

in a wardrobe while Protestant troops sack his city and pillage his church. After a brief flashback to his early years, the authors move through the compelling incidents of the bishop's life. Although their account may read like a hard-to-put-down historical novel, the source notes demonstrate that Harline and Put are thoroughgoing archive rats.

A charming final chapter lays out the argument that is implicit all along: In a world where bishops were struggling to implement the decrees of the reforming Council of Trent (1545–63), “religious life was a constant negotiation among all parties rather than a simple matter of the hierarchy proclaiming and the flock obeying.” Throughout the book, we see Hovius negotiating, cajoling, threatening, compromising, and bargaining, in a struggle to make the church in his archdiocese conform to his vision of what it should be, a task that sometimes pitted him against his superiors in Rome. Nothing was easy.

The book also makes a second, unstated argument. Published with the academic imprimatur of Yale University Press, *A Bishop's Tale* proves by example that a good academic history can also tell a good story. If academics take up its model of accessible yet rigorous historical scholarship, the not-so-saintly archbishop will indeed have worked a miracle.

—LAURA ACKERMAN SMOLLER

GEORGE SANTAYANA:

Literary Philosopher.

By Irving Singer. Yale Univ. Press.

256 pp. \$25

For the dwindling handful of readers acquainted with the elegant, offbeat writings of the Spanish-born American philosopher George Santayana (1863–1952), the appearance of a serious publication about him is cause for celebration. It is both astonishing and tragic that the works of such a talented thinker should have fallen so quickly into obscurity.

Tragic, but indicative—and therefore not entirely unpredictable. Santayana was that rarest of beasts, a philosopher who was also a cultivated man of letters, with a superlative gift for producing vivid and evocative writing across the full range of forms—philosophical treatises, essays, sketches, dialogues, literary criticism,

poetry, the best-selling novel *The Last Puritan* (1935), and the three-volume autobiography *Persons and Places* (1944–53). By the standards of most contemporary philosophers, who seem to regard a commitment to impenetrability, abstractness, academicism, and inaccessibility as the badge of professionalism, Santayana would appear to be not only a lightweight but an impostor and a traitor to his class. How could a refined, playful, jargon-free writer who gives so much literary pleasure have anything profound to convey?

To his credit, Singer, a professor of philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and the author of valuable studies of the philosophy of love, has little patience for such narrow perspectives. He has been a serious student of Santayana for many years, and with this small book he sets out to guide us to the heart of Santayana's achievement. In his view, the philosopher's flair is a matter of substance as well as style: Santayana, “more than any other great philosopher in the English language,” sought to “harmonize” literary and philosophical styles of writing, making the centrality of the humanistic imagination “a fundamental resource in his doctrinal outlook.” The magnificent prose was not mere ornamentation serving to soften the harsh lines of an otherwise unadorned philosophy. The literary and the philosophical components were inseparable for him.

The novelist Somerset Maugham lamented that “it was a loss to American literature when Santayana decided to become a philosopher rather than a novelist.” Maugham was paying tribute to the philosopher's prodigious gifts of imagery and metaphor, as well as hinting that the writing might have been even better had it not been so laden with ideas. But that, as Singer argues, misses the point of Santayana's work, which aimed to transcend the divide that both literati and professional philosophers have been intent on preserving. Singer applies this argument to some of Santayana's chief works, reinforcing the case for the creative imagination while weighing the strengths and weaknesses of the oeuvre.

Most of the book's contents have been published before, at different times and in diverse places, and so the text often has the unfortunate feel of a collection of fugitive

essays. Had Singer reshaped some of the essays and put a bit more effort into harmonizing the others, the result would have been a far better book. But one should still be grateful for the intelligence and judiciousness of the book we do have. One should acknowledge, too, that writers who have the temerity to write about Santayana are doomed to be outshone by their subject. We can be grateful to Singer for showing just such temerity, and thereby helping to keep Santayana's vision alive.

—WILFRED M. MCCLAY

IN THE SHADOW OF THE BOMB: Oppenheimer, Bethe, and the Moral Responsibility of the Scientist.

By S. S. Schweber. Princeton Univ. Press. 260 pp. \$24.95

To understand the overlapping but divergent careers of nuclear physicists J. Robert Oppenheimer and Hans Bethe, according to Schweber, look to Immanuel Kant and educator Felix Adler. Oppenheimer and Bethe both grew up in Jewish families that sought social and cultural assimilation, and both men found physics and secular ethics appealing substitutes for traditional religion. Oppenheimer studied at New York's Society for Ethical Culture, which Adler had founded in 1876 to impart a humanitarian philosophy that might replace traditional Judaism. Adler considered Kant's ethics "a species of physics" that impelled each individual to behave as if his actions could be a universal ideal. Bethe's parents and his German education imparted a similar Kantian moral imperative that would enrich his life, but in ways more communal and familial than Oppenheimer's.

Creating the A-bomb together at Los Alamos during World War II, Oppenheimer (director of the secret laboratory) and Bethe (head of its theoretical division) personified individual responsibility for their science: Beating Nazi Germany to the bomb became their moral imperative. Afterward they went their separate ways. Oppenheimer left theoretical physics research to head the Institute for Advanced

Study in Princeton, New Jersey, while Bethe returned to Cornell University, his intellectual home since 1935 and a scholarly community that would give him moral support.

"It is one of Bethe's striking characteristics," writes Schweber, a physicist and science historian at Brandeis University, "that there is only one of him—in contrast to Oppenheimer." When Cold War anticommunism struck American college campuses in the 1940s and 1950s, a duplicitous Oppenheimer so feared his conservative critics that he could not bring himself to defend publicly a former student, University of Rochester physics professor Bernard Peters, against unsupported attacks (attacks prompted by Oppenheimer's own casual remarks). By contrast, Bethe staunchly defended Cornell physicist Philip Morrison against biased accusations by the university's alumni and board members. President Dwight Eisenhower's science adviser, James Killian, spoke of Bethe's "grave nobility of character," a quality that Oppenheimer somehow lacked.

Indeed, as Schweber argues in this engaging intellectual story, the two men's lives seem like mirror images refracted by their heady years at Los Alamos. Before World War II, Oppenheimer thrived in a circle of colleagues and talented students at Berkeley; after the war, he was nearly alone in his struggles against political enemies. Before the war, Bethe was "self-sufficient and somewhat of a loner" socially and intellectually; after the war, he created a lively physics community at Cornell and "set its moral and scientific standards."

Oppenheimer, who died in 1967, is a historical icon, remembered by many as a martyr who professed that "the physicists have known sin, and this is a knowledge they cannot lose." Bethe is a living legend. He received the 1967 Nobel Prize in physics for explaining how stars produce energy. Throughout the Cold War he publicly advocated nuclear arms control and test bans, and he recently sent a letter to President Bill Clinton opposing the development of a national missile defense system. At 94, he still studies physics at Cornell.

—WILLIAM LANOUILLE