised version of charity),[128] and a feeling of living in the eternal because one detaches

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[121] For further exploration of these significant themes, see Amir, *Laughter and the Good Life*, Chapter 3.

[122] "Catholicism is paganism spiritualised: it is fundamentally naturalistic; and the transcendental spirit and the wise statesman may accept Catholicism, where it naturally arises, as a good poetic symbol for the forces and the issues of human life in that phase; not, however, as a scientific revelation of reality or a history of literal facts. Religion is valid poetry infused into common life. It is not a revelation truer than perception or than science…." (Santayana, *PP*, 492).

[123] Ibidem, 492.

[124] Ibidem, 93. "Catholicism is the most human of religions, if taken humanly: it is paganism spiritually transformed and made metaphysical. It corresponds most adequately to the various exigencies of moral life, with just the needed dose of wisdom, sublimity, and illusion. Only it should be accepted humanly, traditionally, as part of an unquestioned order, a totalitarian moral heritage, like one's language and family life, leaving religious controversy to the synods and metaphysical speculation to the schools" (Ibidem, 93). For Santayana's humanism, see Katarzyna Kremplewska, *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics* (Leiden: Brill, 2022).

[125] For a thorough analysis of Santayana's view of religion, see Lovely, *George Santayana's Philosophy of Religion*; see also Kuntz, "Santayana's Christian Neoplatonism."

[126] Santayana, *PP*, 409.

[127] Santayana, *RB*, 809. Note, however, that "Truth is contingent" and spirit "can rest only in what is necessary". Hence, "More deeply, therefore, than with the truth, spirit is concerned with conceiving, loving, or hating what might have been true", that is, not with the world as it is (Ibidem, 805). And, "in the act of surveying and understanding action, spirit raises the action into an image; and the imagination… moves at another level", because "the potential sympathy that spirit has with all life is… dramatic" (Ibidem, 715).

[128] See the insightful reconstruction of Santayana's notion of charity that Kremplewska offers in her latest book, *George Santayana's Political Hermeneutics*.

oneself from the suffering and the anxiety of existence by contemplating eternal essences. Moreover, an alternative to the Christian eternal life is offered also in Santayana's assertion that the fact that I lived is eternally true.

Because existence is irrational for Santayana, still in this a follower of Schopenhauer, it cannot be saved; and reason, which he argues leads more by love than by reasoning to liberation, is redefined as a form of the imagination, the individual liberation that Santayana offers is not intended to be of social significance, unless the *life of reason* is lived in a homogenous religious community, which a global world excludes. Moreover, spirit can thrive in an evil society, he explicitly states. By emphasizing that which necessarily divides us, our loves and our perceived goods (desires), and insisting on leaving them all as they are, while sympathizing with them all yet with emotional detachment, Santayana's individual liberation, the sole one he offers, can only lay in renouncing worldliness, and most importantly, in renouncing the world-improvement which is possible only by worldly engagement rather than by "the life of prayer," to which "we must come morally in the end," which is "the only perfectly rational form of life for a spirit that has attained self-knowledge."[129]

Santayana criticizes Spinoza for making the philosophers' good, reason, the good for all; and for offering truth as an ideal that binds us all; in short, for taking pains to show where our common *true* interest lies. This move enables Spinoza to emphasize the significance of other persons' rationality for our well-being and to argue in favor of democracy, because insofar as we are rational, we think similarly, and our liberties and our joys, rather than our suffering, is heightened by this cooperation. Thus, our common interest is that many people would be rational, so they can be happy, and we can be freer. Since according to Spinoza, man is a god for man, and we cannot neglect the political and social conditions for the philosopher's liberty. Santayana states that Christianity wants to save the world, yet the world does not want to be saved. Spinoza, on the contrary, exhorts us to "have no other motive than the sal-

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[129] Santayana, *RB*, 801. This explains the tragic in Santayana's view of life, as exemplarily explained in Charles Padrón, "The Notion of the Tragic in Santayana's Thought," *Overheard in Seville*: *Bulletin of the Santayana Society* 19(19) (2001): 10–17. Of course, a partial liberation is possible as well, at any moment, by laughter, for example, as explained in Amir, "I Stand in Philosophy Exactly where I Stand in Daily Life."

vation of your fellow man and make as sure as possible that you do not work in vain."[130]

Despite these differences, I believe that the blueprint of the project I have described in this article is Spinozistic, picked up by Schopenhauer, amended by Nietzsche, and endorsed by Santayana.[131] But what exactly is the nature of this project? To address this question, I refer to Matthew Flamm's response to my query, "Is Santayana's thought a reconstruction of Catholicism, or an alternative to it?"[132] "Can't it be both?" Flamm inquired. It can and it is, I believe; such also is Spinoza's thought, a reconstruction of religion and an alternative to it. Thus, the thesis I propose is as follows: Santayana is the *philosopher* of Catholicism, the one, to use his own words, who "transposes" Catholicism into philosophic terms. In that capacity, what he advances is of necessity an alternative to Catholicism; but it is also a "reduction of Christian theology and spiritual discipline to their secret interior source,"[133] which he defines as its esoteric part,[134] the spiritual side of religion which *Dominations and Powers* tells us has been neglected by most. The philosophic core he reveals not only underscores the significant pagan elements in Catholicism, but also discloses the truth of Indian religions,[135] the latter enterprise explicitly undertaken first by Schopenhauer,[136] despite the difficulties of accessing all the necessary materials in the beginning of the nineteenth century, but

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[130] Benedict Spinoza, *The Collected Works of Spinoza*, ed. and transl. Edwin Curley, vol. 1 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 150.

[131] The sheer ambition of this project forces me to rely on additional publications, as I have been doing throughout this article. Let me mention one more: I am working on a manuscript titled, *The Legacy of Spinoza*, which will detail that which could only broach here.

[132] Following my lecture under the auspices of The George Santayana Society at the 2022 APA Eastern Meeting.

[133] Both quotes are from Santayana, *RB*, 845.

[134] Santayana, *PP*, 409. "In Christianity the idea of prosperity is abandoned for that of salvation in the world to come; and incidentally there is much aspiration towards spiritual perfection and many a master of it; yet this spiritual discipline is in some sense esoteric […]. The incidental esoteric discipline, which is all that I respect in Catholicism, terminates in the same inward liberation and peace that ancient sages attained under all religions or under none. The question is whether the paraphernalia of salvation are not in all cases accidental…" (ibidem, 409).

[135] For example, at the end of the *Realm of Spirit*, the salvation that Santayana offers reinterprets both Indian themes, such as transmigration, and Christian themes, such as the Resurrection (Santayana, *RB*, 671–767).

[136] For Schopenhauer on Indian thought, whose content he considers similar to the mystical intuition of Christian monks, see Douglas L. Berger, *"The Veil*

importantly developed by Santayana, due to the similarities he underlines between Greek and Indian thought. What can we learn from that about Santayana's position in modern philosophy on individual liberation? He is a follower of Spinoza, and of Schopenhauer, whom he assimilates to Spinoza, and a contender for Nietzsche's place as heir of both.[137]

Conclusion

I conclude by pointing out two different paths for further research, which exceeds the capacity of this article, on the place of Santayana in Modern philosophy. One path involves the philosopher and sociologist, Georg Simmel, Santayana's teacher in Berlin, and the other unorthodox Christians and unorthodox philosophers, Pascal, Hamann, and Kierkegaard, in whose purpose in philosophizing I find much in common with Santayana.

1. In his role as the true (affirmative) successor of Schopenhauer, Santayana was competing not only with Nietzsche, as proposed above, but also with Simmel. Simmel published a study on both thinkers, and developed further his own position in relation to both.[138] Simmel could have imparted his views to his students; Santayana was familiar enough with his thought to be impressed.[139] Whilst studying in Berlin, Santayana may have learned about Schopenhauer (and the Indians) from

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of Māyā": Schopenhauer System and Early Indian Thought (Binghamton University, New York: Global Academic Publishing, 2004).

[137] I am deeply grateful to the editor, Katarzyna Kremplewska's and of the two anonymous reviewers' comments, which helped me modulate my claim of Santayana's relation to Catholicism and to refine my account of Santayana's attitude toward Spinoza, free will, and Indian Philosophy. I agree that the title could be, "The Place of Santayana's Individual Liberation in Unorthodox Modern Christian Tradition," and I even concur with those who would only describe him as "a philosophically religious thinker." However, I believe that his claim is stronger and I hope that I have made a good case for it despite the necessary limitations that this article imposes.

[138] Georg Simmel, *Schopenhauer and Nietzsche* (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1986); Georg Simmel, *The View of Life: Four Metaphysical Essays, with Journal Aphorisms* (Chicago–London: The University of Chicago Press, 2010).

[139] However, he wrote: "I took a course under Simmel on 'Ten Different Interpretations of the Essence of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason'; a clever series of criticisms, producing at least in my mind nothing but amusement and confusion. I was living in Babel" (Santayana, *PP*, 260).

Deussen,[140] a significant contribution to Santayana's understanding of Schopenhauer and of the German philosopher's view of Christianity; however, it was Simmel that impacted Santayana, as he testifies in a letter to William James ("I have discovered a Privatdozent, Dr. Simmel, whose lectures interest me very much"), in which he famously went on to describe Simmel as "the brightest man in Europe."[141]

Simmel's study discloses the relation and tension between Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, and, significantly, at least in relation to my thesis, refers both to Spinoza. Later on, he set himself the task of developing a philosophy of his own that answers Schopenhauer and replaces Nietzsche's.[142] As probing Simmel's thought is the topic of another article, I turn now to an additional philosophic tradition which I find of interest in relation to Santayana.

2. Insofar as the contents of Santayana's philosophy are concerned (e.g., existence is not rational, reason is displaced in favor of imagination and the heart; rather than truth as the sole ideal, love is emphasized, etc.), we should note that they do not belong to the rational tradition in philosophy, in which Santayana did not wish to partake; but more importantly, they do not align with much else in philosophy. His literary psychology, which is "essentially divination, not science," yet "more literally true than any other kind of knowledge" when "the mind-reader and the mind read are generically akin," is described in terms of spirit; it is "to read actions in terms of spirit and to divine the thought that doubtless accompanied them."[143] Already Schopenhauer approached philosophy differently than his predecessors and contemporaries,[144] operating a psychologizing move in philosophy, and Santayana somewhat follows the German philosopher's lead in that.

Yet Schopenhauer was also influenced by Pascal; and in turn, influenced Kierkegaard, who was himself influenced by Hamann.[145] If Santayana's thought gains understanding from being described as the philosopher of Catholicism, as I believe it does, probing his thought and techniques in relation to these unorthodox Christian authors and phi-

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[140] Ibidem.

[141] Donald N. Levine, Ellwood B. Carter, Eleanor Miller Gorman, "Simmel's Influence on American Sociology, I," *American Journal of Sociology* 81(4) (1976): 813–845, 815.

[142] Simmel, *The View of Life*.

[143] Santayana, *RB*, 836.

[144] See Head, *Schopenhauer and the Nature of Philosophy*.

[145] For Hamann and Kierkegaard, see Lydia Amir, *Humor and the Good Life: Shaftesbury, Hamann, Kierkegaard* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2014).

losophers will further advance its understanding. For example, it may be interesting to compare the various approaches to the apologetics of Christianity that Santayana may be sharing with Pascal, Hamann, and Kierkegaard, which incidentally or not, make use of humor, irony, and satire to promote Christian truth.[146] More particularly, putting Santayana in dialogue with Pascal may illuminate the role of the heart in relation to reason, which is central to both; and putting Santayana in dialogue with Kierkegaard may illuminate the approach to Christianity as Humanism and Humanism as Christianity,[147] and the indirect approach to Christianity that characterizes Kierkegaard's pseudonymous works and the majority of Santayana's works (those which he wrote from a humanistic point of view[148]), excepting the last few ones.

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[146] See Lydia Amir, "Pascal and Kierkegaard," in: *The Blackwell Companion to Pascal*, ed. Yuval Avnur (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, work under contract).

[147] For a notable contribution to Kierkegaard studies along these lines, see Avi Sagi, *Kierkegaard, Religion, and Existence: The Voyage of the Self* (Leiden: Brill, 2000).

[148] Santayana, *RB*, 828.

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Summary

This article evaluates the significance of the personal liberation that Santayana offers in relation to previous proposals in Western modern philosophy. These include the ideas of liberation present in the philosophies of Spinoza, Schopenhauer, and Nietzsche. I argue that Santayana endorses Spinoza's project, as Schopenhauer and Nietzsche did, of a philosophic redemption as an alternative to an established religion. Yet, he also follows Schopenhauer in rectifying Spinoza's attempt of recapturing the philosophic truth of Christianity, a project undertaken in Medieval times for Judaism and Islam, but not for Christianity. The result is an explicit *philosophic* reconstruction of the esoteric truth of Christianity. This, I argue, is the content of the lay religion and the deliverance it provides that Santayana sees as genuine philosophy and that is exemplified by the work of his hero and master, Spinoza.

Keywords: Spinoza, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Christianity, philosophical religion, philosophic personal redemption