

Book Reviews.

A PHILOSOPHICAL NOVELIST: GEORGE SANTAYANA AND THE LAST PURITAN. H. T. Kirby-Smith. Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois: Southern Illinois UP, 1997. xii plus 208 pp. \$39.95.

Here is a generally welcome addition to the schools of thought on George Santayana: Santayana the Spinozist. The author is very right that it is strange how little study there has been of the influence of Spinoza on Santayana, considering how often Santayana stated what a great favorite of his Spinoza was. My own preference is for Santayana the Aristotelian. As the author states, "... Spinoza...was for him (Santayana) the greatest of the moderns..." (173) The last three words are an important qualification. It is odd that in the chapter on Spinoza, there is no direct mention of "Ultimate Religion," perhaps Santayana's most important work on him. I also would have liked to see a more extensive treatment of what is to me the most interesting question of the Spinoza-Santayana connection, how Santayana could so admire Spinoza and be such a strong, consistent opponent of pantheism. One answer, of course, but not necessarily the correct one, is simply that Spinoza was not a pantheist. On page 40, however, is a quotation which suggests that Santayana thought he was.

The author is also quite correct that philosophers have not devoted enough attention to considering the influence on thinkers' philosophies of the events of their personal lives. Being in an English department himself, he is perhaps more inclined to recognize this influence than we are. In a time when so many in our field are stressing the "embodied" nature of philosophy, why is there such resistance to the idea that a thinker's thoughts can have a great deal to do with, for instance, his or her childhood and immediate family? This work illustrates both the promise and problems of this approach; the latter when it is suggested (61) there is a connection between Santayana's theory of essence and his seasickness.

There is more philosophy, and appeal for philosophers, here than I expected. Though the focus is ostensibly on *The Last Puritan*, only two chapters are devoted to it. The preceding seven lay the philosophical groundwork. This is not the definitive study of, for instance, essence, but that work is still to be written. The explanation is good. It certainly avoids the worst misunderstandings, such as that essences have power. It does, however, make essence a little harder to grasp than perhaps is necessary. My most significant philosophical objection is that it is rather an exaggeration to say, "For Santayana, *distraction* is nearly synonymous with *evil*." (160 - emphasis his) Christopher Perricone has even suggested that in Santayana salvation is attained *through* distraction.

For a work of such modest length, there are more felicitous and perceptive turns of phrase than one would expect. Space requires I let readers find these for themselves. But

there are also problems. The image of Santayana as more detached and reclusive than he was is unfortunately perpetuated (though also contradicted in a couple of places), even to suggesting that "...he suffered from a morbid fear of intimacy..." (130) Nor was Santayana's poetry so bad as the author maintains, just dreadfully unfashionable. The book could also have benefited from more footnotes. At several points, it would be good to know precisely who made where some particularly memorable and/or critical statement about Santayana, and where he himself expressed a couple of sentiments I found rather jarring.

The last chapter gathers together some of the more gossipy Santayana material, having to do with such matters as James's "perfection of rottenness" phrase, Bertrand Russell, and Santayana's homosexuality. This is not of great philosophical significance, but it's good to have it all in one place, particularly since I think the author is right again when he suggests this kind of thing continues to color views of Santayana.

Southern Illinois University at Carbondale

Richard P. DeTar

COLLECTIVE RESPONSIBILITY. Gregory F. Mellema. Rodopi, 1997. 141 pp.

This volume offers a revised definition of collective responsibility, designed in part to defend that very notion against the argument that all responsibility is individual. The philosophical status of "collective responsibility" was notably attacked by H. D. Lewis in 1948. He argued persuasively that no one is ethically responsible for the conduct of another, and discredited collective responsibility by associating it with "primitive" and "tribal" practice and "traditionalist theology," while contending that it obstructs proper inquiry into individual actions contributing to a given joint result. Use of the term in a collective context, argued Lewis, dissociates it from discrete cognate causal conduct. All cases of moral judgment concerning a group may be adequately served by an exhaustive accounting of the relation and relevance of individual actions.

There is an interesting ontological overtone to this argument. Granting independent status to collective responsibility has the effect of fictionalizing the idea of responsibility itself. Only by maintaining a strict relation to specific deeds does the concept of responsibility maintain what Bentham (writing of legal vs. moral rights) called a "relation to the real." While this sounds appealingly empirical, it assumes a concreteness to individual causal analysis that is, presumably, unaffected by arbitrary line drawing. In excluding "collective" responsibility, it also inevitably discounts the surplus effects of planned conjoint action that are greater than the sum of individual acts--what could not have happened but for conjointness--although this is debatable. The individualist will insist that a sufficiently exhaustive investigation can apportion responsibility for all joint results.

Mellema's purpose is to demonstrate the "balance between the positions of those who see collective responsibility as reducible to [...] individual instances and those who