

## CHAPTER TWO THE TROUBLED HEIRS OF A TRADITION OF CIVIC EDUCATION

Using education as a way of preparing people to become virtuous actors in public life is not a practice which everyone puts a lot of faith in. Theorists who think of people's natures as essentially static or unmalleable are inclined not to place much emphasis on using education for moral purposes because its fruits would be minimal. Rather than pouring resources into changing people's natures, these theorists favor institutions that will control and channel human action so as to diminish harm. Instead of placing their faith in education as a way of promoting a viable if not noble society, these theorists place their hopes in divided government, constitutions, prisons, and other devices that will ensure a modicum of stability for a society that cannot be educated to virtue. While such skepticism has existed for a long time, it has had to exist alongside a tradition which places a much stronger faith in the power of education to teach virtues that promote stable, if not noble communities.

But if this tradition is uniform in its faith in the power of education to inculcate virtue, it is not uniform in its conception of virtue. While some would associate virtue with an education that socializes people to adopt particular behavioral norms and while others might associate virtue with the development of professional skills, only a subset of this group emphasize virtue as citizenship. Only this group think of education as a practice which is designed primarily to develop civic skills. Some of the first spokesmen for this tradition are found in Cicero's De oratore and Quintilian's Institutio oratoria. These men advocated the "artes liberales" and the "studia humanitatis" as a way of developing and selecting an active and critical citizenry. By teaching classical texts and outstanding examples of oratory, these men proposed to

inculcate the normative and rhetorical skills that would identify and cultivate civic leaders.<sup>1</sup>

While the civic orientation of scholarship was eclipsed by scholasticism and its attempt to orient learning toward divine rather than human subject matter, the civic orientation of education was revived again during the renaissance when humanists renewed the connections between political virtue and education. Inspired by Greco-Roman models, Italian humanists like Pietro Vergerio (1349-1420) declared that a good education "calls forth, trains and develops those highest gifts of body and of mind, which ennoble men and are rightly judged to rank next in dignity to virtue only." In Baldessare Castiglioni's (1478-1529) The Book of the Courtier, the connection between civic virtue and education was solidified even further. As Castiglioni argued, the true courtier as a citizen and man of affairs, needed to be able to speak eloquently and this was best conveyed through the study of history, ethics, poetry, grammar, logic and composition. In general, renaissance humanists believed that education could have a beneficent effect on the governing process. Active participation in politics, especially as it was embodied in diplomacy or administration, could be performed more effectively if the participants were versed in history, philology, philosophy and literature.<sup>2</sup>

The attempt to confer civic qualities on education was soon carried over to England as well. Sir Thomas Elyot's The Book Named the Governor (1531) argued, in opposition to those who were skeptical of the intrinsic civic virtue of higher

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<sup>1</sup> Bruce A. Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers a History of the Idea of Liberal Education* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1986) 37.

<sup>2</sup> Christopher Lucas, *American Higher Education, a History* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994) 78.

learning, that philosophical, literary, and historical studies were salutary means for molding a governing class.<sup>3</sup> Studies at Oxford and Cambridge also developed a distinctly overt political orientation. Classical texts were read as a way of dramatizing moral and political precepts, historical studies were used to develop political acuity, and rhetoric and logic were practiced as a way of cultivating the powers of persuasion. With the intrusion of the Crown, Oxford and Cambridge developed curricula that were increasingly devoted to the ideal of education for state service.<sup>4</sup>

The civic value which the renaissance conferred on the humanities did not die and was carried across the Atlantic by the colonists. At Harvard, Princeton and Yale, service to divinity was spoken of in close association with service to the state. If college education was meant to train pious clerics, it also was meant to train citizens. Harvard's 1692 charter stated that it would train men for "Publick Employments both in the Church and in the Civil State", Yale's 1745 charter decreed that it would be an institution "wherein Youth may be instructed in the Arts & Sciences who truth the blessing of Almighty God my be fitted for Publick Employment both in Church & Civil State," and the Presbyterian founders of Princeton, although committed to the idea of a seminary, hoped in 1746 that it would also function as "a means of raising up men that will be useful in other learned professions - ornaments of the State as well as the Church."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> David W. Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution, 1750-1800* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985) 8.

<sup>4</sup> David W. Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution, 1750-1800*, 9.

<sup>5</sup> David W. Robson, *Educating Republicans: The College in the Era of the American Revolution, 1750-1800*, 13-14.

The intent of using Yale, Harvard and Princeton as means for educating citizens tended to be overwhelmed by the religious orientation of these colleges. But if the civic qualities of American education were relatively latent, they had a chance to become more manifest in the early national period. Men like Benjamin Rush and Daniel Webster celebrated the revolution that had brought forth a new republic but cautioned that the "experiment" in liberty would founder without proper (educational) means for safeguarding citizenship.<sup>6</sup>

Their faith in universal education as a way of guaranteeing republican government and civic virtue was carried forward through the first couple decades after the revolution. Washington, in his farewell address, observed that "It is substantially true that....virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government." As Washington went on to say, if virtue was essential than it would best be promoted through "institutions for the general diffusion of knowledge." Although Washington was never explicit about what these institutions were, Jefferson detailed them clearly in 1818 in his home state of Virginia, when he proposed the building of the state university. Primary education, Jefferson professed, should accomplish a variety of civic tasks allowing the student "[t]o understand his duties to his neighbors, and country, and to discharge with competence the functions confided to him by either. To know his rights; to exercise with order and justice those he retains; to choose with discretion the fiduciary of those he delegates; and to notice their conduct with diligence with candor and judgment." The "higher branches of education", while more particularly focused on developing "statesman, legislators and judges" should also be devoted to an education in virtue. As Jefferson professed, it should "develop the

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<sup>6</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education; the National Experience 1783-1876* (New York: Harper and Row, 1980) 5.

reasoning faculties of our youth, enlarge their minds, cultivate their morals, and instil into them the precepts of virtue and order. . .and generally. . .form them to habits of reflection, and correct action, rendering them examples of virtue to others and of happiness within themselves."<sup>7</sup>

If Jefferson's bill enlightened his contemporaries to the civic and republican possibilities that popular and elite education harbored, his ideas were also promoted by men like Benjamin Rush and Horace Mann. For Rush, republican government had "created a new class of duties [for]...every American" that were best insured by founding "nurseries" for the creation of "wise and good men" and by implementing a system of teaching peculiarly suited for the new nation. The curriculum that Rush thought appropriate for ensuring civic virtue included the study of religion, eloquence, and history. Through these means Rush foresaw a "golden" American future in which "religion, liberty and learning" would act beneficently on the "morals, manners and knowledge of individuals, [and] of these, upon government."<sup>8</sup>

Mann, too, promoted a civic vision of education and if he paid much less attention to college, he did so precisely because of his broadly democratic vision. Appointed in 1837 to the post of State Superintendent of Public Schools in Massachusetts, Mann spent the next twelve years of his incumbency in waging a tireless campaign for public schooling. Republican virtue and moral piety, Mann thought, would be instilled through scripture. The requisites of citizenship in the

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<sup>7</sup> "Report of the Rockfish Gap Commission on the Proposed University of Virginia, 1818," *American Higher Education, a Documentary History*, vol. 1 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 194-95.

<sup>8</sup> Benjamin Rush, "Thoughts Upon the Mode of Education Proper in a Republic; Addressed to the Legislature and Citizens of the State of Pennsylvania, 1786," *Essays on Education in the Early Republic* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1965) 22.

American republic would be imparted through the study of history and a "common intellectual culture" would be "conveyed via reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, English grammar, geography, singing, and some health education."<sup>9</sup> All of these pedagogical aims culminated in the development of a republican persona, a selfless individual who would attend not only to his own welfare but to the "welfare of others".

As Mann proclaimed:

Above all others, must the children of a Republic be fitted for society, as well as for themselves. As each citizen is to participate in the power of governing others, it is an essential preliminary, that he should be imbued with a feeling for the wants, and a sense of the rights, of those whom he is to govern; because the power of governing others, if guided by no higher motive than our own gratification, is the distinctive attribute of oppression....In a government like ours, each individual must think of the welfare of the state as well as of the welfare of his own family. It becomes then a momentous question, whether the children in our schools are educated in reference to themselves and their private interests only, or with a regard to the great social duties and prerogatives that await them in afterlife.<sup>10</sup>

These affirmations by Rush, Washington, Jefferson, and Mann illustrate that the ideal of civic education --of educating citizens for virtuous participation in the new republic-- was alive and well in the post revolutionary-period -- at least in popular education and at Jefferson's University of Virginia.

Were these civic trends in popular education also present at Harvard, Yale and Princeton in this period? The answer is a qualified yes. The spokesman for these colleges, may have harbored a more elite vision of republican government than Horace Mann, but they were nonetheless committed to an education that developed political acuity. While "politics" and "government" were not offered as subjects in their own

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<sup>9</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education; the National Experience 1783-1876*, 136, 140.

<sup>10</sup> Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education; the National Experience 1783-1876*, 140-41.

right, students were at least exposed to political and social questions in their reading of Greek and Roman classics.

The study of classics, which usually included Cicero as well as a varying assortment of other Roman and Greek writers, exposed students to authors whose concerns with virtue and corruption and with good oratory and statesmanship attended closely to the style and substantive concerns of classical republican politics.

The rationale for the study of the classical languages was supported by the pedagogical outlooks of European philosophy and philology. For these disciplines, the ancient languages were dripping with bountiful literary and political insight. But in order to partake of this nectar, one would first need to become, as Hegel put it, "intimately connected to the language."<sup>11</sup> Only by becoming familiar with the grammar, and by engaging in endless grammatical exercises, would one achieve the perspicacity to appreciate the political and literary insights. The civic intents of the curriculum were reinforced by the extra-curriculum. Students came to believe, whether through their participation in literary societies, or by listening to college sermons, that they were developing the moral outlook, the civic commitment, and the political skills that would make them into the nation's future leaders. This belief was reinforced by institutions and practices that imbued them with civic skills. Debating societies, courses in moral philosophy, and required oratorical presentations and recitations before their peers forced students to practice the art of public communication and to see politics as an arena that attended to normative questions.<sup>12</sup> The college was

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<sup>11</sup> Gerald Graf, *Professing Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987) 29.

<sup>12</sup> For example, the Linonian Society and The Brothers in Unity, two of Yale's debating societies, fielded question that have often interested republican theorists; "Is it the tendency of intellectual culture to promote moral improvement? (1834) Is party

pervaded by what English professor Gerald Graf has called an "oratorical culture" and what educational historian Laurence Veysey has described as "moral piety."<sup>13</sup> Both of these features worked in conjunction serving not only to make students take moral (and by extension) political positions but to articulate and declaim them as well.

If the college as a whole aspired to develop citizenship, it was reinforced by the fact that the colleges touted their education in terms of what educational historian Frederick Rudolph has called "social investments" for the common good rather than merely as means for personal advancement. To be sure, colleges developed the earning capacity of their students but this was subordinated, at least rhetorically, to the ideal of the selfless citizen. An emblematic example of this ideal was set forth by President McKean at Bowdoin in 1802:

It ought always to be remembered, that literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good, and not for the private advantage of those who resort to them for education. It is not that they may be able to pass through life in an easy or reputable manner, but that their mental powers may be cultivated and improved for the benefit of society. If it be true no man should live for himself alone, we may safely assert that every man who has been aided by a public institution to acquire an education and to qualify himself for usefulness, is under peculiar obligations to exert his talents for the public good.<sup>14</sup>

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spirit beneficial to a republic? (1832) is the attention which is paid to politics by all classes of the community favorable in its influence? (1834) Which is most beneficial to society the merchant or professional man? (1820) Ought a student while in college to direct his studies with reference to his profession? (1823) Have manufactures been a benefit to this country?" Thomas S. Harding, *College Literary Societies: Their Contribution to Higher Education in the United States 1815-1876* (New York: Pageant Press International Corp., 1971) 336-45.

<sup>13</sup> Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Gerald Graf, *Professing Literature*.

<sup>14</sup> Louis C. Hatch, *The History of Bowdoin College* (Portland, 1927) 19.

In the early nineteenth century, colleges like Harvard may have been instruments for forging and maintaining class position<sup>15</sup> and may have provided graduates with increased opportunities for monetary and social gain. But if this was often the college's concrete social effect, the college was sold and presented primarily as an institution that would prepare its graduates to be future civic leaders of the American republic.

In spite of these strong civic sentiments at the start of the century, historians Frederick Rudolph and Louise Stevenson have argued that the dedication to the service ideal had waned significantly by 1900. If middle and late nineteenth-century spokesman for collegiate education continued to bathe the college in the hallowed light of public service, this light no longer seemed to reveal the colleges' true contours. In the immediate wake of the Revolution, college was conceived as a social investment that would pay dividends to republican government, but by the dawn of the twentieth century, students had begun to view the college less as a social investment and more as a personal one. While education had at one time been conceived as an institution for the development of citizenship, it was reconfigured as a gateway for a newly forming middle class. The college as articulator of the summum bonum was replaced by the college as facilitator of the race of life. In short, civic education had declined. As Louise Stevenson puts it:

A college in 1800 prepared graduates to be citizens of the republic; a college in 1900 usually prepared them to enter a profession . . . As the century progressed students' commitment to public life declined as their concerns shifted from those of republicanism to those of liberalism . . . The graduate of 1900 also looked forward to entering a well-defined world, but now it was one of professional expectations and not of community life. While a student in 1800 had encountered significant question of national concern through a general discourse of debates, addresses, and sermons, in the turn of the century college

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<sup>15</sup> Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870* (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 1980).

he encountered controversial issues in specific academic classes taught by professionals trained as specialists . . . By the last third of the century republican concerns and references no longer supplied the content for their discourse. Students spoke for the liberal position that individual achievement promoted the common good . . . .<sup>16</sup>

The narrative, at least as it has been elaborated by Stevenson and Rudolph, is one where an overt attention to civic life had been displaced by an emerging university that attends to professional and pecuniary concerns.

Does this narrative of civic decline through civic displacement describe what was happening to the subjects of this study? In looking at Porter, Eliot, and Wilson's reforms I argue that the story, at least as it was played out at Yale, Harvard and Princeton was more complex. It was less a story of decline so much as a story of multiple failure. While the old-time college hoped to educate for citizenship, its aspirations, in Porter's day at least, ultimately fell flat. And while the university sought to carry on or resurrect a waning civic purpose, its intents were compromised as well.

### *Noah Porter*

Although Porter's presidency was contemporaneous with Eliot's, he was Eliot's senior by twenty years. He was born in 1811, the son of a Connecticut Congregationalist pastor. After graduating from Yale in 1831, Porter took up the ministry until 1845, when he returned to Yale as Clark Professor of Moral Philosophy and Metaphysics. Except for a year-long foray to the University of Berlin in 1853-54

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<sup>16</sup> Louise L. Stevenson, "Preparing for Public Life: The Collegiate Students at New York University 1832-1881," *The University and the City, from Medieval Origins to the Present* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988) 151.

he spent the rest of his life teaching metaphysics and moral science to Yale students, continuing to do so through his presidency and right up until his death in 1892.<sup>17</sup>

Porter was a prolific scholar who was well regarded not only for his study in psychology, embodied in his work The Human Intellect (1868), but for his text book on moral science entitled Elements of the Moral Science, (1884). Well-respected among mid- century American moral philosophers, Porter also was a popularizer who wrote numerous essays in The New Englander. These essays attempted to retain a place for religious spirit in a world of scholarship that was being secularized by a reductive materialistic science. While Porter's Congregational commitments made him look askance at any science that challenged Christian principles, this did not mean that he was an opponent of science or scholarship per se. As Louise Stevenson has noted in her work, Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends, Porter's Yale was dominated by a faculty who were intent on introducing the most advanced German scholarship into the academy as a way of helping to reveal God's existence. For these New Haven scholars, science and advanced learning could be used as a way of uncovering evidence about the divine. As Porter put it in the opening sentence of The Human Intellect, "Psychology is the science of the human soul....psychology is a science.....It is the science of the soul; i.e., the science which has the soul for its subject matter." While the conjunction of soul and science may strike a chord of incongruity to modern ears, it did not do so for Porter and his New Haven contemporaries. Science and scholarship, they felt, could be used for the promotion of Christian ends as effectively as the emotional frenzy of the religious revival.

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<sup>17</sup> George S. Merriam, *Noah Porter, a Memorial by Friends* (New York: Charles Scribner and Sons, 1893) 195.

If religion was the driving impetus behind Yale and New Haven scholarship, it was not conceived as a cloistered activity that was devoted only or even primarily to theological issues. Although Porter was not an active participant in partisan politics and sometimes complained of the scholar's isolation, he did not conceive of the religious orientation of Yale college as an ideal that necessarily precluded this worldly concerns. New Haven scholars "spoke for Whiggery"; that is, they believed that morality and political virtue could be inculcated in everyone given the existence of proper social institutions.<sup>18</sup> Given this framework, Porter saw Yale as an institution devoted to piety, but it was a piety that was closely associated with political virtue. Porter did not usually speak of this virtue in connection with politics. But the civic orientation of his educational philosophy is certainly revealed in the fact that his circle supported Horace Mann's common school. Moreover, they conceived of Yale, and education in general, as an institution that would help maintain social cohesion and unity against the increasing disparities in lifestyle and faith presented by immigration and by the growth of the city.

In conceiving of education as a means for forwarding this social cohesion, and in using the college and his lectures in moral philosophy as a means for establishing an objective basis for duty and obligation, Noah Porter was interested not only in revealing a divine order but a social and political one as well. If Porter's attachment to the recitative and declamative pedagogy of classics taught students the rudiments of eloquence which they could then employ as citizens, chapel and the required senior course in moral philosophy provided students with the reason for holding dear the value of civic and divine obligations. In making a connection between civics and

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<sup>18</sup> Louise L. Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 5-7.

religion, Porter's educational predilections enjoyed more than a passing similarity to those forwarded by promoters of civic education in the early national period. Porter's more overtly republican antecedent, Benjamin Rush, argued: "A Christian cannot fail of being a republican for every precept of the Gospel inculcates those degrees of humility, self-denial, and brotherly kindness.....A Christian cannot fail of being useful to the republic, for his religion teacheth him, that no man liveth to himself."<sup>19</sup> Porter was less willing to celebrate the virtue of self government, but he too could draw a connection between Christian virtue and the republic:

Take away the Spirit of the Lord from the colleges, schools, churches, courts, legislative assemblies, and other institutions that are brought together in the fabric of society here, and substitute for it the spirit of partizanship (sic), of intrigue, of venality, of lying of revenge, which characterize the spirit of this world of apostasy and sin, and the freedom, the life, the glory of the Republic is departed.<sup>20</sup>

Porter's whiggishness and his tendency to conjoin Christian faith with "the glory of the republic" all came into play when he was appointed to the Yale presidency in 1871. As a proponent of advanced scholarship it might have seemed fitting for Porter to accommodate those who were clamoring for the development of the college into an advanced research institution. But while Porter could appreciate the ideal of research for Christian ends, he incorporated the ideal very cautiously for fear that Yale might follow in the lead of his fellow alum Daniel Coit Gilman who was fashioning the newly established Johns Hopkins into a research institution whose Christian ends were relatively muted. Porter felt threatened by the development of the research university because of the secularizing tendencies inherent in its development. But he

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<sup>19</sup> George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994) 64.

<sup>20</sup> Noah Porter, "Civil Liberty," A sermon preached in Farmington Connecticut, July 13, 1856 (New York: Pudney and Russell, 1856) 16.

was also reluctant to embrace the ideal of the university if it meant the adoption of an elective system or the expansion of the curriculum. He was averse to these because they threatened his whiggish devotion to unity and social cohesion. As Porter admitted, the classical curriculum was not always taught as well as it could be, but at least it ensured that students would share in "a common repast" imbued through a shared subjection to the disciplining pedagogy of Greek and Latin grammar. These pedagogies would promote the unity and social cohesion missing in a curriculum where students were not forced to take the same courses.

In his respect for educational orthodoxy, Porter maintained fidelity to Yale's traditionally conservative approach to reform, which had been codified by the Yale Corporation's Report of 1828. The report forwarded a retention of the "dead" languages in the face of critics who wanted to turn Yale toward more vocational and practical studies. Although the primary author of the report, Yale President Jeremiah Day (1773-1867), recognized the need to furnish the mind with knowledge, his first sympathies lay with "discipline" accomplished by "daily and vigorous exercise" of the mind's "faculties." If discipline was the chief end of undergraduate education, Day insisted that this discipline be inculcated through the acquisition of general knowledge rather than by means of a professional or highly specialized education. As Day contended, "The course of instruction which is given to the undergraduates in the college, is not designed to include *professional* studies. Our object is not to teach that which is peculiar to any one of the professions; but to lay the foundation which is common to them all."<sup>21</sup> Day acknowledged that a thorough education was "not within the reach of all" and that "[m]any for want of time and pecuniary resources, must be

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<sup>21</sup> *American Higher Education, a Documentary History*, ed. Richard Hofstadter, and Wilson Smith (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961) 281.

content with a partial course....of scientific and professional education."<sup>22</sup> These class constraints, were however, "imperfections" which should not compromise Yale's commitment to non-professional, non-pecuniary learning because these were necessary requisites for a "republican form of government." As Day put it:

Our republican form of government renders it highly important, that great numbers should enjoy the advantage of a thorough education. On the Eastern continent, the few who are destined to particular departments in political life, may be educated for the purpose; while the mass of the people are left in comparative ignorance. But in this country, where offices are accessible to all who are qualified for them, superior intellectual attainments ought not to be confined to any description of persons. Merchants, manufacturers, and farmers, as well as professional gentlemen, take their places in our public councils. A thorough education ought therefore to be extended to all these classes. Can merchants, manufacturers, and agriculturalists, derive no benefit from high intellectual culture? . . . Is it not desirable they should be men of superior education, of large and liberal views . . . which will raise them to a higher distinction, than the mere possession of property; which will not allow them to hoard their treasures, or waste them in senseless extravagance; which will enable them to adorn society by their learning . . . Light and moderate learning is but poorly fitted to direct the energies of a nation . . . Where a free government gives full liberty to the human intellect to expand and operate, education should be proportionably liberal and ample.<sup>23</sup>

Having attended Yale in the immediate wake of this rousing defense of non-professional education devoted to citizenship, Porter undoubtedly internalized its tenets, if not through an overt reflection on Day's defense, at least in his willing subjection to Day's pedagogy. To a large extent, Porter maintained fidelity to Day's pedagogical vision. In fact, Porter was so tenaciously attached to the traditional curriculum that it impeded the development of Yale into a modern university and made him intransigently opposed to curricular change for fear that it might

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<sup>22</sup> *American Higher Education, a Documentary History*, ed. Richard Hofstadter, and Wilson Smith 283.

<sup>23</sup> *American Higher Education, a Documentary History*, ed. Richard Hofstadter, and Wilson Smith 287-88.

compromise the civic and non-specialized ideals of education so enthusiastically celebrated in the Yale Report of 1828.

Porter succeeded in entrenching the classical curriculum at Yale until the late 1880's, but his actions did not go unchallenged. By the 1850's, the Yale student body started to become more diversified. Enrollments, which had once been predominantly from New England became less provincial in geographical makeup. With the influx of students from large metropolitan centers outside New England, Yale's character began to change. Congregationalists and Presbyterians, who had originally made up the majority of the student body, were diluted by the enrollment of students from other religious denominations. The Yale of Porter's undergraduate days had been an institution of regional significance, dominated by an integrated and shared set of religious beliefs, where character and piety were key, But by the 1850's these qualities were challenged by the influx of students from New York and Chicago whose interest in becoming Christian gentleman of catholic learning was attenuated by their desire to be trained for careers or for success in business. These students and alumni, who called themselves the Young Yale Movement, and who rallied around Yale professor William Graham Sumner, were secularizers who thought that Yale's emphasis on Christian piety was impeding its ability to train men properly for careers.<sup>24</sup> Porter did not respond favorably to these men, nor for that matter to William Graham Sumner, who, in Porter's eyes, was not properly committed to developing the Christian spirit in his students.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Louise L. Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986) 63-66.

<sup>25</sup> George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University* 25.

Although Porter was seen as stubborn and reactionary by his critics, he was not unreflective, and his defense of the classical liberal arts curriculum was eloquently put forth in his three hundred page tract, The American Colleges and the American Public (1870). Yale University historian Brooks Kelley labeled Porter's administration a period of "stagnation". While Porter's challengers certainly saw it this way it would be a mistake to see Porter as a mere reactionary who thoughtlessly cow-towed to tradition. If his administration maintained a tenacious grip on the pedagogical practices of the past and even if his civic intents were corrupted by this grip on an outdated and impotent pedagogy, his defense of long standing ideals of civic education was a thoughtful one. Indeed, it can still inform our present attempts to develop a proper relationship between higher education and citizenship - especially when it is contrasted to the educational philosophy put forth by Eliot and Wilson.

### ***Charles Eliot***

Born into the Boston Brahmin class in 1834, Charles Eliot was the son of Samuel Atkins Eliot, Harvard treasurer, ex officio member of the Harvard corporation, and one-time mayor of Boston. As a paragon of the Brahmin class, Eliot's upbringing was almost a stereotype. His home was on Beacon street, he was Unitarian, he attended Boston Latin School, and enrolled at Harvard in 1849.

In college, Eliot worked hard, parlaying his studies into an appointment as a Harvard tutor in 1854. In 1863 he went abroad, and returned to Boston to fill an appointment as professor of chemistry at Massachusetts Institute of Technology. His years as a tutor and professor led Eliot to think carefully about the status of higher education, and in 1869 he published a series of articles entitled "The New Education" in the Atlantic Monthly. In them, Eliot detailed his opposition to turning the college

into a more utilitarian institution and launched his reputation as a vociferous and reflective authority on the curriculum. This reputation, and his social background, was soon noticed by the Harvard Board of Overseers who were seeking to find a replacement for the ailing President Thomas Hill. Eliot was appointed in 1869 and held the presidency for the next forty years, resigning it in 1909.

Compared to Noah Porter, Charles Eliot was a modernizer who was able, over the course of his forty year appointment to convert Harvard college into a major university of national renown. He was an able administrator who built the endowment from \$2.25 million to twenty million, increased student enrollments from one thousand to four thousand, and augmented the faculty from sixty to six hundred.<sup>26</sup> Eliot's more expansive administrative policies were also accompanied by greater curricular innovation. A radical elective system was implemented in the eighties which allowed students virtual free choice in what they wanted to study and the curriculum was expanded multifold.

If the elective system allowed students to break away from "a common repast" and from the religious and civic aims that had lent legitimacy to the orthodox core curriculum, this was compounded by the abandonment of compulsory chapel in 1886. When Eliot graduated from Harvard in 1853, he had been subjected to a curriculum

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<sup>26</sup> Burton J. Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism; the Middle Class and the Development of Higher Education in America* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1976) 337-38. Porter's tenure was only half as long as Eliot's but even after factoring in this difference, his administration achieved only modest growth at best. In 1871, the year of Porter's inaugural, there were 775 enrolled students. By the last year of his presidency in 1886, the enrollments had grown to 1076. Porter started with an endowment of about a million and managed only to double it during an era of logarithmic growth in academia. Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale: a History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 271.

which was not much different than Yale's.<sup>27</sup> The recitative method, daily chapel, Greek and Latin languages, the senior year course in moral philosophy, and a sectarian (in Harvard's case Unitarian) faculty were the norm. By the turn of the century these practices had been transformed. Unitarians no longer even composed a fifth of all faculty appointments and the pedagogy and discipline of old had been eclipsed if not annihilated by the expansion of the curriculum and by the new elective system. Harvard still professed an attachment to the idea that college could somehow contribute to social cohesion and to unified moral consensus but its ability to do so was being eroded somewhat by the subdivision and specialization of disciplines. As Princeton's President James McCosh warned in 1885,

Harvard boasts that it gives two hundred choices to its students, younger and older. I confess that I have had some difficulty in understanding her catalogue. I would rather study the whole Cosmos. It has a great many perplexities, which I can compare only to the cycles, epicycles, eccentricities of the old astronomy, so much more complex than that of Newton . . . In Nature . . . there is differentiation which scatters, but there is also concentration which holds things together. There should be the same in higher education.<sup>28</sup>

While Charles Eliot was certainly aware of this danger, and actually made gestures to broad learning in his "New Education" he did not heed the danger as much as Porter and Wilson did. The reason he did not came at least in part from his own

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<sup>27</sup> Harvard's Course Catalogue for academic year 1849-1850 (Eliot's freshman year) was dominated by required studies in Greek, and Latin in the freshman and sophomore years. Juniors and seniors were no longer subject to Greek and Latin but were still required to take courses in rhetoric, moral philosophy and physics. Some electives were offered, including instruction in German, French and Spanish. But aside from these modern languages, the other electives were advanced studies in subjects the students had already been exposed to -- namely mathematics, Greek and Latin. "Harvard University Catalogue 1849-1850," Harvard University Archives.

<sup>28</sup> James McCosh, *The New Departure in American Education* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1885) 11,16.

intellectual predilections. Having demonstrated special aptitude for math and science in college, and having pursued a brief career as a chemistry professor at MIT between 1865 and 1869, Eliot was more predisposed to favor the educational freedom that would admit more science and technically focused subjects into the Harvard curriculum.

Eliot, although favorably disposed towards expertise and science, still maintained some fidelity to the idea that the university could cultivate an uplifting spirit and some cognizance of the a unifying perspective. While Porter was rankled by Sumner's inattention to Christian faith and polemicized against godless materialists, Eliot professed that science and scholarship, in whatever form they took, would help reveal the divine spirit of the universe. Eliot, in fact, came close to professing a sort of deism, claiming once that "there is no separating God from nature, or religion from science, or things sacred from things secular."<sup>29</sup>

Science was not the only form of instruction that could supply spiritual uplift. It was also to be found in the emerging literature and art history courses made possible by Eliot's elective system. Before Eliot came into office, students read literature but they generally did so in order to learn grammar rather than as a way of cultivating aesthetic and literary sensibilities. But after Eliot hired professors like Charles Eliot Norton and Barrett Wendell, a new spiritual quality was conferred on college studies. Wendell, Norton and others sought to convince their students that a close perusal of high culture, whether through the study of literature or art, could imbue not only

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<sup>29</sup> Charles W. Eliot, "What Place Should Religion Have in a College?" Address delivered before the Nineteenth Century Club, February 3, 1886, *Harvard Archives, Charles W. Eliot Collection, Box 334, Folder 36* 1-16; Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972) 129-30; George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 192.

aesthetic satisfaction but a beauty of humanizing and spiritualizing influence.<sup>30</sup> While these pretenses to spirituality were decidedly non-sectarian, Eliot did not intend them to be devoid of religious character. Eliot went so far as to proclaim that: "A university cannot be built upon a sect . . ." yet while he followed his own advice to the tee, his reforms were not intended to despiritualize the nature of higher education.

If Eliot entertained a more expansive conception of religious education than Porter, it was facilitated by his extreme Unitarianism. As Eliot once hoped, "I should not like to have it said by the next generation, as has often been said by my contemporaries, that I was a man without ideals and without piety." But if Eliot made concerted efforts to be spiritual, he also confessed that "I belong to the barest of religious communities".<sup>31</sup> To be sure, Eliot was capable of piety but it did not drip from him as freely as it did from Porter.

While Eliot had been brought up Unitarian, he had also been moved by Emerson and the Transcendentalists who were a notable presence in the Boston of his generation. Emerson's celebration of self reliance as a means for charging oneself spiritually allowed Eliot to contemplate the decline of older theologies with less alarm than he might have felt otherwise. He believed that sects and organized religious institutions had no place in the development of the university and that the curriculum would stagnate if it was beholden to the dictates of a single faith. Even with this non-sectarian thrust, Eliot still thought that Harvard could inculcate spirituality through the

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<sup>30</sup> James Turner, "Secularization and Sacralization: Speculations on Some Religious Origins of the Secular Humanities Curriculum, 1850-1900," *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992) 89-90.

<sup>31</sup> Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot*, 121.

cultivation of individual freedom -- which he sought to institute in his radical elective system.

Eliot was more predisposed to the secularization of the academy than Porter but this did not mean that he sought to turn Harvard into an institution that was devoid of all religious pretensions. In maintaining fidelity to a scientific theism and to the spiritualizing effects of freedom, and in encouraging aesthetic appreciation as it was developing in the departments of modern language and art history, Eliot sought to preserve an element of religiosity. But whether this religious spirit maintained a civic bent as did the old, is another question altogether. In recalling Benjamin Rush's pronouncements on the connection between religion and republican government, it would seem as if Eliot's deism could indeed maintain a civic bent. As Rush said, "the only foundation for a useful education in a republic is to be laid in RELIGION. Without this, there can be no virtue, and without virtue there can be no liberty, and liberty is the object and life of all republican governments." If we take Rush at his word, we could venture that Eliot's non-denominationalism (or as his critics called it his "utilitarianism raised to the nth degree") still served to preserve at least a trace of civic republican focus in Harvard education. But it is too simple to say that any type of spirituality necessarily fosters a civic spirit. If it promotes attention to "other-worldly" concerns, to scholastic arguments about the nature of beauty and the divine, without reference to anything more concrete or political, than it is hardly the case that religion is necessarily consonant with the development of civic commitment.

In his Yale lectures on moral philosophy, Porter had always sought to couch his theological beliefs in a manner that had a distinct moral and political thrust. But the connection between Eliot's deism and his sense of the civic was somewhat more tenuous. A religious state could be as easily achieved through a sequestered and

detailed investigation of nature as through the cognizance of duty and social obligation. As a tireless exponent of "service," Eliot sometimes sounded like he supported education for citizenship, but he had so expanded the notion of service that its connection to the concretely civic was diluted. As a result, the ultimate civic significance of his educational policy is ambiguous.

The ambiguity is exacerbated even more when we examine the elite character of the Harvard which not only produced Eliot, but which he sought only partially to change. When Eliot graduated in 1853, Harvard was an institution distinctly dedicated to "forging an aristocracy" of Boston Brahmins who formed an upper class by virtue of the fact that they exerted "influence and control through a combination of wealth and culture."<sup>32</sup> As Henry Adams put it, Harvard from 1815 to 1855 was a college that parents sent their offspring to "for the sake of its social advantages."<sup>33</sup> The institution was seen as a "common step in the preparation of elite progeny for life" and became, according to historian Ronald Story a "monopolistic preserve of the Boston elite."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870*, xiii.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Adams, *The Education of Henry Adams* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961) 65. See also, Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870*, 97.

<sup>34</sup> Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870*, 96-97. Yale, to be sure, was an elite institution as well, but it did not quite match Harvard in terms of its exclusivity. Where 34 Harvard students received aid in 1831, 144 did so at Yale. If Harvard forged an elite along cultural and material lines, Yale, in a more sectarian spirit placed greater emphasis on the college as an institution for the training of a ministry. While the ministry formed an elite in its own right, its patrician character was probably not quite as strong as when fortified by culture *and* wealth.

While early and mid century Harvard College channeled graduates into remunerative positions in Boston business and functioned effectively to bolster the Brahmin class, it did so while preserving the civic intents of an older pedagogy. Even though Eliot graduated from Harvard a generation after Porter did from Yale, the pedagogical methods used to teach Eliot were pretty much the same as those which Porter had been exposed to. More importantly, the Harvard of Eliot's undergraduate days did not seriously challenge the essential tenets of civic education put forth in the Yale Report of 1828 (and as they were later upheld by Porter) so little had education changed over this thirty year period. As such, Harvard at mid-century did become increasingly "interwoven with the Brahmin business establishment"<sup>35</sup> but it did so under the presumption that it was molding effective leaders for politics and the ministry, as well for in business.

When he became president in 1869, Eliot turned Harvard into an institution that was not quite as explicitly aligned with the Boston Brahmins. He did this, not only by enrolling students from other regions, but by venturing that while admissions should still take into account family and wealth, an added emphasis should be placed on scholarly aptitude.<sup>36</sup> But if Eliot succeeded in turning Harvard into a slightly more meritocratic institution, it was not accomplished in a manner that accorded many more civic benefits. While I will explore this further in later chapters, a preliminary indication of this is suggested by the shift in occupations of Harvard graduates. Between 1835 and 1860, 33% of graduates went into the law, 9% into the ministry,

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<sup>35</sup> Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870*, 175.

<sup>36</sup> Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot*, 196-97.

24% into business, and 15% into medicine. By the 1890's more than 40% were going into business, 22% into the law, 10% into medicine and only 3% into the ministry.<sup>37</sup> Of course, changing occupational distributions cannot, in and of themselves, indicate the shifting civic quality of Harvard, but they serve as a provocative introduction to Eliot's ambiguous position vis a vis civic education. Harvard in 1900 continued to be a preserve of what Eliot called a "natural aristocracy" with increasing numbers of graduates in business and proportionately less graduates in the ministry. Given these figures, one begins to wonder whether Harvard could continue to legitimate its stratifying effects on the basis that its graduates, in spite of their elite status, at least contributed to the development of civic vitality. The Harvard of the 1850's had conflated the virtues of the upper class with the virtues of social leadership. But as classical pedagogies in "discipline and piety" were eclipsed by the radical elective system, as a type of learning that was overtly devoted to the rational divination of duty and social obligation was displaced from its privileged and central place in the curriculum, it appears that Eliot's reforms were implemented with some civic costs. So far, and as we shall also see with Wilson, the religious orientation of the college played no small part in steering the college to civic ends. As the college's character became less sectarian and as the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge began to lose some of its Christian focus, the anchors of civic education were loosened. Where Eliot had hoped to improve on the civic deficiencies of the old-time college, his reforms ended up compromising civic education in new and perhaps even more threatening ways. And as we shall now see, Wilson made belated attempts to redress some of these emerging threats.

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<sup>37</sup> Ronald Story, *The Forging of an Aristocracy; Harvard and the Boston Upper Class, 1800-1870*, 95-176.

***Woodrow Wilson***

Although Woodrow Wilson's Princeton presidency was contemporaneous with the last ten years of Eliot's, he was of a later generation, having graduated from Princeton in 1880. To some extent this meant that Wilson's presidency operated in the wake of the major transformations of higher education in America. The period from 1865 to 1890, which roughly circumscribed the presidency of Porter and the first half of Eliot's, was a time of fluidity in which the idea of what the university should look like was still up for grabs, and when the structure of higher education had not become so entrenched that it might discourage the sharp exchange of opinion over what higher education ought to look like. As Lawrence Veysey described this period:

[In the] two decades after 1865 . . . the young university enjoyed a temporary (if partial) liberty of action. Not overwhelmed by vast numbers of students, it could afford to experiment with fewer restraints . . . In this fluid time, before the pressure of numbers had irrevocably descended, entire universities might even be founded or reorganized in the name of [abstract] . . . conceptions. Presidents and professor could engage in debate among themselves over the guiding aim of the university with the feeling that their words really mattered. It could be hoped that deeply held convictions would realize themselves in institutional structures.<sup>38</sup>

Administering in this "fluid" period, Porter and Eliot could disagree not only on the aims of higher education but also on the scope, the size, the structure and the bureaucratic relationship between administrators and faculty. By the turn of the century, and by the time of Wilson's appointment to the Princeton presidency, the "basic shape" and internal structure of the university had already melded "bureaucratic procedures....deanship[s]...the appearance of the academic department with its recognized chairman, and the creation of a calculated scale of faculty rank."<sup>39</sup> To these

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<sup>38</sup> Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965) 17-18.

<sup>39</sup> Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University*, 267-68.

structures Wilson readily acquiesced,<sup>40</sup> but if the structures of higher education were in place by the time Wilson became college president, they did not seriously constrain Wilson's willingness to talk about the ends of higher education at Princeton. Coming into his college presidency thirty years later than Eliot or Porter may have prevented him from effecting real change at the most formative moments in the emergence of the university but it did not prevent him from speaking eloquently about what higher education should be about. It is because of Wilson's unceasing urge to speak about educational ideals and to articulate them even in the face of institutional pressures that might have encouraged him to take up narrower more administrative concerns that he can be placed in the company of men like Eliot and Porter who could articulate their visions in a time of greater "liberty of action."

Born in 1857, Wilson was the son of a southern Presbyterian minister and graduated from Presbyterian Princeton in 1879. Instead of following his father into the ministry, Wilson studied law and spent a short and unhappy interlude practicing it before enrolling in Herbert Baxter Adam's thriving graduate history program at Johns Hopkins. In 1885 he began a career as a professor, teaching at Bryn Mawr, Wesleyan, and Johns Hopkins, until being hired at Princeton in 1890 where he stayed until his campaign for the New Jersey Governorship in 1910.

If Wilson's choice of careers seemed more secular than his father's, he was nonetheless infected with the religious spirit and brought it to bear in his work. He used his position as an educator and as a politician as a means for "spreading spiritual

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<sup>40</sup> Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967) 291.

enlightenment" and for articulating the ideal of "service" which permeated his strong Protestant upbringing.<sup>41</sup>

Service, in fact, served as Wilson's touchstone for articulating the connection between Princeton's Presbyterian origins and his own attempt to maintain Princeton as a producer of civic leaders. When Wilson graduated in 1879, Princeton was still very much within the folds of its Presbyterian heritage, at least if this can be measured by the types of professions which students chose to pursue. In 1881, 35% of the student body went into the law, 19% went into business, 15% into the ministry, 11% into medicine and 10% into teaching. After 1890 the number of graduates pursuing business rose precipitously. In 1899, 49% went into business, 16% into law, 9% into the ministry and 5% into teaching.<sup>42</sup>

Just as at Harvard, the vocations of graduates suggest that students were using their college experiences for different purposes than earlier generations. Vocations like the ministry that focused on the articulation of values and the exhortation to duty were being displaced by vocations whose most salient feature was the pursuit of profit. The shift from a social service ideal to a more pecuniary one is also registered by changes in Princeton's social life. When Wilson was an undergraduate, the campus had been dominated by Whig and Clio, two neo-classical buildings with imposing colonnades and white marble exteriors. The buildings were home to Princeton's debating societies and they formed the center of social life at Princeton. Offering training in oratory, debating, essay writing and parliamentary procedure, they were a

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<sup>41</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Woodrow Wilson: The Conservative as Progressive," *The American Political Tradition* (New York: Vintage Books, 1954) 238.

<sup>42</sup> W. Bruce Leslie, *Gentlemen and Scholars: College and Community in the "Age of the University," 1865-1917* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1992) 246. (The data was compiled from reunion books.)

strong forum for instilling the skills that could be put to use in the ministry, the law, and in politics. On every Friday, a business meeting was held followed (the same evening) by debates and literary exercises lasting from 7:30 until 11:00.<sup>43</sup> While Wilson participated in these forums during their golden age, by the time he became college president in 1902 they had declined, suffering significant losses in membership because of new campus distractions. By 1900, not only had athletics become an abiding undergraduate preoccupation, but the social loci of college life had shifted from Whig and Clio to an emerging set of elite eating clubs on Prospect Street. If these clubs were more than institutionalized cliques which fostered the social and class based solidarity through which future business and professional contacts could be made, they certainly failed to exhibit any vestiges of the civic character inherent in Whig and Clio.

The rise of the eating clubs, the decline of Whig and Clio, and a vocational shift away from the ministry and into business are all suggestive of a decline in the service ideal as a standard of Princeton education. Wilson not only called attention to these shifts away from civic education, but strove to bolster the service ideal in response to a new generation of college students who increasingly saw education merely as a personal investment. It is in Wilson's deft negotiation of this civic issue that we see him as a college president who could transcend some of the limitations of Porter's Christian college while upholding the civic orientation which Eliot's extreme Unitarianism and elective sympathies treated a bit more casually.

Wilson articulated his understanding of the relationship between Princeton's Presbyterian origins and its civic tradition most effectively in his speech "Princeton

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<sup>43</sup> John Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson the Years of Preparation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978) 31.

For the Nation's Service", delivered on the occasion of Princeton's sesqui-centennial (1896). The main thrust of Wilson's argument was that while Princeton had been funded by Presbyterians, the college was as much an institution devoted to "citizenship" and to "society" as it was to God.

A small group of Presbyterian ministers took the initiative in [Princeton's]...foundation. They acted without ecclesiastical authority, as if under obligation to society rather than to the church....It was not a sectarian school they wished. They were acting as citizens, not as clergymen, and the charter they obtained said never a word about creed or doctrine....<sup>44</sup>

If Princeton was a school of religion, Wilson also claimed that it was a "school of duty" dedicated to implanting a sense of obligation not only to the church but to the community as well:

Churches among us....are free and voluntary societies separated to be nurseries of belief, not suffered to become instruments of rule; and those who serve them can be free citizens, as well as faithful churchmen. The men who founded Princeton were pastors, not ecclesiastics. Their ideal was the service of congregations and communities, not the service of a church. Duty with them was a practical thing, concerned with righteousness in this world, as well as with salvation in the next.<sup>45</sup>

As Wilson went on to claim: "There is nothing that gives such pith to public service as religion" and it was, he thought, by impetus of this religious pith that Princetonians like John Witherspoon and his students (among whom Wilson mentions Madison) were moved to forward the American revolution:

There was a spirit of practical piety in the revolutionary doctrines which Dr. Witherspoon taught. No man, particularly no young man, who heard him could doubt his cause a righteous cause, or deem religion aught but a prompter in it. Revolution was not to be distinguished from duty in Princeton. Duty becomes the more noble when thus conceived the "stern daughter of the voice

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<sup>44</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," An oration delivered at the Princeton sesqui-centennial celebration, October 21, 1896, *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1925) 260.

<sup>45</sup> Woodrow Wilson "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 270.

of God" ...It has not been by accident, therefore, that Princeton men have been inclined to public life.<sup>46</sup>

Since the ideals of service and Princeton's strong Christian heritage were so closely allied, and since Wilson saw service as precious, it is not surprising that Wilson sought to maintain some fidelity to the Christian college. He did not, however, do it in the same way that Noah Porter did. First of all, he did not conceive of the college, as Porter did, as a means for pursuing "scholarly means for evangelical ends." Faith, Wilson professed, was largely "an affair of the heart" and was not ultimately substantiable by means of scholarship. As he advised, in The Handbook of Princeton:

Religion cannot be handled like learning....It is a matter of individual conviction and its source is the heart. Its life and vigour must lie, not in official recognition or fosterage, but in the temper and character of the undergraduates themselves. That religion lies at the heart of Princeton's life is shown, not in the teachings of the class room and of the chapel pulpit, but in the widespread, spontaneous, unflagging religious activity of the undergraduates themselves.<sup>47</sup>

If Wilson differed from Porter in that he did not conceive of scholarship or learning as a means to religious uplift, he also was less willing to force scholarship and teaching into overtly Christian lines. Wilson not only attempted to hire faculty without recourse to religious tests, he was not noted for strong arming faculty into teaching in overtly theistic ways. The contrast with Porter is especially notable since Porter did just this in attempting to prevent Charles Graham Sumner from teaching Spencer's The Study of Sociology, a text which Porter regarded as tendentiously atheistic.

Wilson may have maintained a strain of Christian thought in most of his work but it was nonetheless muted compared to Porter's. His mutedness was noted by

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<sup>46</sup> Woodrow Wilson "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 272.

<sup>47</sup> Introduction to The Handbook of Princeton, c. Aug. 1, 1904; also in, John Mulder, *Woodrow Wilson the Years of Preparation*, 178.

Wilson's presidential precursor Francis Patton (1888-1902) who hired Wilson to the chair of Political Economy and Jurisprudence in 1890. While Patton saw fit to hire Wilson, he wanted him to be more overtly Christian in his scholarship. As Patton advised with regard to Wilson's recently published book The State (1889), "in your discussion of the origin of the State you minimize the supernatural, & make such unqualified application of the doctrine of naturalistic evolution & the genesis of the State as to leave the reader of your pages in a state of uncertainty as to your own position & the place you give to Divine Providence."<sup>48</sup>

In spite of Patton's discomfort, in spite of Wilson's less scholastic Christianity, and in spite of the fact that Wilson officially turned Princeton into a non-sectarian institution in 1906, it would be a mischaracterization to say that Wilson did not uphold the idea of a Christian college. Indeed, Wilson could not but uphold it because of his abiding commitment to service and the sense that service was best implanted by the religious spirit. If he was willing to celebrate the historical connection between Princeton's commitment to civic education and to Presbyterianism as he did in his 1896 sesqui-centennial address "Princeton in the Nation's Service", he was also willing to uphold the connection for Princeton's future, as he did in his inaugural address six years later, entitled aptly enough "Princeton for the Nations Service". In elucidating what type of education would ensure the supply of dedicated civic leaders, Wilson went on in great detail about the merits of generalist learning but he made sure, in the end, to close his arguments by reiterating the critical connection between Christianity and civics. If "social service" was "the high law of duty" against which the "American university must square its standards" these standard could not be met if "its teachings

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<sup>48</sup> Quoted in George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 220.

be not informed with the spirit or religion and that the religion of Christ, and with the energy of positive faith."<sup>49</sup>

Wilson's Presbyterian heritage, inculcated by his father and by his undergraduate days, made him abidingly religious. But even more important in terms of the focus of this dissertation, it made him committed to the ideal of service and civic duty.

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As historian Louise Stevenson has noted with respect to New York University, as Thomas Haskell has noted with respect to the development of American social science, and as Frederick Rudolph has noted with respect to higher education as a whole, by 1900, most institutions of higher education and scholarship had begun to uphold practices and ideals which would seem to threaten a tradition of education that had emphasized the importance of citizenship. Graduates in business and in professional vocations were overwhelming graduates in the ministry. Scholarship in the university was beginning to rally around the catchwords of "objectivity" and "investigation" while at the same time holding words like "agitation" and "advocacy" in some abeyance. Moreover, where the college had once emphasized its social utility it was increasingly set on parading itself as a vehicle of personal investment for the middle class.

All of these developments would suggest a narrative of civic decline, in which higher education was attending less and less to the traditions which had thought of civic life as the telos of learning. But what does a study of Porter, Eliot, and Wilson tell us

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<sup>49</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," Inaugural Address as president of Princeton University, October 25, 1902., *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1925) 458-59.

about this? The description so far has located these educators as the heirs of a long educational tradition that sought to use schooling for specifically civic purposes. Moreover, it shows them as men who were operating in the wake of a tradition that had attempted to bolster schooling-in-citizenship by alloying it with strains of religious piety.

The old-time college was a heir to this tradition and sought to use the classics, the chapel, and extra-curricular exercises in forensics and oratory to develop the kinds of civic skills which would contribute to the virtue of the young American republic. Porter, Eliot, and Wilson had themselves been educated in this civically-oriented educational tradition. But when they assumed their presidencies, they stood on the threshold of change. Their colleges began to take on the features of the modern university and its increasingly secular orientation. These secularizing trends were much in evidence in their day with the disappearance of mandatory chapel, the declining proportion of graduates who went into the clergy and the disappearance of moral philosophy as a core requirement.

In spite of these secularizing tendencies, Porter, Eliot, and Wilson continued to maintain fidelity to the older tradition's commitments to civic education -- as we shall see in the next chapter, they continued to exhort students to citizenship, even if their school's support of religion became somewhat more tenuous.

The central and abiding question, however, is whether their outward gestures to citizenship were served by their other ideals and by the pedagogical practices which they tacitly accepted as administrative leaders. The answers elaborated in this study are tinged by a modicum of cynicism. The argument put forward in the body of this study is premised on a vision of thwarted aims and fumbled opportunities. Where Porter tried to uphold older traditions, these traditions no longer served strong civic purposes. Where Eliot ushered in change that served to cast off many of the corrupted traditions of the old

time college, the new practices served also to dampen civic education. Eliot's tenure circumscribed, in large part when civic education was compromised. While I find Eliot complicit in this compromise, I see Porter and Wilson's presidencies as the flawed "bookends" that were ultimately unable to stop this compromise from occurring. Starting his presidency at roughly the same time as Eliot, Porter tried to hold on to an older civic tradition. He failed to hold on to the tradition because it had already been deeply compromised.<sup>50</sup> Wilson comprehended many of the civic deficiencies that were arising in the new universities and tried to redress them, but was infected by elite visions which were also inimical to widespread civic education.

Educational histories are often whiggish and they suggest that the development of the university was tied to a history of civic enrichment. Although Porter, Eliot, and Wilson cannot be located in a whig history it is not by the same token precise to peg them as educators who ushered in civic decline. Porter, Eliot, and Wilson's story is rather one of unrealized intentions. As we shall see, their intentions were good but they were compromised by cloisterization, troubling rhetorical practices, and by an uncritical embrace of specialization. These compromises are developed more fully in the succeeding chapters.

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<sup>50</sup> Robert E. Proctor, *Education's Great Amnesia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988)