

*RECENTLY DISCOVERED LETTERS
OF GEORGE SANTAYANA*

*CARTAS RECIÉN DESCUBIERTAS
DE GEORGE SANTAYANA*

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Ed. Daniel Pinkas

Traducción y notas de Daniel Moreno

Presentación de José Beltrán

Biblioteca Javier Coy d'estudis nord-americans
Universitat de València

Recently Discovered Letters of George Santayana
Cartas recién descubiertas de George Santayana

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Edición e introducción de Daniel Pinkas,
traducción y notas de Daniel Moreno Moreno,
presentación de José Beltrán

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Presentation

José Beltrán Llavador

How stimulating it is to delve into this written exchange between George Santayana and two of his many friends over five long decades spanning the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The newly discovered letters constitute a small collection compared to the totality of his epistolary activity, which occupies no less than eight books (of volume V) in the *Works of George Santayana* that the MIT Press has been publishing with exquisite scholarly care. Thus the values of the unexpected, the unusual and the unpublished are added to the gift of the discovery itself: who would have thought that it would still be possible to find new material with which to enrich such an extensive corpus?

In these letters, which are now published and translated for the first time, the most characteristic features of the thinker and the human being are distilled. They mirror and reflect a life told as it is lived, and they simultaneously confirm an endless narrative apprenticeship and negate a way of doing philosophy that is alien to everyday life. They show, instead, life accompanied by its narrative, indeed intensified and conjured up by the constant exercise of writing. And now we have the privileged opportunity to look once again, with the help of materials that provide new vistas, into the fascinating life of reason unfolded by the universal thinker and citizen of the world George Santayana.

The origin of these letters can be traced back to the time when Santayana was a very young student at Harvard, aged 23, and they end when he reached 74, once he had already completed most of his work and was settled definitively in Rome. In terms of chronology, the first group of letters (27), addressed to Charles A. Loeser, began in September 1886 and continued until Santayana's definitive departure from the United States in October 1912; the second, more extensive (61), addressed to Baron Albert von Westenholz, began at the turn of the century, in July 1903, and concluded in January 1937, fifteen years before Santayana's death in Rome.

Neither of these two singular friends were anonymous figures. Both form part of a certain social lineage and, in spite of their different profiles, the two of them embody a tradition and a cultural heritage to whose distinctive mark Santayana, rather than a direct participant, was a sensitive, receptive and detached witness, as we shall see in not a few of his missives.

If the reading of this constellation of letters is stimulating for many reasons, the account of their discovery in the “Introduction” by Daniel Pinkas is fascinating. Daniel Pinkas is not only a most attentive and insightful reader of Santayana but an internationally renowned researcher who has devoted a significant part of his scholarly interests to the analysis and interpretation of the philosopher’s work.

Pinkas’ recent discovery of these letters, now published for the first time in English and in Spanish, is a testimony to his dedication and perseverance. As in Edgar Allan Poe’s short story “The Stolen Letter”, Santayana’s letters can be said to have been there for anyone who wanted to see them. Even if the facts are as Pinkas himself describes them, things are not that simple, and it would be unfair to downplay his astonishing discovery. First, it was necessary to know that these letters existed and to feel intrigued by their absence from the volumes devoted to Santayana’s correspondence in the MIT edition of his collected works. Then, what was also needed was to know how to decipher the signs pointing to the place where they were kept. Daniel Pinkas modestly attributes this wonderful finding to a combination of coincidence and causality, or chance and necessity, which he sums up as a result of serendipity. Even if this were so, it is worth remembering that this fortunate concurrence of events was preceded by much previous research and excellent documentation work, for only with constant and conscious attention is it possible to keep track and establish the right connections, which are the preconditions for being at the right place at the right time.

On the other hand, the fact that the *Frick Collection* website records the existence of Loeser’s correspondence and that the Rare Book and Manuscript Library at Columbia University also records the acquisition of Westenholz’s letters five years ago, has a noteworthy symbolic significance. I had the opportunity to visit the Frick Collection in 2014 during a stay of just over a week in the Big Apple where I was able not only to breathe the spirit of an era but also to experience the fruits of its unique attitude, that rare disposition that combines art and enterprise, pragmatism and altruism, tradition and modernity.

Both the Columbia University Libraries, which lodge 12 million copies, and the *Frick Collection*, which holds an impressive artistic and cultural heritage, reveal that the history of the United States is comparatively recent, and perhaps that is why institutions such as these treasure every trace or vestige, and every testimonial document that can contribute to recreating and enriching the foundational stories of its past and the prophetic accounts of its future.

Thus, in these letters we find, threading their narrative, a sort of surprising patchwork, a microcosm filled with forms of life pulsating in each message, within every word, with highly suggestive echoes in resonance with the rest of the thinker's work. The epistolary genre, as cultivated by Santayana and his contemporaries, is less and less frequent, yet another social practice that is being lost, swept away by the speed and formats of the digital media. For this very reason, these handwritten letters now have the added value of being approached as ethno-texts, noble and unique remains of an anachronistic genre.

On the other hand, Santayana's letters partake in a rich conversation where profound reflections are intermingled with everyday matters and where a plethora of interests and a plurality of perspectives inhabit the very space they shape. Here we can clearly perceive the deep thinker and the human being, the lucidity of the former and the frailties of the latter, the *chiaroscuro* that Santayana himself detects in his own persona and to which he applies an enormous capacity for humour, irony and self-criticism. There is a little of everything in this volume, which acts as a kind of mailbox into which messages have been deposited, year after year, over the course of half a century. Alongside the short, instrumental letters, treatise-like letters are also found containing cogent, concentrated arguments reminiscent of the developments found in the thinker's major works. Read as a whole, they eloquently express his material and vital concerns, intertwined with other speculations and dilemmas that range from his early estrangement at being at Harvard to his long-cherished desire to leave the university in order to practice philosophy as a way of life rather than being a philosophy professor; they also encompass reflections on love and death, contacts with publishers—including their rejection or acceptance to publish his works, the constant planning of his travels and sojourns, digressions on Homeric times, notes on the perception of life as a dream, and asides on his own writing process...

While reading these texts one is easily transported to the thinker's silent space as he reads or takes notes in the solitude of his study, and when the writer describes

the urban landscape of the big cities, the noise and increasing bustle of the streets can almost be perceived. As we read these texts, of admirable plasticity and visual power, we experience a passage through different atmospheres, some denser and some lighter, where the aroma of the classical pervades contemporary experiences and moments, as when he visits the grape harvest in Avila and associates it with the lifestyle of *The Georgics*. The letters also seem to give us access to a world full of evocations and adventures —adventures pertaining to the realms of intelligence and reason— through the primacy of names that reverberate and stimulate our imagination: those of legendary ships (“I sail in the ‘Lusitania’”, “I sail... in the ‘Kaiser Wilhelm II’”, “my passage is taken in the ‘Kaiserin Auguste Victoria’”), those of always temporary residences (Colonial Club, King’s College, Hotel Manin, Hotel du Quai Voltaire, Grove Street...), the almost fictional titles of philosophical societies, or those toponyms so expressive of far away places and distant countries which paradoxically make us feel the world as a domestic space.

And among the names, as Daniel Pinkas points out, those referring to paintings and books stand out. And to painting and reading are added other diverse expressions of art of which Santayana gives a good account by recreating for his friends his frequent visits to museums, and to the theatre and the opera, or to musical concerts and telling them about cultural tours as well as about his walks and observations on architecture (about which he intends to write a book —“if it is ever written”— as mentioned in his correspondence to Westenholtz in 1905), one of the professions he would have cultivated had he been endowed, like Pessoa, with heteronyms.

As a polyhedral artefact, this volume of letters also invites different approaches and other reading angles. On the one hand, it lends itself to be read as the catalogue of an imaginary museum, similar to the one conceived by André Malraux, filled with impressionistic notes. In this sense, these pages could very well give rise to another parallel or complementary volume illustrated with each of the works of art mentioned, which would undoubtedly craft a beautiful diptych. On the other hand, this correspondence, which totals 90 letters from 1886 to 1937, could also be considered an extension or appendix to his autobiography *Persons and Places*, or a collection of notes complementary to the *Little Essays*. When regarded as variations on a series, even if the contents of these letters are familiar to us because they refer to many of his works, they always offer, in their meditated spontaneity,

that which is proper to philosophy: the invaluable opportunity to rethink reality and thus reassess our contract with it throughout our fragile and ephemeral existence.

Pictures and books, persons and places, landscapes and passages. So many comings and goings, so many departures and arrivals, crossing countries on trains and continents on ships, staying in hotels and university residences, stopping off at memorable cafés, giving lectures here and there, reading and writing incessantly. “I have written so many letters”, he told Loeser in 1887, when his epistolary activity was still very recent, “that I never know what I have told one man and what another”... This handful of letters, which adds to the rest of his abundant correspondence, is the material proof that writing, for Santayana, in any of its registers, is one more way—everyday, immediate, full of genial *impromptus*—, of practicing philosophy. And the philosopher practiced it not only in solitude but also as a genuine expression of intellectual friendship. The best definition of philosophy for Santayana is that which identifies it with the life of reason, a life that can be shared and enriched through the joy of dialogue and conversation. These newly discovered letters are a sensitive, lucid and delightful proof of that conversation. We have now the unique opportunity to join in, thus enriching ourselves as readers, sharing the common purpose of reaching the best version of ourselves, our most human dimension. Somehow, by participating ourselves in the experience offered by these pages, guided by Santayana’s hand, we will somehow be able to use his own words at the end of these letters and make them our own: “I saw things I shall never forget”. And in passing, we will have come to know the author of these letters a little better for, as William James stated in *A Pluralistic Universe*, “a man’s vision is the great fact about him.”

The original letters are available on the website of the Santayana Edition, section Texts, thanks to the praiseworthy management of its director, Martin A. Coleman. We feel indebted to Megan Young Schlee for the transcription of the letters to Charles A. Loeser, and to Matthew N. Preston II for the transcription of the letters to Albert W. von Westenholz, and we are equally grateful to Martin Coleman for his very fine supervision. The translation and critical editing of this book are due to Daniel Moreno, who has carried out the kind of meticulous and rigorous work we are familiar with. Both Daniel Pinkas and Daniel Moreno shared the wish to publish this volume in the University of Valencia collection *Biblioteca Javier Coy d’Estudis Nord-Americans*, which includes previous books on George Santayana. This edition would not have been possible without their determination

and commitment, nor would it have been possible without the enthusiastic involvement and generous support of Professor Carme Manuel, the director of this unique North American Studies series. We would like to thank them all for having crafted this new volume and for making it accessible in English and in Spanish so that it could reach a wider readership on the two shores of the Atlantic, and beyond.

Presentación

*José Beltrán Llavador*¹

Qué estimulante resulta adentrarse en esta correspondencia que mantiene George Santayana con dos de sus numerosos amigos durante cinco largas décadas que atraviesan el siglo XIX y el siglo XX. Las cartas recién descubiertas constituyen una colección pequeña comparada con la totalidad de su actividad epistolar, que ocupa nada más y nada menos que ocho libros (el volumen 5) dentro de las obras de George Santayana que viene publicando el MIT con gran cuidado académico. Precisamente por ello, este nuevo legado cobra el valor añadido de lo inesperado, de lo insólito y de lo inédito. ¿Quién hubiera pensando que todavía iba a ser posible encontrar nuevos materiales con los que enriquecer un *corpus* tan extenso?

En estas cartas, cuya transcripción y traducción se hacen públicas aquí por primera vez, se destila lo más característico del pensador y del ser humano. Todas ellas son espejo y reflejo de una vida contada al tiempo que es vivida, la constatación de un interminable aprendizaje narrativo y la impugnación de un modo de hacer filosofía ajeno a la vida diaria. Son una muestra, más bien, de la vida acompañada de su relato, intensificada y conjurada por el ejercicio constante de la escritura. Y ahora tenemos la ocasión privilegiada de asomarnos una vez más, desde otros materiales que proporcionan nuevas vistas, a esa fascinante vida de la razón desplegada por el pensador universal y ciudadano del mundo George Santayana.

El origen de estas cartas se remonta a un jovencísimo Santayana, estudiante de 23 años en Harvard, y finaliza con 74 años, cuando ya había culminado la mayor parte de su obra y se había asentado definitivamente en Roma. Atendiendo a su cronología, el primer lote de cartas (27) va dirigido a Charles A. Loeser comenzando en septiembre de 1886 y prolongándose hasta el abandono definitivo

¹ José Beltrán es profesor de la Universitat de València y secretario de *Limbo. Boletín internacional de estudios sobre Santayana*.

de Santayana de Estados Unidos en octubre 1912; el segundo conjunto de cartas, más amplio (61), se dirige al Barón Albert von Westenholz y se inicia recién inaugurado el siglo, en julio de 1903, hasta enero de 1937, quince años antes de su fallecimiento en Roma. Ninguno de estos dos amigos singulares son personajes anónimos. Ambos, con perfiles distintos, forman parte de un cierto linaje social y encarnan la marca de distinción propias de una tradición y una herencia cultural, una marca de la que Santayana, más que partícipe directo, fue un testigo sensible, receptivo y desapegado, como apreciaremos en no pocos de sus envíos.

Si la lectura de esta constelación de cartas resulta estimulante por muchos motivos, el relato de su hallazgo por parte de Daniel Pinkas en la “Introducción”, es fascinante. Daniel Pinkas no solo es un lector perspicaz de Santayana, sino un investigador de prestigio internacional que ha dedicado una parte destacada de sus intereses académicos al análisis e interpretación de la obra del filósofo.

El hallazgo reciente que ha hecho Pinkas de estas cartas que ahora se editan por primera vez, en inglés y en español, es una muestra de su entrega y de su perseverancia. Como en el cuento de Edgar Allan Poe “La carta robada”, podría decirse que las cartas de Santayana estaban ahí, para quien las quisiera ver. Aun cuando los hechos son tal como los describe Pinkas, las cosas no son tan sencillas, y sería injusto hacer una simplificación de este asombroso descubrimiento. Primero, era necesario saber que esas cartas existían y sentirse intrigado por su ausencia en los volúmenes dedicados a su correspondencia dentro de las obras completas del MIT. Después, había que saber descifrar las señales que apuntaban al lugar donde se alojaban. Daniel Pinkas atribuye con modestia este asombroso hallazgo a una combinación de casualidad y causalidad, de azar y necesidad, que resume como un resultado de serendipia. Admitiendo que así sea, conviene recordar que detrás de esta afortunada coincidencia hay mucho trabajo previo de investigación y documentación, pues solo con una atención constante y consciente es posible seguir la pista y establecer las conexiones adecuadas, condiciones previas que permiten estar en el lugar y en el momento oportunos.

Por otra parte, que la página web de la *Frick Collection* de cuenta del legado de Loeser, y que la Biblioteca de manuscritos y libros singulares de la Universidad de Columbia registre la incorporación hace cinco años de las cartas de Westenholz, no deja de tener un significado simbólico que vale la pena resaltar. Tuve ocasión de visitar la *Frick Collection* en 2014 durante una estancia de algo más de una semana en la Gran Manzana. Allí pude no solo respirar el espíritu de una época, sino que

también experimenté el resultado de una actitud, una disposición que combina arte y empresa, pragmatismo y altruismo, tradición y modernidad.

Tanto las bibliotecas de la Universidad de Columbia, con cerca de 12 millones de ejemplares, como la *Frick Collection*, que custodia un impresionante patrimonio artístico y cultural, revelan que la historia de Estados Unidos es comparativamente reciente y tal vez por ello instituciones como estas atesoran toda huella o vestigio, todo documento testimonial, que puedan contribuir a recrear y enriquecer las narrativas fundacionales de su pasado y proféticas de su futuro.

De manera que en estas cartas encontramos, formando parte de esa narrativa, una suerte de sorprendente *patchwork*, un microcosmos de piezas de vida que laten en cada mensaje, en cada palabra, con ecos muy sugerentes que resuenan en el resto de la obra del pensador. El género epistolar, tal y como lo cultivaron Santayana y sus coetáneos, es cada vez menos frecuente, una práctica social que se va perdiendo, barrida por la velocidad y formatos propios de los medios digitales. Por eso mismo, estas cartas escritas a mano cobran ahora un valor añadido al poder ser consideradas como etnotextos, materiales nobles y únicos de un género anacrónico.

Por otra parte, las cartas de Santayana forman parte de una rica conversación, en la que se entremezclan las reflexiones profundas con los asuntos más cotidianos, y convive un aura de intereses y una pluralidad de perspectivas muy variados. Aquí se percibe con claridad el pensador de fondo y el ser humano, la lucidez del primero y las fragilidades del segundo, los claroscuros que el propio Santayana detecta en sí mismo y sobre los que ejerce una enorme capacidad de humor, ironía y autocrítica. Se encuentra un poco de todo en este volumen, que actúa como un buzón en el que se han ido depositando mensajes, año tras año, a lo largo de medio siglo. Junto con las cartas breves e instrumentales, hay cartas tipo-tratado con argumentos enjundiosos y concentrados que evocan los desarrollos que encontramos en las obras mayores del pensador. Leídas en conjunto, expresan de manera elocuente sus preocupaciones materiales y vitales entrelazadas con sus especulaciones y dilemas habituales: desde su temprano extrañamiento por estar en Harvard hasta su deseo largamente acariciado de abandonar la universidad con el fin de practicar la filosofía como forma de vida, antes que ser un profesor de filosofía; reflexiones sobre el amor y la muerte; los contactos con editoriales –con rechazos y aceptaciones para publicar sus obras, la planificación constante de sus viajes y estancias, digresiones sobre los tiempos homéricos, apuntes sobre la

percepción de la vida como un sueño, o breviaríos sobre su propio proceso de escritura...

Uno se transporta fácilmente al leer estos textos al mismo espacio de silencio del pensador mientras está leyendo o tomando notas en la soledad de su estudio, y también intuye el ruido de las calles que comienzan a ser bulliciosas cuando el escritor describe el paisaje urbano de las grandes ciudades. Al leer estos textos, de una admirable plasticidad y potencia visual, experimentamos la sensación de ir pasando por distintas atmósferas, más densas o más ligeras, y donde el aroma de lo clásico permea en los momentos y vivencias más actuales, como cuando visita la vendimia en Ávila y la asocia al estilo de vida de *Las Geórgicas*. Las cartas también parecen abrirnos a un mundo lleno de evocaciones y de aventuras —aventuras de la inteligencia y de la razón— a través de la primacía de nombres que reverberan y estimulan nuestra imaginación: esos barcos legendarios (“zarparé en el ‘*Lusitania*’”, “me embarco en el ‘*Kaiser Wilhelm II*’”, “tengo paisaje para el ‘*Kaiserin Auguste Victoria*’”), esas residencias siempre temporales (*Colonial Club*, *King’s College*, *Hotel Manin*, *Hotel du Quai Voltaire*, *Grove Street...*), esas sociedades filosóficas con títulos casi ficcionales, esos topónimos tan expresivos de lugares y países distantes, pero que nos hacen sentir el mundo como un espacio doméstico.

Y entre los nombres, como señala Daniel Pinkas, destacan los que se refieren a cuadros y libros. Pintura y lectura, a las que se suman diferentes expresiones del arte de las que Santayana da buena cuenta al recrear para sus amigos sus frecuentes visitas a museos, al teatro, a la ópera, a conciertos musicales e incluso a tours culturales, así como sus paseos y observaciones acerca de la arquitectura (sobre la que tiene intención de escribir un libro —“si alguna vez lo escribo”— como menciona en su correspondencia a Westenholz en 1905), una de las profesiones que habría cultivado de haber tenido, como Pessoa, heterónimos.

Como un artefacto poliédrico, este volumen de cartas también admite diferentes aproximaciones y ángulos de lectura. Por una parte, invita a ser leído como el catálogo de un museo imaginario, a la manera de André Malraux, nutrido de apuntes impresionistas. En este sentido, muy bien podrían dar lugar estas páginas a otro ejemplar paralelo o complementario si lo ilustráramos con cada una de las obras de arte mencionadas, sería sin duda un díptico precioso. Y, por otra parte, también esta correspondencia, que suma un total de 90 cartas desde 1886 a 1937, se podría considerar una extensión o apéndice de su autobiografía *Personas y lugares*,

o una suma de apostillas a los *Pequeños ensayos*. Consideradas como variaciones sobre una serie, estas cartas encierran materiales que, aunque nos resulten familiares porque nos remiten a buena parte de sus obras, siempre ofrecen, en su meditada espontaneidad, aquello que es propio de la filosofía: la ocasión inapreciable de volver a pensar la realidad y evaluar nuestro contrato con la misma durante nuestra frágil y efímera existencia.

Cuadros y libros, personas y lugares, paisajes y pasajes. Tantas idas y venidas, tantas partidas y llegadas, atravesando países en trenes y cruzando continentes en barcos, alojándose en hoteles y residencias universitarias, con paradas en cafés memorables, pronunciando conferencias aquí y allá, leyendo y escribiendo sin cesar. “He escrito tantas cartas —le dice a Loeser en 1887, cuando su actividad epistolar es todavía muy reciente—, que nunca sé que he dicho a uno y qué a otro”... Este puñado de cartas, que se suma al resto de su abundantísima correspondencia, es la prueba material de que la escritura para Santayana, en cualquiera de sus registros, es una manera más —cotidiana, inmediata, plagada de geniales *impromptus*—, de practicar la actividad filosófica. Una actividad que el filósofo ejerció también, no solo en soledad, sino también como una forma genuina de amistad intelectual. La mejor definición de filosofía para Santayana es la que la identifica con la vida de la razón, una vida que puede ser compartida y enriquecida a través del placer del diálogo y la conversación. Estas cartas recién descubiertas son una muestra sensible, lúcida y deliciosa de esa conversación. Ahora tenemos la ocasión inigualable de sumarnos a ella enriqueciéndonos también como lectores, compartiendo el propósito común de alcanzar la mejor versión de nosotros mismos, nuestra dimensión más humana. De alguna manera, al participar también de la experiencia que ofrecen estas páginas, guiados de la mano de Santayana, también podremos decir con sus propias palabras al finalizar estas cartas: “Vi cosas que nunca olvidaré.” Y de paso, habremos conocido un poco mejor al autor de estas cartas pues, como afirmó William James en *Un universo pluralista*, “la visión de un hombre es lo más importante acerca de él.”

Las cartas originales están disponibles en la página web de la *Santayana Edition*, sección *Texts* gracias a la encomiable gestión de su director, Martin A. Coleman. Debemos a Megan Young Schlee la transcripción de las cartas a Charles A. Loeser, y a Matthew N. Preston II la transcripción de las cartas a Albert W. von Westenholz, con la cuidadosa revisión de Martin Coleman, a quienes reconocemos su dedicación. La traducción y edición crítica de este libro son de Daniel Moreno,

con la tarea minuciosa y rigurosa a la que nos tiene acostumbrados. Tanto Daniel Pinkas como Daniel Moreno pensaron desde el principio publicar este volumen en la *Biblioteca Javier Coy d'Estudis Nord-Americans* de la Universitat de València, que añade este nuevo título a otras publicaciones previas sobre el autor. Esta edición no hubiera sido posible sin su decisión y empeño, como tampoco hubiera sido posible sin la implicación entusiasta y el generoso apoyo, una vez más, de la directora de esta colección única de Estudios Norteamericanos, la Dra. Carme Manuel. Quede constancia de nuestro agradecimiento a todos ellos por hacer accesible esta nueva edición en inglés y en español para que pueda alcanzar una lectura más amplia en las dos orillas del Atlántico, y más allá.



Almacén del padre de Loeser/Loeser's father establishment

Introduction

Daniel Pinkas

Among the countless challenges facing the truly monumental and still ongoing publication of the critical edition of *The Works of George Santayana*, none could have been greater than that of gathering, annotating, and contextualizing the more than three thousand letters that Santayana wrote throughout his life to his family, friends, colleagues, publishers and admirers. This collection ranges from 1868 (a letter to his sisters when he was only five) to 1952, the year of his death. The outcome of this stupendous task is housed in the eight books of letters, edited by the late William Holzberger, that constitute Volume 5 of the critical edition, published between 2003 and 2008.

At the outset of his introduction to *The Letters of George Santayana*, Holzberger provides an answer to the question: «Who was George Santayana?» that can hardly be improved upon as a succinct presentation of the author:

George Santayana (1863-1952) was one of the most learned and cultivated men of his time. Born in Spain and educated in America, he taught philosophy at Harvard University for twenty-two years before returning permanently to Europe at age forty-eight to devote himself exclusively to writing. He knew several languages, including Latin and Greek. Besides his mastery of English, he was at home in Spanish and French (though he modestly down-played his knowledge of those languages). As a young man, Santayana studied Italian in order to read Dante, Cavalcanti, Michelangelo, and other Platonizing poets in their own language; and, in later life, as a result of his long residence in Rome, he acquired facility in speaking Italian. While a student in Germany during 1886-88, Santayana lived with Harvard friends in an English-speaking boardinghouse in Berlin, thereby missing an opportunity to learn to speak German properly. However he could

read the original versions of German literary and philosophical works. He also knew the world, having lived for protracted periods in Spain, America, England, France, and Italy. A true cosmopolitan, Santayana nevertheless always regarded himself a Spaniard and kept his Spanish passport current. He possessed many talents and had a multifaceted personality, and each of those facets is reflected vividly in his letters. World famous as a philosopher, he was also a poet, essayist, dramatist, literary critic, autobiographer, and author of a best-selling novel.²

It is hard to overstate the importance and usefulness of *The Letters of George Santayana* to Santayana scholars, wherever their focus of interest may lie. The more philosophical letters shed light, often in unexpected ways, on Santayana's fundamental philosophical tenets: his materialism, his naturalism, his theories of essence and truth, his doctrine of animal faith, his ideal of the «life of reason» and his conception of the spiritual life; they are filled with mordant comments on the views of other philosophers, classical and modern. Many letters state his views on religion, science, literature, history, politics and current affairs. Obviously, the letters are full of crucial biographical information, sometimes sprinkled with delightful gossip. For a less specialized audience also, Santayana's letters can be a wonderful source of information, inspiration and fun. They offer an unforgettable, and most enjoyable, opportunity to hear, so to say live, the unique voice of a supremely smart and wise philosopher who is at the same time, fully, a human being with a very distinctive history and intellectual background. Santayana's flair for finding the most appropriate word is everywhere on display, from the briefest thank-you note to the most extensive metaphysical discussion.

The publication of the critical edition was preceded by the publication, in 1955, of about 250 letters that Santayana's friend and secretary, Daniel Cory, had managed to assemble. In order to locate these letters, Cory published advertisements in leading journals and reviews, he visited the main libraries housing Santayana's manuscript materials and he wrote to people he thought had been his correspondents. As he undertook this task, he was, as he recounts in the

² Holzberger, William G., Introduction to *The Letters of George Santayana*, Book One [1868]–1909, edited by William, G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001, p. xxix.

foreword, «a prey to certain misgivings». First, the sheer size of the correspondence of someone who had been an established writer for over sixty years would probably turn out to be forbidding. Secondly,

Santayana was such an accomplished artist in so many fields [...] that I wondered if in the more spontaneous rôle of correspondent he might fall short of the very high standard he had always set himself. I knew that he had never sent anything to his publisher in an untidy condition, but always dressed for a public appearance. Above all, I did not want his friends or critics or general audience to say of him what has unfortunately been said of other distinguished writers: What a pity his letters were ever published!³

But as he started receiving letters, Cory's anxieties were mostly assuaged. Admittedly, the volume of correspondence would be enormous, and everything would have to be sorted in order to eliminate «polite» or banal letters. On the other issues, however, there was nothing to worry about. As Cory wrote: «this large collection of letters soon proved a fresh and exciting adventure. They are essential as a revelation of his life and mind, and a further confirmation of his literary power.»⁴

Although the critical edition of *The Letters of George Santayana* aimed painstakingly at comprehensiveness (the editors sent letters of inquiry to sixty-three institutions reported as holding Santayana manuscripts, they ran advertisements in leading literary publications and contacted more than fifty individuals who were potential recipients of Santayana's letters, and as a result were able to add over two thousand more letters to Cory's initial set of about a thousand) the ideal of absolute completeness was clearly out of reach: not only because, as we know, Santayana himself destroyed his letters to his mother, but because the editors were unable to locate many letters whose existence could be inferred from Santayana's or his correspondents' allusions. Thus, at the end of the editorial appendix of the critical edition, there is a «List of Unlocated Letters» comprising almost one hundred

³ Cory, Daniel, Foreword to *The Letters of George Santayana*, edited by Daniel Cory, New York: Scribner's, 1955, p. vii.

⁴ Ibid.

entries. It should be noted that these unlocated letters do not include those, recently discovered, which we are pleased to present in this volume.

The editors of the critical edition of the *Letters*, however, did mention that none of Santayana's letters to von Westenholz had been located, just as they comment on the relative scarcity of letters (only six) to John Francis Stanley («Frank»), the second Earl Russell, given the significance of this relationship to Santayana⁵. In retrospect, therefore, the absence of any letters addressed to Charles Loeser and Baron Albert von Westenholz in the critical edition points unequivocally to the possibility that such letters could exist somewhere. These are two persons to whom Santayana devoted several pages in his autobiography, leaving no doubt as to how much they had meant to him. Let us begin with Charles Loeser.

At the beginning of chapter XV («College Friends») of *Persons and Places*, Santayana recounts his first meeting with Loeser, at Harvard, in a passage that deserves to be quoted in full:

First in time, and very important, was my friendship with Charles Loeser. I came upon him by accident in another man's room, and he immediately took me into his own, which was next door, to show me his books and pictures. Pictures and books! That strikes the keynote to our companionship. At once I found that he spoke French well, and German presumably better, since if hurt he would swear in German. He had been at a good international school in Switzerland. He at once told me that he was a Jew, a rare and blessed frankness that cleared away a thousand pitfalls and insincerities. What a privilege there is in that distinction and in that misfortune! If the Jews were not worldly it would raise them above the world; but most of them squirm and fawn and wish to pass for ordinary Christians or ordinary atheists. Not so Loeser: he had no ambition to manage things for other people, or to worm himself into fashionable society. His father was the proprietor of a vast «dry-goods store» in Brooklyn, and rich—how rich I never knew, but rich enough and generous enough for his son always to have plenty of money and not to think of a profitable profession. Another blessed simplification, rarely avowed in America. There was a commercial presumption that man is useless unless he makes

⁵Holzberger, William G. (ed.), *The Letters of George Santayana*, Book One [1868]–1909, p. 422.

money, and no vocation, only bad health, could excuse the son of a millionaire for not at least pretending to have an office or a studio. Loeser seemed unaware of this social duty. He showed me the nice books and pictures that he had already collected—the beginnings of that passion for possessing and even stroking *objets-d'art* that made the most unclouded joy of his life. Here was fresh subject-matter and fresh information for my starved aestheticism—starved sensuously and not supported by much reading: for this was in my Freshman year, before my first return to Europe.⁶

The question of whether, or to what extent, this paragraph is redolent of antisemitism has been discussed at length by John McCormick in his biography of Santayana⁷, and I propose to leave it aside⁸, in order to concentrate on «the keynote» of the Santayana and Loeser connexion: «pictures and books». Indeed, Loeser immediately became for Santayana a mentor in the field of art appreciation, and later showed him Italy, in particular Rome and Venice, and «initiated [him] into Italian ways, present and past», making Santayana's life in the country where he chose to reside from the 1920s onwards «richer than it would have been otherwise»⁹. Even in his early college years, Loeser was, in a small way, what he later became on an international scale: a refined and shrewd art collector. Santayana readily admits that «Loeser had a tremendous advance on [him] in these matters, which he maintained through life: he seemed to have seen everything, to have read everything, and to speak every language»¹⁰. A comparison with the eminent art critic Bernard Berenson (who was also Jewish but converted twice), whom Santayana later frequented, immediately springs to Santayana's mind: Berenson enjoyed the same cultural advantages, and soon gained a public reputation through his writings, which Loeser never did. But the comparison is not at all favorable to Berenson: Loeser, says Santayana, had a sincere love for his favorite subject (the Italian Renaissance) while Berenson was content to merely display it.

⁶ Santayana, George, *Persons and Places*, edited by William, G. Holzberger and Herman J. Saatkamp. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1986, p. 215-216.

⁷ McCormick, John, *George Santayana - a biography*, New York: Knopf, 1987, p. 366.

⁸ For my opinion on this matter, see Pinkas, Daniel, «Santayana, Judaism and the Jews», *Overheard in Seville. Bulletin of the Santayana Society*, 36 (2018): 69-78, in particular p. 75.

⁹ Santayana, G. *Persons and Places*, p. 218.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 216.

Wealth was another big advantage that Loeser had over Santayana. During their early university years, when the two friends went to the theater or the opera in Boston, it was Loeser who inevitably paid; and when, later, they traveled together in Italy, Santayana would contribute a fixed (and modest) daily sum to their expenses, leaving Loeser, who spoke the language, to make the arrangements and pay the bills. Loeser untied the purse with as few qualms as Santayana had in accepting this generosity, because «it was simply a question of making possible little plans that pleased us but that were beyond my unaided means.»¹¹

Aside from a common interest in «books and pictures», one of the factors that obviously brought the two young students together was their status as outsiders, due to their religious origins, respectively Catholic and Jewish, in an overwhelmingly Protestant institution. For Santayana, this marginal status was somewhat compensated by his association, through his mother's first marriage, with one of Boston's prominent Brahmin families. But not only was Loeser unashamedly Jewish, his father owned a «dry-goods store», two facts that «cut him off, in democratic America, from the ruling society.»¹² This seemed strange to Santayana, considering how much more cultivated his friend was than «the leaders of undergraduate fashion or athletics.»¹³ A somewhat ambivalent portrait follows this remark about Loeser's isolation at Harvard:

He was not good-looking, although he had a neat figure, of middle height, and nice hands: but his eyes were dead, his complexion muddy, and his features pinched, although not especially Jewish. On the other hand, he was extremely well-spoken, and there was nothing about him in bad taste.

The ambivalence is reflected in Santayana's overall judgment on his relationship with Loeser: «To me he was always an agreeable companion, and if our friendship never became intimate, this was due rather to a certain defensive reserve in him than to any withdrawal on my part.»¹⁴ Loeser's «defensive reserve» and the asymmetry it introduced in their relation, is a constant theme in the pages devoted to him in *Persons and Places*. When he lived in Florence as a rich bachelor, notes Santayana, Loeser seemed also to be oddly friendless, in spite of knowing the

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 217.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

whole Anglo-American colony; and Santayana complains that, in the 1920s, when he regularly stayed at Charles Strong's Villa Le Balze in Fiesole, next to Florence, Loeser, who had a car, never visited him or invited him to his house: «this made me doubt whether Loeser had any affection for me, such as I had for him, and whether it was *faute de mieux*, as a last resort in too much solitude, that in earlier years he had been so friendly».¹⁵ But this melancholic doubt is quickly dismissed by the ever-realist Santayana: «circumstances change, one changes as much as other people, and it would be unreasonable to act or feel in the same way when the circumstances are different.»¹⁶ All in all, Santayana's gratitude to Loeser for having shown him Italy and for his guidance in the visual arts, is unqualified.

After their college years, in the 1890s, Santayana and Loeser met several times in London. Santayana reports that his friend had become «very English, much to [his] taste»¹⁷ and that he was both vastly instructed and amused by Loeser's «expert knowledge of how an English gentleman should dress, eat, talk, and travel.» Yet those meetings didn't relieve Santayana of «the latent uneasiness [he] felt about [his] friend»: he actually suspected «a touch of madness in [Loeser's] nature,»¹⁸ to such an extent that he wondered whether, when Loeser boasted of having two original works by Michelangelo in his collection, he was not indulging in wishful thinking. But no, the Michelangelos were authentic, and Loeser had got them cheap. He was a truly terrific collector.

It was in 1895, and with Loeser, that Santayana first visited Rome and Venice. Loeser turned out to be quite the ideal *cicerone*: «His taste was selective. He dwelt on a few things, with much knowledge, and did not confuse or fatigue the mind.»¹⁹ The first impressions upon arriving in Rome may have played a role in Santayana's ultimate choice of residence:

We reached Rome rather late at night. It had been raining, and the wet streets and puddles reflected the lights fantastically. Loeser had a hobby that architecture is best seen and admired at night. He proposed that we should walk to our hotel. [...]. We walked by the *Quattro Fontane* and the *Piazza di Spagna* – a long walk.²⁰

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

In the autobiography, Santayana does not tell us in what year he and Loeser undertook a walking tour of the Apennines, from Urbino to San Sepolcro; but one of the newly found letters (June 8th, 1897) allows us to date the trip. As promised, I will not dwell on Santayana's stereotyping reflections that accompany his account of this excursion (they concern «the modern Jew» and his purported inability to «apprehend pure spirit»²¹), and I will limit myself to quoting the memorable exchange the two friends had when they reached the top of the pass:

... after deliciously drinking, like beats on all fours, at a brook that ran down by the road, we looked about at the surrounding hill-tops. They were little above our own level, but numerous, and suggested the top of the world. «What are you thinking of?» Loeser asked. I said: «Geography». «I», he retorted, «was thinking of God.

Loeser died in New York, during a visit in 1928, and was buried in the *Cimitero degli Allori* in Florence, which welcomed the graves of non-Catholics. By then, his collection comprised over 1'000 pieces, mostly works of Italian Medieval and Renaissance art, but also contemporary works, most notably an impressive collection of fifteen Cézanne paintings. Loeser bequeathed his collection of Old Master prints and drawings to Harvard University's Fogg Museum of art, eight of his Cézannes to the President of the United States, and a selection of thirty works of art and furnishings to the Florence city council, which are housed in the *Quartiere del Mezzanino* of Palazzo Vecchio (where one can admire Bronzino's superb portrait of the poetess Laura Battiferri). The Cézannes were initially shown at the National Gallery of Art in Washington, until the Kennedys took notice of the gift and decided to hang a few of them in the White house. In a letter dated May 2 1961, the First Lady wrote the following to Loeser's granddaughter, Mrs. Philippa Calnan:

Dear Mrs. Calnan:

I hope you will be as pleased as the President and I are that we have arranged to have the superb Cezanne paintings which you and your father so generously presented to the United States Government hung

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 220.