What Is Pragmatic Religious Naturalism, and What Does It Have to Do with Du Bois?
Jonathon S. Kahn

in Divine Discontent: The Religious Imagination of W. E. B. Du Bois
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: September 2009
Item type: chapter

This chapter defines pragmatism and pragmatic religious naturalism through a reading of pragmatists William James, John Dewey, and George Santayana. It shows how Du Bois constructs crucial notions of black identity, double consciousness, and black peoplehood with anti-essentialist pragmatist tools such as James's radical empiricism. It goes on to show how Du Bois's religious voice is fully inhabited by four key characteristics of pragmatic religious naturalisms: 1) skepticism of supernatural revelation; 2) conceiving of religion's powers as coming from finite human trusts; 3) finding religion's genius in its pairing of the real with the ideal; and finally 4) a meliorism in which hopefulness only emerges from a frank confrontation with real struggle and loss.

Santayana’s Sage
Thomas M. Alexander

in The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence
Published in print: 2013 Published Online: September 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter examines George Santayana’s notion of philosophy as a discipline of “aesthetic enlightenment,” a way of life that leads toward an ideal of “the sage” reminiscent of Hellenistic systems. It also takes up Santayana’s claim that his philosophy is “a discipline of the mind and heart, a lay religion” and what it means. It considers his philosophy in relation to the ancient Hellenistic ideals of the “sophos” and how he perceives the aesthetic discipline of the sage. In particular, it discusses
four major archetypes that contribute to Santayana’s ideal of the sage: the discipline of matter, the discipline of the infinite, the discipline of essence, and the discipline of spirit.

**A Pilgrimage to Santayana**

Irving Singer

in George Santayana: Literary Philosopher

Published in print: 2000 Published Online: October 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter presents two ways in which George Santayana's contribution to twentieth-century philosophy may be appraised. Santayana could be taken as a writer about the human condition who was also interested in philosophy, or else who was also a theorist in various branches of philosophy who wrote essays, literary criticism, histories of ideas, social commentaries, volumes of poetry, a best-selling novel, and so forth. Both approaches to his talent must be employed, and interwoven, in order to attain a clear idea of what Santayana accomplished in his books. More than any other great philosopher in the English language, Santayana not only harmonized literary and philosophical writing but also made harmonization of this sort a fundamental resource in his doctrinal outlook. Despite its systematic structure, Santayana's philosophy was intended to be an expression of the author's personal experience and imaginative interpretation of his life as he lived it.

**Santayana**

Irving Singer

in The Nature of Love: The Modern World

Published in print: 2009 Published Online: August 2013
Item type: chapter

This chapter explores the reasons why the theories of George Santayana on the nature of love have never been adequately studied. Santayana’s works have, in recent years, enjoyed a revival of scholarly attention. Being the greatest proponent of Platonism in the twentieth century, Santayana combined his Platonism with an antithetical materialism. It is from this materialism that he often begins his analysis. Santayana’s “humanism” or the humanistic voice that separates itself from his
Platonism and materialism is the most promising element in his philosophy. Santayana is an admirer of Schopenhauer and his assertion of the material grounding of all experience and of all reality. In his attempt to dismiss Romantic ideas about the will heroically contriving to deny itself through acts of contemplation or proud defiance, Santayana accentuates and extends Schopenhauer’s reductivistic belief that brute matter is the only substance which sustains being of any kind.

**Beauty and the Labyrinth of Evil**

Thomas M. Alexander

in The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence

Published in print: 2013 Published Online:  September 2013

Publisher: Fordham University Press

This chapter examines how an aesthetic philosophy may address the problem of evil by focusing on George Santayana’s analysis of Plotinus’s position. It argues that Santayana’s idea of aesthetics, which is one of disengagement, is not the only possible attitude and that the practice of “insight meditation” (or vipassanā) in Buddhism implies the same attentiveness to experience but stresses compassionate insight and conduct. It considers what the quest for a beatific vision has to do with the “problem of evil” in a naturalistic mysticism such as Santayana’s. The chapter also discusses Santayana’s vision of the spiritual life as a naturalistic contemplative discipline in relation to Platonism and Neoplatonism, how a contemplative spirituality may acknowledge the existence of evil and develop a compassionate response to it without surrendering the ideal of contemplative detachment, and the relation between morality and spirituality.

**Santayana’s Philosophy of Mind**

Patrick Shade and John Lachs

in Freedom and Limits

Published in print: 2014 Published Online:  September 2014

Publisher: Fordham University Press

In this defense of epiphenomenalism, Lachs highlights Santayana's use of the Aristotelian distinction between process and activity to argue that mental life is an impotent byproduct of the body. Processes involve movement from potentiality to actuality and so are temporally
differentiated. Activity by contrast is complete and self-contained, lacking heterogeneous parts or any essential temporal reference. Consciousness (or spirit, to use Santayana's terminology) is the actualization of physiological processes, possessing the perfections of pure activity. Being fully actualized, it lacks the power to bring anything into existence. Lachs argues that this position preserves our experience of the duality of mind and body while also leaving the world open to scientific investigation, unimpaired by mental or nonphysical forces.

Spires of Influence
John J. McDermott
in The Drama of Possibility: Experience as Philosophy of Culture
Published in print: 2007 Published Online: March 2011
Item type: chapter

This chapter presents an essay on the importance of Ralph Waldo Emerson for classical American philosophy. It explains that despite the differences and disagreements among several classic American philosophers including William James, Josiah Royce and John Dewey, they have one influence in common, and that is the thought of Emerson. Even George Santayana, another major figure of the American classical period, had an abiding interest in Emerson's thought and he frequently referred to Emerson in his own writings.

The Transcendence of Materialism and Idealism in American Thought
Patrick Shade and John Lachs
in Freedom and Limits
Published in print: 2014 Published Online: September 2014
Item type: chapter

Lachs argues that what is distinctive about American philosophy is its transcendence of the materialism-idealism option and with it a host of related dichotomies (subject-object, mind-matter, process-product). Criticizing Santayana's insistence on the impotent mind, and with it his emphasis on the realm of essence, Lachs argues that Santayana's view of animal faith, with its emphasis on human action, offers vital insights for a philosophy of life.
George Santayana was unique in his contributions to American culture. For almost sixty years before his death in 1952, he combined literary and philosophical talents, writing not only important works of philosophy but also a best-selling novel, volumes of poetry, and much literary criticism. This portrait of Santayana's thought and complex personality explores the full range of his harmonization of the literary and the philosophical.

“Love calls us to things of this world”
Thomas M. Alexander

in The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence

This chapter compares John Dewey’s embodied aesthetics with George Santayana’s contemplative or “spiritual” concept of the aesthetic life. Both men view the aesthetic as central to existence, but adopt quite different approaches to realize it. Both are also aesthetic philosophers who put philosophy to service toward the end of a life incarnate with wisdom and beauty, that is, a “spiritual life.” The chapter first looks at the classical conceptions of ontology found in the Greeks before turning to the postmodernism of Dewey and Santayana. It shows how Santayana approached the question of “Nature” or “Being” and argues that the aesthetic may be a more important domain of philosophical inquiry, especially for metaphysics, than previously assumed. It also discusses the role of imagination in the philosophical enterprise.

Peirce, Santayana, and the Large Facts
Patrick Shade and John Lachs

in Freedom and Limits
Lachs notes seven important similarities Santayana and Peirce share, including commitments to realism, naturalism, and the existence of universals. Despite these commonalities, Lachs finds their respective views of the individual (isolated or social) and of reality (independent or communal) to be the source of their more apparent differences, especially with respect to Peirce's optimism and what Lachs calls Santayana's more “sober assessment” of reality.

Professional Realism, 1912–1956
Bruce Kuklick

in A History of Philosophy in America: 1720-2000
Published in print: 2003 Published Online: November 2003
Item type: chapter

Of equal importance as the development of pragmatism and instrumentalism, although more narrowly and professionally focused, was the development of realism, a view that argued for the independent existence of the material world in space and time. This movement began in the first decade of the twentieth century led by Harvard's neo-realist, Ralph Perry. It continued with the more significant Critical Realists of the second decade of the century—George Santayana, Arthur Lovejoy, and Roy Wood Sellars. C.I. Lewis, the most important inter-war philosopher and another Harvard professor, known for his conceptual pragmatism, also embraced realistic ideas. In the second half of the century, Wilfrid Sellars influentially defended this point of view.

The Human Eros
Thomas Alexander

Published in print: 2013 Published Online: September 2013
Item type: book

This book explores themes in classical American philosophy, primarily the thought of John Dewey, but also that of Ralph Waldo Emerson, George Santayana, and Native American traditions. It argues that human beings have an inherent need to experience meaning and value, a “Human Eros.” Our various cultures are symbolic environments or “spiritual ecologies” within which the Human Eros seeks to thrive. This is how we inhabit the earth. Encircling and sustaining our cultural existence is nature, yet Western philosophy has not provided adequate conceptual models for thinking ecologically. The book introduces the idea of “eco-
ontology” to explore ways in which this might be done, beginning with
the primacy of Nature over Being but also including the recognition of
possibility and potentiality as inherent aspects of existence. It argues for
the centrality of Dewey’s thought to an effective ecological philosophy.
Both “pragmatism” and “naturalism,” it shows, need to be contextualized
within an emergentist, relational, nonreductive view of nature and an
aesthetic, imaginative, nonreductive view of intelligence.

A Community of Psyches
Patrick Shade and John Lachs

in Freedom and Limits
Published in print: 2014 Published Online: September 2014
DOI: 10.5422/
Item type: chapter

Lachs argues that the individual is the only moral substance (not atoms,
not the state), for it alone is the seat of consciousness and desire
required for action. Communities and organizations may “act” but only
through the actions of their individual members. Individuals are ultimate
in the social world, and the hallmark of a good society is tolerance of
different individuals with their different goods. Lachs offers a theory of
mediation as an explanation of social life.

Aesthetic Foundations of Ethics & Religion
Singer Irving

in Meaning in Life: The Harmony of Nature and Spirit
Published in print: 2009 Published Online: August 2013
DOI: 10.7551/
Item type: chapter

The ends–means continuum can shed light on the nature of aesthetic
experience. The aesthetic manifests the imagination creating
consummatory possibilities, and its reliance upon harmonious unity
between ends and means can also help resolve problems in the fields of
ethics and religion. Arthur Schopenhauer himself extolled the aesthetic
as a path of salvation which defeats our bondage to the will and argued
that art can provide this spiritual service only if it turns away from
anything that is useful for preserving and prolonging life. For his part,
George Santayana makes a distinction between “servile” arts and “fine”
arts. His aesthetics is not wholly inconsistent with John Dewey’s ideas
about the continuum of ends and means. Nineteenth-century proponents of art for art’s sake insisted that art need not conform to any of the standards which pertain to ethics, philosophy, or religion.

The Right Phenomenology?
Peter Kivy

in De Gustibus: Arguing About Taste and Why We Do It

Published in print: 2015 Published Online: November 2015
Publisher: Oxford University Press
DOI: 10.1093/acprof:oso/9780198746782.003.0011

Interestingly enough, Hume’s notion of our psychologically “fusing” the sentiment of beauty onto objects, and perceiving them as if the beauty is in the object, re-emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century in George Santayana’s once popular book, The Sense of Beauty. Santayana’s view is explored in Chapter 11. And it is argued that Santayana had exactly the right explanation for why we engage in disputes over taste. It is, simply, because we believe, although wrongly, that we are disputing over matters of fact; we project the pleasure that “beautiful” objects arouse in us onto the objects and perceive this pleasure as a property of the object.

Introduction
Thomas M. Alexander

in The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence

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Publisher: Fordham University Press
DOI: 10.5422/fordham/9780823251209.003.0001

This book explores an “aesthetics of human existence” in terms of an ecological, humanistic naturalism. It argues that human beings seek to live with a concrete, embodied experience of meaning and value in the world, a “Human Eros.” It discusses the Human Eros and the related themes of imagination and education, as well as themes dealing with the role of the aesthetic as the fulfillment of the Human Eros in life, focusing on the philosophy of John Dewey, George Santayana, and Ralph Waldo Emerson along with Native American culture. It also examines the question of “spirit” and looks at cultural ecologies and the related concept of “eco-ontology”.
Mountains and Rivers without End

Thomas M. Alexander

in The Human Eros: Eco-ontology and the Aesthetics of Existence

This chapter examines the aesthetic as self-realization in nature as found in Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendentalist view of human existence in nature and compares it with classical Chinese philosophy. John Dewey’s aesthetics is absolutely one of integration, while that of George Santayana is one of liberation. Both integration and liberation are present and equally significant in Emerson’s philosophy. In all three thinkers, the idea of “lived aesthetics” is a central concern for realizing human existence, and integration and liberation are reflected in the tensive relation between nature and spirit. The chapter discusses postmodernism and Romanticism in relation to Emerson’s transcendentalism.

Harvard

James Dempsey

in The Tortured Life of Scofield Thayer

Thayer entered Harvard in 1909. His education began somewhat unimpressively with C grades on essays, but by his final year he was doing well enough to receive a scholarship. He became involved with the literary magazine the Harvard Advocate, attached himself to George Santayana, and met many aspiring writers, some of whom would later work at and write for The Dial. He met and was impressed by the poet Alan Seeger, and one of Thayer's poems received a letter of admiration from an underclassman named E. E. Cummings.

Melville Renders the Real

Elizabeth Renker

in Realist Poetics in American Culture, 1866-1900
During the eighties and through his death in 1891—that is, the height of high realism and the Realism War—Melville actively wrote, revised, and published his last two volumes, composed Billy Budd, and wrote and revised an extensive body of unpublished poems. Yet scholarship has rarely situated Melville the poet in the debates about realism and idealism common in the print culture of the age. This chapter demonstrates that he carved out a realist poetics. This poetics simultaneously countered both Howellsian models of realism and the genteel poetics of romantic idealism. Melville predicates his realist poetic practice on a vision of “the Real”—his term in “The Aeolian Harp” (1888)—as epistemologically opaque.