the self-willed laziness of his anti-metaphysical bent: "I have for many years ceased to read or to think concerning [the spiritual realm], and have reposed my head on that pillow of ignorance which a benevolent creator has made so soft for us" (118).

The dogmatic anti-dogmatism of Ethan Allen and Thomas Paine is also well represented, but the most useful part of the book is its second half which includes sections from lesser-known thinkers. Elihu Palmer is presented as the most active and intellectually creative and consistent American deist. Phillip Freneau of Jefferson's political circle was the best poet of the deist movement. Selections from the Compte de Volney's Ruins; or Meditations and the Revolutions of Empires are given a chapter since "no other continental contemporary of the American deists exerted a greater influence on them" (182). Walters is at his best at the end of the book introducing selections from the short-lived deist magazines The Temple of Reason and more popular Prospect; or, View of the Moral World, which were both heavily influences by Palmer and offer a window into the wide circulation of deist views at the turn of the century. The most interesting piece is a Thomistic proof for an infinite, benevolent, unitary creator written probably by the ex-Jesuit Dennis Driscoll. The short final chapter is devoted to The Theophilanthropist magazine which Walters uses to show how deism "fizzled out with a whimper by 1811" (358).

Walters, who also introduced and edited Elihu Palmer's "Principles of Nature" (Wolfeboro, NH: Longwood, 1990), knows well the deists and deism at the turn of the century. His two other recent books now joined by this volume are an important contribution to our knowledge of the lesser-known radical thinkers at the end of the eighteenth century who endeavored to spread the good news of deism in a new era of increasing freedom in the press.

Indiana University Southeast
Rick Kennedy


Levinson's book represents a valuable contribution to the ongoing study of the significance of George Santayana in the history of American thought. The author traces the development of Santayana's views from his student days at Harvard College through his mature philosophical reflections. But, what makes this interpretation intriguing is that Levinson asserts his own commitment to pragmatic naturalism and assesses Santayana's strengths and weaknesses as a pragmatic naturalist.

At the outset, Levinson characterizes in rough fashion the heart of the difference between Santayana and Dewey, the paradigmatic pragmatic naturalist, this way:
Santayana's pragmatic naturalism was religious in ways that mainline pragmatists in the period from World War I at least up through World War II could not abide; and the pragmatic naturalism developed by Dewey, and disciples like Sidney Hook and Joseph Ratner, often boiled down to a moralism too strenuous to suit Santayana. (3-4)

He then points to six differences between these two forms of pragmatic naturalism and proposes that

. . . . these six areas of inquiry constitute an agenda of study for current religious naturalists to pursue. In the pages that follow, I hope — through coming to critical grips with Santayana's writings — to begin suggesting, broad-stroke, the prospects for religious naturalism now. (10)

The two differences I want to comment on relate to Santayana's view of the spiritual life. The first concerns the positive significance of solitude. Levinson points out that " . . . the Christian practices and patterns of thinking that shaped Santayana's religious philosophy make solitude and exile from society cultural locations of primary positive significance, not just personal idiosyncrasies." (22) Solitude is not simply to be understood as withdrawal from the social interactions essential to our being. The practice of solitude enables us to explore the inner source of our own spirituality, and this experience requires separation from the social. Levinson argues rightly, in my view, that such experience continues to make sense for the pragmatic naturalist.

If we are naturalists, if we accept the finite, contingent, material, and mortal character of humankind and the universe surrounding it, does it still make sense to explore the solitary spiritual life that so captured the interest of the young Santayana and his teachers? I think it does, because in light of inevitable suffering, absurdity, and evil, is life worth living? and What makes life significant? remain compelling questions; and they are questions that social thought alone does not answer. (51)

The second point of difference involves Santayana's view of religion as a cultural institution. In opposition to Dewey's rejection of religion in favor of the religious in A Common Faith, he argues that

If common-sense language and social policy establish the realistic order in which people live, religion offers a way to embark from it. Religion provides a cultural space that is unrealistic or festive --- space in which people can stretch their imaginations in various ways beyond the confines of their practical and socially regimented lives. (156)
Thus, although neither Dewey nor Santayana accept supernaturalism, Santayana sees no need to discard the practices traditionally associated with it. These practices have long fulfilled and can continue to fulfill human needs for disengagement from the everyday reality of practical social institutions.

In my estimation, Levinson accomplishes two important objectives in this text. First, he presents a scholarly and sympathetic interpretation of Santayana which places him squarely within the classical pragmatic tradition. Second, he offers a persuasive argument for the positive value of a religious naturalism inspired by the pragmatic tradition. Thus, the book represents not only a worthy addition to the secondary source material on Santayana, but also a vital contribution to the ongoing philosophical conversation about the role of spirituality in human life. Those of us with scholarly interests in both pragmatism and spirituality who have by and large ignored Santayana would do well to devote careful attention to Levinson's book.

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Tom Curley


The central thesis of this book is that the American philosophical tradition provides an alternative to philosophical "modernism" which is not vulnerable to the critiques of "postmodernist" thinkers such as Derrida and Richard Rorty. Neville holds that "modernism harbors two requirements for philosophy: that philosophy be foundationalist and that it be intelligible and valuable in a self-contained manner" (p. 93). But, he argues, American pragmatism and process philosophy have always been strongly anti-foundationalist, and have recognized the essential interconnection between philosophy and other fields such as "science, politics, religion, art, history and practical affairs" (pp. 93-4). American philosophy is thus a product of "modernity" without being "modernist."

Unlike postmodernist thinkers who proclaim "the end of metaphysics," Neville holds that "metaphysics is . . . central to the way around modernism" (p. 111). Thus he feels that Richard Rorty denigrates or ignores an essential aspect of the American tradition: the speculative and systematic thinking of Peirce, James, Dewey, Whitehead, and their followers and philosophical descendants. In this sense he is also somewhat critical of Richard Bernstein for "downplaying the plainly metaphysical contributions to the American tradition," and for "suggesting that Americans can be just as modernist as the analytic philosophers and the Europeans" (p. 90). His sharpest criticism, however, is reserved for Rorty, who has "fudged this distinction: