Fundación Banco Santander recovers George Santayana, the philosopher who wrote not for philosophers

* Fundación Banco Santander publishes *Una antología del espíritu*, an unpublished collection of the most profound and personal texts by the philosopher George Santayana, in an anthology edited, compiled, and translated by the professor and philosopher Antonio Lastra.
* George Santayana was one of the most representative philosophers of the twentieth century, currently recognized as a forerunner of contemporary thought. He knew how to combine a rigorous respect for matter with an unwavering aspiration to the spirit, always distancing himself from the anguish and despair that marked the mindset of his contemporaries.
* The volume is accompanied by eight podcasts, including an interview with Antonio Lastra and a dialogue between Lastra and Fernando Savater on how to understand Santayana, available on the foundation's website.

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George Santayana affirmed that "there are three ties that stifle philosophy: the church, the thalamus and the cathedra" And he freed himself from all three.

From the first, because he never felt bound to any religion. From the second, because despite his passage through it, he abandoned it as soon as possible. And from marriage, because as a homosexual, he was unable to marry.

George Santayana was born in Madrid at the end of the 19th century, however, far from experiencing the typical life of the children of his generation, his complex family situation led him to first live in Avila and then in the United States, where he settled with his mother at the age of nine. Despite knowing absolutely no English, he adapted very easily. He was educated in Boston and ended up being a professor of philosophy at the prestigious Harvard University, being one of the founders of its Philosophy Department. In his 20 years as a professor, he taught students of the stature of Wallace Stevens, Gore Vidal and T.S. Elliot, among others.

Despite his dedication and the affection shown by his students (Elliot was the only one who declared that he found the classes very boring, an exception that confirmed the rule), he never liked teaching. Thus, when his mother died and he received a large inheritance, he submitted his letter of resignation and decided to devote himself entirely to philosophy, to practice it and not to teach it. After leaving Boston, he lived in the United Kingdom, France, and finally in a convent in Rome, where he lived until the end of his days. He never returned to his native Spain, except for periods when he visited his relatives, which he interrupted when his father died.

This need to not settle in any fixed place, this sought-after uprooting responded to a single reason: the desire to have a totally free, personal thought, without influences of any kind (hence his commentary on the church, the university and marriage). According to Antonio Lastra, George did not feel attached to any philosophical current. He was never attached to anything. He did not think like an American or a Spaniard. He was a man of the world, a stranger everywhere, someone impossible to pigeonhole. Free, perhaps is the most appropriate word. That gave him a global perspective that made him stand out among the philosophers of his time: in Spain they were drinking the winds for José Ortega y Gasset, however, in Santayana's eyes, he was almost a provincial.

Santayana wrote all his work in English, but never renounced his Spanish passport. For this reason, Fundación Banco Santander entrusted Antonio Lastra with the difficult task of translating his texts, to compose a volume that would shed new light on his most transcendental works. "Santayana said in English, as a Spaniard, what no Spaniard ever said in Spanish," explains Lastra, "Every time you read Santayana you get the feeling that he is opening horizons. His cosmopolitan outlook benefits us Spaniards extraordinarily". For Javier Expósito, head of the Obra Fundamental collection, this volume makes a lot of sense because "Santayana never renounced being Spanish and recovering the spiritual and philosophical exercise of one of the great thinkers of the 20th century was a pending matter in our culture. Lastra's translation and anthology is a work that reveals a new Santayana, and it will undoubtedly remain".

However, although he became an important philosopher in his time (he was on the cover of Time), he shunned the idea of triumph; he did not aspire to be a best-seller, and even did everything possible to avoid being awarded the Nobel Prize for literature, for which he was nominated several times. He did not seek recognition, but sincerely believed that people need philosophy to take care of their spirit, and so he wanted to reach them in a way that they could understand him.

For this reason, as Lastra says, his work is written in a natural, simple, informative language. He was a cheerful and vital man, and his philosophy reflects this. It is not anguished, nor dark, like the existentialists. "He did not write for philosophers or connoisseurs, although that does not detract from the depth of his work," says the anthologist.

According to Lastra, Santayana was, above all, a materialist. Not in the sense of the word we use in the 21st century, but as someone who accepts death. The human body has a certain longevity, and he does not invoke immortality, but accepts this world as the only possible one. Lastra argues that "he adds a very strong idea to the concept of matter, considering that matter is made alive by what he calls the spirit. It is not something related to transcendence, but to intelligence, and it is this intelligence that illuminates matter. Moreover, he is fully aware that this spirit is lost without flesh. The free life he seeks from the spirit is an incarnated life. And he knows perfectly well that this can lead to the fact that, ultimately, the flesh is also the tomb of the spirit".

In *Una antología del espíritu* relevant works are recovered, such as *Metanoia*, *Locura normal* oe *De escepticismo y fe animal*, in addition to letters, poems and short essays, in a volume made up of chapters that do not require a linear reading and that help us to discover a new insight into an author who embodied the figure of the "philosopher" in the style of the ancients. ""Reading Santayana is therapeutic, it is healing, he has the gift of making the spirit something better,"" Lastra explains, ""Not all philosophers have that gift."

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In all our programmes, we seek to create collaborative networks with the third sector to tackle the main global challenges.

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