

## CHAPTER THREE THE PUBLIC DIMENSION OF CITIZENSHIP

### **Wavering sympathies to integration and cloisterization.**

The two primary methods I use for gauging Porter, Eliot, and Wilson's commitment to civic education revolve around the rhetorical and economic dimensions of republican citizenship articulated in the introduction. These two dimensions serve to illuminate their civic commitments and will be tackled directly in chapters four and five. However, these two approaches can only be grounded by understanding Porter, Eliot, and Wilson's troubled relationship vis a vis a longstanding tradition of civic education --a relationship I investigated in the previous chapter-- and by bringing to light instances where Porter, Eliot, and Wilson directly and very wittingly sought to define the degree of mesh between their schools and the larger public. These instances where Porter, Eliot, and Wilson strove to define how higher education should fit into a larger public are the focus of this chapter.

#### ***Porter: "the science of duty"***

In Professors and Public Ethics, historian Wilson Smith argues that

There is....a widespread inference that the ante bellum period represents a hiatus in the traditional leadership of educators in public affairs, that these years brought forth few significant men to compare with the Mathers, John Witherspoon, William Smith or Samuel Johnson of the colonial era, or to give us the national and educational leadership of men like Charles Eliot, Andrew D. White, David Starr Jordan, Woodrow Wilson, or Nicholas Murray Butler.<sup>1</sup>

While antebellum moral philosophers might suffer the repute of being removed from the public, it is not immediately clear that this was the case for Porter. Porter, in fact, placed considerable import on the value of duty and in so far as he associated duty

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<sup>1</sup> Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics; Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers Before the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956) 13.

with an obligation to participate in collective processes, his moral philosophy appears as an eminently public philosophy as well. In fact, his college textbook, entitled the Elements of Moral Science, had duty as its central theme. As Porter put it in the first line of the text: "Moral science is the science of duty." After having established that the concept of duty was not merely a convention that had been produced by "religion, society or law" but rather an a priori construct that could be apprehended given the proper upbringing, Porter devoted the second half of his book to a detailed elucidation of the various duties that men should practice. Complete chapters were devoted to "duties to ourselves", "duties to our fellow men", "duties of truth and veracity", "duties of general beneficence", "duties to family and kindred", "duties to the state".

Many of these senses of duty implicitly encouraged the student to participate in public decision-making and because they do, Porter exhibits at least a passing interest in public life. These civic senses of duty are however complicated by other exhortations in Porter's text that pontificate on the value of "duties to God" and "special religious duties." Of course, an abiding desire to uphold duty to a transcendent subject does not in itself indicate a lack of interest in public life -- after all, many religious people have construed their duty to God as a duty which is best realized through charitable deeds, social work, and other modes of action that presume involvement in collectivities. However, there are also many forms of religious piety that seek to express themselves through private and more cloistered acts of contemplation. The tension between these two modes of acting -- between acting alone or acting in concert with other people-- are very evident in Porter's work.

As noted, Porter had been taught by educators who had emphasized the importance of retaining the orthodox pedagogy because of its capacity to improve the virtue of the American republic. In striving to be a worthy heir of this tradition, Porter

made a concerted effort to emphasize the value of public life and to emphasize the important connections that exist between this life and a Yale education. The value which Porter placed on public life is especially evident in an essay he wrote on the New England meeting house. In it, Porter spoke fondly of the meeting house's capacity to uphold the value of political activity:

Inasmuch as the New England settler regarded the meeting house as almost the prime necessity of his life, if not as essential to his existence, he must have recognized himself most distinctly as what Aristotle call a "political animal" i.e. an animal made for society and holding definite relations to the community.<sup>2</sup>

To be sure, when Porter spoke nostalgically of the "vitality" and "vigor" of the Puritan community, it was primarily its religious integrity to which he was referring:

...Everything in their faith was referred to the plan, and purpose, and kingdom of God, as these were expounded in the meeting house, it is not surprising that the meeting house and the weekly worship, and the minister, and the church left its impress upon every man, woman, and child.<sup>3</sup>

But despite this acclamation of an integrated and hegemonic religious spirit, Porter could not entirely discount the fact that politics had a role in ensuring this vitality. Politics, Porter recognized, could not really be separated from religion; "the church and the organized town consisted of the same persons" and the "town existed...for the good of the church." While Porter may have thought that ethical certainty could still be apprehended without community, he seemed, at least in this essay, to suggest that politics played a role in guaranteeing ethical vitality whether through the "indomitable public spirit" the "public discourse" or through the fact that "every man acted and reacted upon the other with more or less of quickening energy."

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<sup>2</sup> Noah Porter, "The New England Meeting House," *The New Englander*, May 1883: 303.

<sup>3</sup> Noah Porter, "The New England Meeting House," *The New Englander*, May 1883: 328.

Porter's sympathy for public association was not merely confined to a nostalgia for the past. In fact, Porter envisioned that the moral philosophy course of the old-time college could be used as a way of injecting politics with more principled airs -- which naturally tended to increase the public orientation of his moral philosophy. The education in ethics and piety which Porter was imparting to Yale students was not taught merely as a way of guaranteeing the virtue of Yale students. Besides developing personal piety, Porter hoped that his Yale graduates would imbue the larger world with the moral framework that they had learned to apprehend during college. To be sure, a Yale education was meant to inculcate piety, but Porter often sought to associate this piety with public life. The association is especially evident in the parting lines of his 1874 baccalaureate sermon to Yale graduates:

It is well that you are to go forth to try the free and bracing air of public life and to move among the ways and haunts of common men. As you stand upon the threshold of your new life and look backwards and forwards, let me give you this parting sentiment: A life of Christian faith is the only human life in which there is cheerfulness and hope, and an assured Christian faith can only be gained and sustained by the earnest practice of duty.<sup>4</sup>

For Porter, Christian piety, at least in theory, was strongly associated with the "bracing air of public life." A proper exercise of the moral faculties would reveal these public obligations -- especially when they were corroborated by chapters in Porter's college textbook that touted the virtues of patriotism and other duties to the state.

Porter's regard for public life was also revealed in an essay called "The Youth of a Scholar". Here Porter recognized that scholarship was often a solitary activity and that it tended to cloister one from association with others. Nonetheless, he pressed that this scholarship was not ultimately a private activity:

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<sup>4</sup> Noah Porter, "Yale College Baccalaureate Sermon, Delivered June 21, 1874," Yale Library Collection.

....the scholar is not....a recluse who cherishes a proud disdain of man's ordinary doings and interests, or gives but a cold sympathy to his ardent enterprises. He is and must be a man of solitary studies, but these studies are mainly interesting, as they cast light on the present and give him power to connect himself with it, and guide it to a more glorious future. It is by more than a figure that letters are called the humanities, from their humanizing tendencies, and their generous and elevating influence.<sup>5</sup>

In qualifying the solitude of scholarship, in associating piety with collective action, in lauding patriotism and other duties to the state and in looking nostalgically at the New England Meeting House, Porter appears as an educator who conceived of his moral philosophy as a public philosophy. But in spite of these public dimensions in his thought, Porter harbored pedagogical and scholarly tendencies whose cloisterizing effects seriously undermine any attempt to paint him, or his Yale, as entities that effectively educated students for the public demands of citizenship.

The most publicly impoverishing feature of Porter was his epistemology. Porter, along with a cohort of other American moral scholars, were following Scottish Enlightenment philosopher Thomas Reid in rejecting David Hume's attempt to confine empirical science to questions of fact. In keeping with Reid, Porter claimed that one need not be so skeptical about man's ability to rationally apprehend moral truth. In Reid's view, and in Porter's as well, moral judgments were not merely subjective experiences but were common dictates that could be apprehended by all men if they examined their "conscious psychical endowments" closely enough.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Noah Porter, "The Youth of the Scholar," In Noah Porter Collection, Yale University Library, *Biblioteca Sacra* 3 (February 1846): 97.

<sup>6</sup> D.H Meyer, *The Instructed Conscience; the Shaping of the American National Ethic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1972) 40-41; Noah Porter, *The Elements of Moral Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884) 21-22; Noah Porter, "Professor Huxley's Exposition of Humes Philosophy," *Science and Sentiment* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882) 326-27.

While it is not absolutely clear whether this process of examining “conscious psychical endowments” had to take place in private, the whole psychological process of looking inward on one’s moral faculties suggest an activity which is more solitary than collective in nature. While Porter did not deny that moral truth might be arrived at through interaction with others, his epistemology presupposes that the apprehension, if not the realization, of virtue could be arrived at in solitude. This epistemology and its pretense that virtue could best be revealed by looking inward suggests that the philosophical practices which Porter upheld were by tendency, if not by necessity, cloistered or private in character.

If Porter was cloistered by epistemology, he was further isolated by his attachment to the ideal of a cloistered life. Porter did on one occasion make a rhetorical appeal to the value of an education which gave the student power to "cast light on the present and to "connect himself with it".<sup>7</sup> But while Porter entertained this notion he was pulled at least as strongly by a more cloistered ideal. In upholding what Matthew Arnold's father Thomas Arnold had called "moral thoughtfulness," Porter embraced the value of "enlarged sympathy" from which "arise more hopeful and tolerant views of present evils" as well as "a more cautious and candid estimate of the excitements and prejudices which attend the partisan conflicts of the passing hour."<sup>8</sup> While these views did not directly uphold distance, so much as "tolerance" and "caution", they did imply that it was better to remain detached than to enter prematurely into the fray of politics where one could easily become overwhelmed by

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<sup>7</sup> Noah Porter, "The Youth of the Scholar," 97.

<sup>8</sup> Noah Porter, *The Elements of Intellectual Science*, A manual for schools and colleges; abridged from *The Human Intellect* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871) 5.

the ephemeral "excitements" and "prejudices" of partisanship. Like other moral philosophers of the period, Porter liked to insist on "the separation of the clergy from politics".<sup>9</sup> While moral and religious matters obviously impress on many political matters, Porter doggedly clung to the amorphous distinction between clerical and political activity and the above is certainly exemplary of his desire to do so. If his deep sympathy for the cloistered life was impelled by a common desire among moral philosophers to separate themselves from policy making and campaigns, the celebration of relative isolation is also manifest in Porter's attempt to convey what was most attractive and worthwhile about German scholarship:

Enthusiasm for study in Germany....is kindled by the sight of and by daily contact with those learned men, who have devoted their thoughts and years to some great object of pursuit till it haunts them as with the force of a master-passion. It is excited by the ardent aspirations of the young devotee who with a splendid training and abundant erudition, is pressing on in the same career with single devotedness. To him the politics of the day, the panics of the money market, the beguiling fiction, the enfeebling newspaper, the superficial review and all the time-consuming occupations and excitements of every-day life are not permitted to interfere with his one object. The scholar not only lives in a world of his own, but he is contented with that world and is satisfied with the superior satisfaction which it imparts. The bustling lieutenant may superciliously ring his sabre on the pavement as he passes, the ignorant noble may smile upon him contemptuously, the fawning trader may by vulgar and tawdry finery put the blush upon his simple and awkward attire, but he envies the lot of none of these, for he has adjusted his habits and his expectations to his condition in life, and is content to be only and wholly a scholar.<sup>10</sup>

That Porter could be so concerned with ethics while simultaneously admiring political and social detachment is difficult to understand if one believes that ethical

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<sup>9</sup> Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics; Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers Before the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956) 24.

<sup>10</sup> Noah Porter, "The American Student in Germany," A review of Philip Schaff's *Germany, its Universities, Theology and Religion*, *The New Englander*, November 1857: 585.

and political truths are not fully developed until one interpolates one's self into the political arena. Porter's Christian absolutism however, made him take a position more Platonic than Aristotelian with respect to how ethical certainty was to be achieved. While ethical truth could be taught in the social setting of a college classroom, the main emphasis was on introspection, on becoming more aware of one's natural (but sometimes latent) ability to make correct moral judgements.

One might, of course, speculate that this epistemology did not necessarily exclude the political as a proper realm for uncovering moral faculties. Porter, in fact, was willing to associate the two activities as he had in his remarks on the New England Meeting House, but in his own time he was not disposed to conflate the two. In Porter's view, religious principle had too often been taken out of politics, turning the latter into a realm which was full of "demagoguery", "intrigue", "quackery" "partisanship" and "venality".<sup>11</sup> Given this state of affairs, Porter was reluctant to think of politics as an arena that could cultivate virtue or ethically upstanding behavior - it is no wonder that he sought the cloister of the college and the church as a better avenue for clarifying and exploring ethical concerns.

Ironically, like most other moral philosophers, Porter believed that there were few if any political questions which were not moral as well. But because he regarded politics with so much cynicism, and because he wanted to segregate clerical activity from the corrupting influence of politics, his attention to morality tended to cloister him from rather than submerge him in public life.

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<sup>11</sup> Noah Porter, "Civil Liberty," A sermon preached in Farmington Connecticut, July 13, 1856 (New York: Pudney and Russell, 1856) 16; Noah Porter, *The American College and the American Public* (New York: Charles C. Chatfield, 1870) 144.

Another insight into Porter's dubious commitments to public life is manifest in his qualified understanding of duty to the state. In describing this duty, Porter felt inclined to also discuss the boundaries of the state because what the state could legitimately demand of its citizens suggested the minimal boundaries of duty. On this issue Porter waffled quite a bit wishing neither to commit himself to either a tradition that demanded complete immersion in the state or one where this immersion was extremely attenuated. In considering the first tradition, Porter wrote,

Among the ancient political philosophers, the state was a sacred institution, cherished and defended by the celestial powers, who were its defenders and its pride. The boundary of one's country was the horizon-line which included all the human beings to whom any obligations were acknowledged, except certain general duties of sympathy and friendship growing out of a common descent and religion. Within this line was the sacred commonwealth, which included all those fellow-beings whom the citizen or the man was bound to love and care for. To all these he was bound by the most sacred obligations; and his duties to them, and the state which encircled them, and the gods who protected them, were sacred and supreme.<sup>12</sup>

After elaborating this ancient subordination of the individual to public life, Porter went on to describe a tradition whose emphasis on association was much more limited:

If in this conception we find an exaggeration of the truth that the state is a social organism which is natural and necessary to man, and therefore always a sacred institution, it is equally true that the modern theory of the state, as an association which is founded on self-interest, and limited to the security of life, property, and personal freedom is a more offensive exaggeration, if it be not a caricature, of the truth that looks in the opposite direction.<sup>13</sup>

Critical of both traditions, Porter forwards a theological vision instead:

The truth that includes them both is, that, while the state accepts the law of love which binds together the moral universe, its special, but by no means its exclusive, function is the defense of its own citizens in the possession and security of their individual rights...if...the rights of men, in the final analysis are resolved into and enforced by the duties which love enforces, the state itself rests for its authority on the same force, - the force which holds the moral

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<sup>12</sup> Noah Porter, *The Moral Science*, 495.

<sup>13</sup> Noah Porter, *The Moral Science*, 495.

universe in eternal harmony, and includes and expresses by a single word all the moral perfections of God.<sup>14</sup>

Rather than committing to traditions that placed a radically different emphasis on the value of association, Porter placed his allegiances within a Christian framework that could, he thought, navigate somewhere between either political extreme. But if Porter cast his religious fidelity in terms that implied a compromise between too much public life and too little, his choice, in many ways, tended to make him more private. Porter's Christianity ultimately committed him to entities that transcended any temporal or geographic public. In describing man's "duties to God", Porter declared that in instances where God and human law came into conflict, it was the duty of men to obey God's law. The commitment to God's law, meant that there were higher and ultimately more important obligations than those attached to public life:

The laws may require or forbid actions which are forbidden or required by God. In case of a positive command of God, or any requirement which such a command involves, the moral authority of God is supreme. The law of the state has, in every such case, no authority over the conscience. 'We ought to obey God, rather than men.'<sup>15</sup>

Although Porter tried to explain his vision of the Yale cloister as an ideal which had the remote interests of the world at heart, he was very attached to the sanctity and distance of the college curriculum: "The more urgent is the noisy tumult of life without, and the stronger its pressure against the doors of the college, the greater need is there that certain studies which have little relation to this life should be attended to"<sup>16</sup> Porter could also speak of Yale as an institution that should be devoted

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<sup>14</sup> Noah Porter, *The Moral Science*, 495.

<sup>15</sup> Noah Porter, *The Moral Science*, 581.

<sup>16</sup> Noah Porter, "Inaugural Address at Yale College," *Addresses at the Inauguration of Professor Noah Porter* (New York: Charles Scribner and Company, 1871) 45.

toward the present and "for the service of the present age" and made a great deal of this during his inaugural. But in spite of all of these attempts to connect Yale to the nation, the gestures seem a little hollow. Ironically, Porter waxed on about duty but this duty ultimately transcended national boundaries and temporal space; it was an ideal of duty that was more amenable to being apprehended -- if not realized -- in a theological or scholarly cloister.

Patriotism, New England Meeting Houses, and the exhortation to immerse oneself in public activities were Porter's way of upholding a tradition of education that had been directed to schooling students for citizenship. But Porter's epistemology, his cynical view of politics, and his devotion to a transcendent good seriously compromised these public intents.

***Eliot: "the spirit of service"***

Charles Eliot was hardly politically withdrawn, and was, at least compared to most presidents, quite willing to publicly articulate his own political positions. In the early years of his administration, Eliot was an advocate of laissez faire and was adamantly opposed to positive government going so far as to publicly voice his distaste for the Morrill Grants. With the advent of Progressivism, he tempered these sentiments, advocating that government should become involved in conservation, the regulation of business, public hygiene, and education. While maintaining that America needed a "collectivism which does not suppress individualism" he admitted to "the indispensableness of government interference."<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot*, 150-51. See also, Charles Eliot, *The Conflict Between Individualism and Collectivism in a Democracy* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1910).

While some of these political pronouncements were made in private letters, many too were made in public. And while some of these public pronouncements, especially those compiled in his book The Conflict Between Individualism and Collectivism in a Democracy were cast in terms that were not overtly partisan, he also spoke openly about his shifting partisan allegiances with an address titled "Three Reasons Why I Became a Democrat" (1889) and later pronouncements against free silver as well as public endorsements of the McKinley campaign.<sup>18</sup>

These actions actually helped to vitalize civic conversation but they were somewhat at odds with Eliot's own corporate and professional commitments. Interested as he was in normative issues, Eliot felt obliged to keep some distance from them because of his close affiliation with Harvard. For instance, in a reply to an invitation to speak at a Philadelphia Unitarian church Eliot wrote:

I have reflected on your suggestion that I speak before the Unitarian Club of Philadelphia in February next; but my conclusion is in the negative . . . I should like to bear witness to the faith in a community where it is despised or abhorred; but when I consider the interest of the University, I seem to see that I ought not to obtrude unnecessarily my individual religious opinions in communities where they are unfamiliar, and, to many, abhorrent . . . In eastern Massachusetts, people know that I am a Unitarian by education and inheritance, as well as by conviction. So much I regard as my personal right; but in other communities it seems to me inexpedient that I should unnecessarily appear in public as a Unitarian . . . I make a somewhat similar response with regard to my political opinions. *At home, I declare myself a Democrat, and on rare occasions I express myself on political questions in public; but I do not attend political meetings elsewhere. These limitations do not accord very well with my natural disposition and inclination; but they seem to me to be fair official restrictions.*<sup>19</sup>(italics mine)

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot*, 150-51.

<sup>19</sup> Charles W. Eliot, "Letter to Rev. Joseph May, August 16, 1895," Harvard University Archives Charles W. Eliot Collection, letter press volume 91, page 104.

Considering how influential Eliot was, it is hard to believe that he was actually trying to curb his own political elocution because of professional concerns. Eliot was an exceptionally active and involved citizen but ironically enough this activism might have been even more pronounced had it not been inhibited by his unquestioned commitment to the "official restrictions" of his career. This brief survey of Eliot's own political activism reveals a man who was sometimes torn between the demands of a career which put constraints on political action and a demeanor which naturally gravitated toward the political. These personal conflicts between relative isolation and relative immersion in political events are also registered in Eliot's vision of Harvard as a whole.

Like Porter, Eliot was fond of exhorting his charges to engage in public service. He lauded the virtue of the civic minded and called on higher and lower education to foster civic spirit.<sup>20</sup> Despite Eliot's desire to strengthen civic ties, he was not so confident that the general public looked at education, or Harvard in particular, as an institution that bred civic commitment or public virtue. As early as 1869, Eliot observed in his inaugural address that the cultivated were reputed to be "selfish" and poorly committed to the ideals that founded American democracy. But Eliot assured

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<sup>20</sup> Charles Eliot, "An Urban University," Dedication of the new grounds of Columbia University, May, 1896, *Educational Reform; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1898) 397; Charles Eliot, "The Function of Education in Democratic Society," Address to the Brooklyn Institute on October 2, 1897, *Educational Reform; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1898) 416; Charles Eliot, "The Happy Life," Originally published in 1909, *Charles W. Eliot, the Man and His Beliefs*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1926) 431-32.

his audience -in recalling the Harvard men who had died in the war - that his Harvard would put this myth to rest:

There have been doubts, in times yet recent, whether culture were not selfish; whether men of refined tastes and manners could really love liberty, and be ready to endure hardness for her sake; whether, in short, gentlemen would in this century prove as loyal to noble ideas as in other times they had been to kings. In yonder old playground, fit spot whereon to commemorate the manliness which there was nurtured, shall soon rise a noble monument<sup>21</sup> which for generations will give convincing answers to such shallow doubts; for over its gates will be written: 'In memory of the sons of Harvard who died for their country.' The future of the University will not be unworthy of its past.<sup>22</sup>

In 1869 Eliot was airing his confidence that culture and refinement would soon be associated with a nationalist spirit, but twenty years later, in a speech entitled "Wherein Popular Education Has Failed Us", Eliot still found himself on the defensive. Eliot noted not only a national irresponsibility but a lack of "noblesse oblige" among the grievances registered against the rich and the cultivated:

. . . the least educated and most laborious classes . . . complain that the rich, though elaborately instructed in school and church, accept no responsibilities with their wealth, but insist on being free to break up their domestic or industrial establishments at their pleasure, or in other words, to give or withhold employment as they find it most convenient or profitable. They allege that the rich man in modern society does not bear, either in peace or in war, the grave responsibilities which the rich man of former centuries, who was a great land-owner, a soldier, and a magistrate, was compelled to bear; and that educating, whether simple or elaborate, has not made the modern rich man less selfish and luxurious than his predecessor in earlier centuries who could barely sign his name.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Eliot was referring to the construction of Memorial Hall, built 1870-74

<sup>22</sup> Charles Eliot, "Inaugural Address as President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869," *Educational Reform; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1898) 38.

<sup>23</sup> Charles Eliot, "Wherein Popular Education Has Failed Us," *American Contributions to Civilization and Other Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1897) 207-08.

In "Present Disadvantages of Rich Men" Eliot continued to focus on this decline in public service among elite:

I often feel sorry for rich men in our day. They deserve a great deal of commiseration in our community; for they have lost a good many of the favoring chances that rich men had in other times. The rich men of former centuries and other countries were soldiers, magistrates, great landowners, and great stockowners; they could not be rich on any other terms. They were necessarily called to the discharge of great public duties . . . All these chances of commending themselves to the community the rich men of to-day have lost. It is a change in the organization of society which has deprived them of these privileges. It has deprived the young rich - the young men who inherit riches - of a great many of the opportunities of service which, on the whole, endeared their like to the feudal societies.<sup>24</sup>

Although Eliot attributed the decline in upper class public service to a "change in the organization of society" he was not willing to recognize the decline as a form of behavior that was so socially entrenched that it could not be changed through education. Education could teach that "loving service leads to happiness and safety."<sup>25</sup> More importantly, education would teach that service was redemptive in its own right and that it could be appreciated regardless of its results:

To be of service is a solid foundation for contentment in this world . . . it is not the amount of good done which measures the love or heroism which prompted the serviceable deed, or the happiness which the doer gets from it. It is the spirit of service which creates both the merit and the satisfaction.<sup>26</sup>

These quotes, in sum, entreat citizenry to look beyond their immediate interest and to act in consort with the demands of country. Moreover, they challenge his audience to find and broaden their identity by expressing an affiliation and commitment with the interests of a larger public. All of these exhortations, when take together, show a man

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<sup>24</sup> Charles Eliot, "Present Disadvantages of Rich Men," Speech at the Unitarian Club, 1893, *American Contributions to Civilization and Other Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1897) 291.

<sup>25</sup> Charles Eliot, "Present Disadvantages of Rich Men," 295-96.

<sup>26</sup> Charles Eliot, "The Happy Life," 431-32.

who was continuously lauding the value of public life. Like Porter, Eliot was intent on orienting students to collective activities and to the good of larger associations. But as we have also seen, Porter had a penchant for subverting these public intents with his celebration of cloistered scholarship. Was Eliot capable of doing the same?

The answer is that while Eliot did not display as much affection for cloistered research as Porter, he was still capable of lapsing into a celebration of the cloistered life. The most notable occasion when this occurred, happened in an 1891 address in Chicago. Like many of his contemporaries, Eliot saw the scientist as a quintessential Victorian figure who could, by mere dint of applying himself in the regenerative power of scientific research, become a virtuous being.<sup>27</sup> In lauding this virtue Eliot also gave himself a pretext for not leveling any criticism on the cloisterization that attended this research:

In this function of truth-seeking by scientific research in every field of human knowledge, the university develops a very peculiar and interesting kind of human being - the scientific specialist. He is wholly indifferent to notoriety; he even shrinks from and abhors it; and his idea of fame is different from that of other men....He much dislikes to see his name in the newspaper; but he hopes that a hundred years hence some student of his specialty may read his name with gratitude in an ancient volume of the proceedings of some learned academy. . .The market-place and the forum are to him deserts, and for the common pursuits of men he would say impatiently that he had no time. . . .<sup>28</sup>

In this particular speech, Eliot did not bother to directly reconcile his promotion of a cloistered and ascetic research specialist who has little regard or interest in contemporary civic events, with his exhortation to public service. But at the

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<sup>27</sup> David Hollinger, "Inquiry and Uplift: Late Nineteenth Century American Academics and the Moral Efficacy of Scientific Practice," *The Authority of Experts* (Bloomington: Bloomington University Press, 1984) 142-56.

<sup>28</sup> Charles Eliot, "The Aims of the Higher Education," Address in Chicago, 1891, *Educational Reform; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1898) 233.

inauguration of President Gilman, who shortly was to turn Johns Hopkins into a model research university, Eliot made a passing attempt to reconcile the ideal of public-mindedness with scientific research. For students and researchers at Johns Hopkins anyway, Eliot held out the hope that the provision of a certain distance between research interests and the day-to-day interests of the world would foster leadership and would ultimately contribute to the welfare of society:

The libraries and other collections of a university are storehouses of the knowledge already acquired by mankind, from which further invention and improvement proceed. They are great possessions for any intelligent community. The tone of society will be sensibly affected by the presence of a considerable number of highly educated men, whose quiet and simple lives are devoted to philosophy and teaching, to the exclusion of the common objects of human pursuit. The University will hold high the standards of public duty and public spirit, and will enlarge that cultivated class which is distinguished, not by wealth merely, but by refinement and spirituality.<sup>29</sup>

Eliot's edifying language serves to gloss over the tension between the civic, the intellectual, and the retrospective, as a way of identifying only those dimensions of each that are in harmony with each other. But if cloisterization did not seem to bother Eliot during his address at Johns Hopkins he was at least aware of the tensions between cloisterization and civic life. In keeping with the Progressive reaction against the Mugwumps, Eliot professed a distaste for too much isolation. In "The New Definition of the Cultivated Man" (1903) Eliot proclaimed that the new gentleman must maintain "habitual contact with the external world". In addition, Eliot exhorted that "true culture" was "not to be attained in solitude, but in society."<sup>30</sup> The ability to

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<sup>29</sup> Charles Eliot, "Address at the Inauguration of Daniel C. Gilman on February 22, 1876," *Educational Reform; Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Company, 1898) 43-46.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Eliot, "A New Definition of the Cultivated Man," *Proceedings of National Education Association, Present College Questions* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1903) 395,398.

speak of the cloistered life in glowing terms while simultaneously upholding the virtue of public-mindedness bespeak, as in Porter, of equivocation if not civic compromise.

Eliot felt compelled at times, to be all things to all people, or at least, enough things to enough people that the coherence and integrity of his public speeches on educational aims were compromised by the need to be solicitous to philanthropic alumni, to mediate between the different disciplinary interests, and to present higher education in a favorable light to a public which was in large part not privy to it. Although Eliot may not have succumbed as often to the vision of cloistered scholarship, he occasionally indulged in it without properly delineating how it fit into a vision of Harvard that was integrated into public life. It is probably true that Eliot did not entertain the virtue of cloisterization as much as Porter, but as we shall see in the next chapters, the greater public orientation of Eliot's presidency did not significantly increase civic education at Harvard; while Eliot may have made Harvard more public he did not thereby necessarily make it more civic -- at least when civic activity is contingent on certain modes of rhetorical and economic activity.

***Wilson: Engendering the Nation's Leaders Through the College Cloister***

As we have just seen, Eliot occasionally felt compelled to restrict his natural disposition toward political expression because of what he termed the "fair official restrictions" of the presidency.<sup>31</sup> Reticence, however, was not his forte and he left behind a string of political pronouncements that spoke of his shifting partisan allegiances, his disregard for labor, and his distrust of free silver.

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<sup>31</sup> Charles W. Eliot, "Letter to Rev. Joseph May, August 16, 1895," Harvard University Archives Charles W. Eliot Collection, letter press volume 91, page 104.

Wilson, of course, was even more politically active. Wilson's governorship and national presidency are testament to his own political commitments, and if he was somewhat less vocal with respect to partisan politics in the academic years preceding his rise to national prominence, he nevertheless voiced his political opinions on subjects ranging from the need for public administration and cabinet government, to the abolishment of elitist eating clubs at Princeton. As Richard Hofstadter once put it, Wilson registered a keen "incapacity for detachment from the political values . . . in which he lived."<sup>32</sup> Above all, Wilson was subject to what Arendt has called the "urge toward self-disclosure". No more poignant reminder of his attraction to the political can be found than in a letter he wrote to a friend regretting the stays which academia were imposing on him:

I have a strong instinct of leadership, an unmistakably oratorical temperament, and the keenest possible delight in affairs; and it has required very constant and stringent schooling to content me with the sober methods of the scholar and the man of letters. I have no patience for the tedious toil of what is known as 'research'; I have a passion for interpreting great thoughts to the world; I should be complete if I could inspire a great movement of opinion, if I could read the experiences of the past into the practical life of the men of to-day and so communicate the thought to the minds of the great mass of the people as to impel them to great political achievements . . . .<sup>33</sup>

We find here, then, a man who had an abiding proclivity to express his opinion and to declaim them in a public setting. And while Wilson felt the call of the political in his own life, he also made sure to imbue it in his Princeton charges.

Like Charles Eliot, Woodrow Wilson was fond of applauding Princeton's ostensible ability to educate men for public service and leadership. But Wilson was

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<sup>32</sup> Richard Hofstadter, "Woodrow Wilson: The Conservative as Progressive."

<sup>33</sup> Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*, vol. 8, ed. Arthur S. Link (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966).

not as vocal as Eliot or Porter in trying to turn his school into an institution centered around the cloistered research scientist. Wilson was less likely to define the university in ways that undermined its repute as an institution that was directly concerned with the political activities extant outside its gates. But if Wilson was more immune to the tensions that arose from simultaneously celebrating scientific specialization and civic duty, his endorsement of Princeton as an institution that would always have its hand on the nations pulse was hardly free of complications.

On the one hand, Wilson wanted Princeton to associate directly with the world outside its walls. In the aptly titled addresses "Princeton in the Nations Service"(1896) and "Princeton for the Nations Service"(1902)<sup>34</sup> Wilson proclaimed, "the closeted scholar himself should throw his windows open to the four quarters of the world".<sup>35</sup> Princeton should not be "inclined to stand aloof from the practical world, and surely it ought never to have had the disposition to do so."<sup>36</sup> For Wilson, Princeton, had never found "seclusion" or a "place apart," and would only be able to when society had become "old, long settled in its ways, confident in habit, and without self-questioning, upon any vital point of conduct."<sup>37</sup>

And yet, in spite of these visions of Princeton as an institution that was closely bound to the life of the nation, Wilson at times spoke of a more cloistered and secluded place that could bridge both worlds:

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<sup>34</sup> Wilson's 1896 speech marked Princeton's sesquicentennial occasion for renaming itself a university. The 1902 address marked Wilson's inaugural address as president of Princeton.

<sup>35</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," 445.

<sup>36</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 272.

<sup>37</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 263, 272-273, 284

I have had sight of the perfect place of learning in my thought: a free place . . . where no man could be and not know with how great a destiny knowledge had come into the world - itself a little world; but not perplexed, living with a singleness of aim not known without; the home of sagacious men, hard-headed and with a will to know, debaters of the world's questions every day and used to the rough ways of democracy; and yet a place removed - calm Science seated there, recluse, ascetic, like a nun; not knowing that the world passes, not caring, if the truth but come in answer to her prayer; and Literature, walking within her open doors, in quiet chambers, with men of olden time, storied walls about her, and calm voices infinitely sweet . . . .<sup>38</sup>

Wilson squared this monastic vision with the ideal of a university caught up in the nation's events in two ways. First, he was willing to distinguish between the occasional "investigators" whom the college would shelter as a way of carrying on the task of uncovering truth, and the majority of the student population who were destined, in Wilson's view, to become "citizens and world servants."<sup>39</sup> Second, and perhaps more importantly, Wilson recognized in his inaugural, that the seclusion would be offered because student learning "must for a little while withdraw from action . . . where . . . thoughts can run clear and tranquil."<sup>40</sup> In other words, if the mind had to be closeted in order to mature, it would be closeted only temporarily and with the notion that a more mature and educated intellect would feel the obligations of public duty even more strongly.<sup>41</sup>

Wilson's Princeton could claim a civic orientation and uphold the virtue of seclusion because it was in the business of training an elite group of leaders. Wilson wanted to offer the privileges of distance and seclusion not to everybody, but to a

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<sup>38</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 284.

<sup>39</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton in the Nation's Service," 271.

<sup>40</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," 459.

<sup>41</sup> Laurence Veysey, "The Academic Mind of Woodrow Wilson," *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review* XLIX (1963): 630.

small elite. Unlike many of the emerging land grant educational institutions, Princeton was reserved for the few. And if Wilson made democratic gestures by denying that Princetonians would be "chosen by birth and privilege" he still conceived of Princeton as an aristocracy.<sup>42</sup> The college so conceived was an institution devoted to citizenship but more particularly it was the citizenship and civic obligation of an aristocracy that had the means to develop civic skills in a sheltered environment. The general implication of Wilson's college addresses suggest that the best leaders and the most valuable participants in the political process were cultivated in exclusive institutions like Princeton. Rather than rising slowly through the ranks of party, Wilson wanted leaders to emerge, like himself, at least half-made, from an environment that was fairly inaccessible to the electorate at large.

If Wilson's commitment to public leadership was visible in his attempt to cast Princetonian cloisterization as merely a means to greater public spirit, his embrace of public spiritedness is also revealed in his attempt to promote a national literature and his concomitant distrust of science. Although Eliot was attuned to the national community as much as Wilson, it was Wilson who perceived a tension between the "cosmopolitan" (or trans-national) interests of the "physical sciences" and "philosophy" on the one hand, and the distinctly national focus which both men were developing in their respective universities on the other. Wilson wanted to conserve and disseminate a type of knowledge that could be used to inspire patriotism, and because he was not sure to what extent this sentiment could be promoted by science, he spoke of science with ambivalence. On the one hand he was willing to praise cosmopolitan scholarship:

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<sup>42</sup> Laurence Veysey, "The Academic Mind of Woodrow Wilson," 630.

Do we want universities of a distinctively American type? It is the first impulse of most scholarly minds to reply with a plain and decided negative. Learning is cosmopolitan, and it would seem at first thought like stripping learning of its freedom and wide prerogative to demand that the universities where it makes its home should be national. Let the common schools smack of the soil, if they must, but not the universities! Must not the higher form of scholarship follow everywhere the same method, in the same spirit? May not its doctrines constitute always a sort of international law of thought? Is it not a kind of freemasonry which has everywhere like degrees and a common ceremonial? Certainly truth is without geographical boundary, and no one could justly wish to observe a national bias in the determination of it.

But despite edifying the cosmopolitan commitments of scholarship, Wilson insisted that scholarship must not be strictly scientific or fact-oriented but must also have a purpose that transcended the mere attempt to unveil truth:

It must be remembered, however, that scholarship is something more than an instrument of abstract investigation merely. It is also an instrument and means of life. Nations, as well as individuals, must seek wisdom: the truth that will make them free. There is a learning of purpose as well as a learning of science; for there is a truth of spirit as well as a truth of fact. And scholarship, though it must everywhere seek the truth, may select the truths it shall search for and emphasize. It is this selection that should be national . . . All physical science is international, so are also all formal parts of learning; and all philosophy, too, no doubt, and the laws of reasoning. But there is, besides these, a learning of purpose, to be found in literature and in the study of institutions; and this it is which should be made the means of nationalizing universities, being given the central and coordinating place in their courses of instruction.<sup>43</sup>

Wilson's concern over what type of public science was oriented to resonates with the problem inherent in identifying how Porter's allegiance to God effected his public spiritedness. Where Porter's allegiances to God sometimes seemed to threaten his commitment to national or local publics, Wilson saw a similar threat in science. Science and religion might both serve to direct student to concerns outside the gates of academe, but it was not always clear what they were turned to. Wilson, more than

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<sup>43</sup> Woodrow Wilson, "University Training and Citizenship," *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1925) 247-48.

Porter, acknowledged the threat and made efforts to orient student to the concerns of a national public.

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In keeping with the habits of almost all college presidents, all three of these educators made a point of exhorting their charges to public service. But their exhortations were not always followed by equivalent effort to preempt cloisterization, to explain how some degree of cloisterization could be integrated into a larger commitment to public activity, or to anticipate how some form of academic activity might subvert public aims. Porter's confidence in moral science led him to believe that duty (and morality) could be apprehended as easily in the cloister as in the civic forum. Moreover, Porter's most preeminent sense of how duty could be realized was through duty to God. Porter's God could be served through service to others or through service to the state but often it seemed to be served through activity that was solitary and reflective almost to the point of being other-worldly.

Eliot's looser Unitarian commitment, and his less philosophical turn of mind, made him much less susceptible to the type of religious and philosophical cloisterization that was the bane of Porter. But he too would occasionally lapse into a description of cloistered research which was curiously uncritical. Eliot made little effort to explain how cloistered academic research was supposed to help Harvard students make "habitual contact with the external world."

Of the three, Wilson forwarded the most coherent ideal of a publicly oriented institution. He made room for cloisterization but accounted for it as a temporary state that would actually contribute to an ultimately more public-minded cohort of Princeton graduates. Moreover, Wilson was significantly clearer in defining the kind of public

which he wanted his students directed to. In describing Princeton as a school for “the nation’s service”, Wilson focused on a national public. In contrast, Eliot and Porter exhorted their charges to public service but were never as sure about what type of public they were talking about.

Of course, as I explained in the introductory chapter, their commitments to public life only provide a *partial* answer to the question of how civic Porter, Eliot, and Wilson were. In order to determine this we must explain not only how coherent their attempts were to integrate Yale, Princeton and Harvard into large publics, but whether they provided rhetorical and economic models of conduct that would impel students to become politically active.