

CHAPTER FIVE SPECIALIZATION

The opposition between liberal and republican virtue and the associated opposition between liberal and republican visions of citizenship provide the theoretical rationale for looking closely at Porter, Eliot, and Wilson's liberal proclivities as an area where they may have compromised their commitments to a republican form of civic education. One economic practice which often accompanies the development of liberal ideology and commerce is the spread of specialization, and in this chapter I look at these educator's reactions to this spread as suggestive indicators of their commitment to republican citizenship.

The theoretical foundations to this approach are fortified by the fact that republicans have traditionally been very wary of specialization. This approach needs to be forwarded with some qualification because the development of specialization in late nineteenth-century America is by many accounts a narrative of increased civic activism. For example, as historian Mary Furner has written in Advocacy and Objectivity, in the late 1890's increasing numbers of professionals --who were invariably college alumni-- "became involved in various kinds of civic betterment movements."¹ On the surface anyway, graduates of the new universities seemed to be getting as involved, or even more involved, in politics than the old-time college graduates of the mugwump era who were definitely less professionalized. Where turn-of-the-century professionals became involved in the Progressive movement, the affiliates of the old-time college often abstained. And if the mugwump graduate of the old-time college looked warily on partisan politics, the ministers who educated him often insisted on discriminating between politics and clerical activity to the point that

¹ Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1975) 265.

it led them to refrain from professing any party allegiance whatsoever.² These composite and highly generalized contrasts are anchored, anecdotally at least, in the contrast between Wilson (who held two professional degrees) and Porter (whose professional education had been much more haphazard). Porter's ventures into partisan politics were extremely limited. Wilson, on the other hand, was quintessentially active in politics.

My argument does not dispute these contrasts. But if there is some evidence to suggest that increases in specialization increased political activism, it is mitigated by the fact that the type of politics which reformers and professionals practiced was often politically muted. Members of professional groups like the American Political Science Association and the American Economic Association pressed for change but they did so without recourse to the jeremiads and moral absolutes that were employed in earlier eras. On the whole, they pressed for "ameliorative and realistic rather than radical or utopian change."³ Furthermore, instead of testing their views in public, the professional's reformist zeal was often implemented through bureaucratic initiatives. As Furner has put it, professionals often "avoid[ed] the normative questions that had characterized moral philosophy [concentrating] instead on the structural and procedural problems involved in implementing established policies."⁴

² Wilson Smith, *Professors and Public Ethics; Studies of Northern Moral Philosophers Before the Civil War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1956) 22.

³ Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993) 58.

⁴Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* 286-87.

To be sure, professionals continued to maintain and even strengthen their standing in the political arena, but it was a type of participation that muted more vituperative and extreme debates over ends. For example, social scientists, (who were one class of professionals) were involved in reform,

. . . but they wrapped their reform intentions in a mantle of professional prerogative that shielded them from consequences of advocacy which would otherwise have been too severe to risk. In the process the form and even the substance of their advocacy was tempered and the tension between reform and knowledge reappeared as a conflict between advocacy and objectivity.⁵

Professionals were reformers and they often made gestures to academic freedom. But their way of participating in politics was tempered by the fear that they might violate professionally established lines of “permissible dissent.”

If professionals tempered political discourse because of their attachments to associations that discouraged radicalism, they also served to mute politics by employing increasingly opaque jargon. As Thomas Bender has put it, professionalization may have increased the political authority of the educated class and their capacity to influence politics, but it did not necessarily lead to an enriched civic life. In fact, scholarship often “reduced the common universe to an exceedingly limited sphere”⁶ where political analysis was practically unintelligible to the man on the street.⁷

The professional tendency to narrow the scope of political action serves to qualify the attempt to paint the emergence of professional associations and the

⁵ Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* 322.

⁶ Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States* 46.

⁷ Mary O. Furner, *Advocacy and Objectivity: A Crisis in the Professionalization of American Social Science* 324.

concomitant emergence of the university as a whiggish history of civic enrichment. If specialization sometimes encouraged republican citizenship, it sometimes served to compromise it.

The likelihood that specialization thwarted republican citizenship is also supported by an abiding antagonism between the republican civic tradition and specialization. Historian J.G.A. Pocock describes the problematic relationship between republican citizenship and a broader less formalized type of specialization as an issue which was central to the republican tradition and particularly important to Anglo republicans in the seventeenth century (who Pocock calls "civic humanists"). According to Pocock, many English civic humanists were inspired by ancient republican theory. Taking after Aristotle, Anglo civic humanists believed that individuals could only achieve their full potential through free and rational participation in politics, and that the articulation of the common good was most felicitously expressed and realized when the citizenry participated actively in government. Like many other republicans, the Anglo civic humanists spoke the language of corruption. But what was of particular concern to them was that they associated this corruption with the specializing tendencies occurring as England shifted from an agrarian economy of landed aristocracy and unspecialized farmers to a "specialized rentier bureaucratic society." Celebrating the material autonomy of the yeoman farmer as true virtue, the Anglo civic humanists saw the growth of government experts as corrupt because the bureaucrats' means of livelihood came from the state rather than directly from their own lands. Since virtuous citizenship depended on material autonomy, the government expert perverted government from a public authority into a private interest. Since the talents of the specialist could only be reimbursed by government, these specialists were considered to be predisposed to

corruption because their dependent relationship with government was inimical to the material autonomy upon which virtuous citizenship depended.

From the point of view of the English civic humanists, specialization was, if not synonymous with corruption, closely associated with it. To these people, the shift from a feudal agrarian society to a more culturally and vocationally diverse society, invited autonomous farmers to specialize in vocations that allowed little time for participation in government. Without being able to participate, the duties of citizenship were "surrendered" to "salaried experts" creating a "professionalized society which was virtually synonymous with corruption."⁸

Specialization, in short, bred corruption because it thwarted the material basis on which freedom rested; it bred dependency and prevented the development of leisure upon which virtuous citizenship was predicated.

If these antipathies to specialization seem particular to only one strain of civic humanism, Pocock makes sure to emphasize otherwise. The distrust of expertise and professionalization was not isolated to Anglo civic humanism, but rather emerged as a pervasive strain in American republican ideology and in the civic humanist tradition in general. American populism and the West became, in Pocock's view, a "stronghold" of "agrarian humanism" that served as a counter to the "combination of credit and professionalization" rampant in the American East.⁹ And if American and English civic humanism was pervaded by a distrust of the professionalized society, Pocock holds that the antipathy was central to the civic humanist tradition as a whole:

⁸ J. G. A. Pocock, "Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought," *Politics, Language, and Time* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) 95.

⁹ J. G. A. Pocock, "Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought," 98.

The undistracted, unspecialized man - hunter in the morning and critic in the afternoon - whom Marx and Lenin hoped to restore to his universality is in the long view an Aristotelian citizen, participant in all the value-oriented activities of society, and his history is in large part the history of civic humanism.¹⁰

If a distrust of specialization is a central feature of civic humanism, as Pocock suggests, than we can begin to determine if Eliot, Wilson and Porter upheld a republican sense of citizenship by examining their attitudes towards specialization. Were they committed to an education that encouraged students to become political beings? Or were they complicit in the production of the type of ideological boilerplate that unqualifiedly promoted specialization?

As we shall see, the civic humanist's fears of specialization are echoed, although assuredly not duplicated, in two of the educators examined here. Porter and Wilson were troubled by specialization and thought that it threatened citizenship. However, for them, the threat came less from the loss of material autonomy or a material disinclination to speak for the common good. Rather, Porter and Wilson were troubled by specialization because they still had some attachments to the general learning touted by the old time college. Many of the (mainly ante-bellum) exponents of traditional collegiate education had argued that the general learning of the old time college helped to inculcate the requisite skills for citizenship in a manner that more specialized education could not. The argument was not that these general skills ensured the material autonomy which past republicans had taken as the foundation of citizenship. Rather, the defenders argued that general learning provided the student with erudition, communicative skills, discipline, and solid normative knowledge. This learning was an effective means of socialization, of teaching a person the beliefs and customs that would uphold social order. But even more importantly the defenders

¹⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, "Civic Humanism and Its Role in Anglo-American Thought," 103.

claimed that learning served to confer the political skills that were necessary for active participation in public decision-making.

The argument that the old time college would produce non-specialized amateurs eminently suited for citizenship helped to ennoble general learning. But the argument was also, in part, a belabored defense for institutions which produced and supported as many leisured idlers as active citizenry. Seen through the lens of class, the defense of general learning looks like a backhanded depreciation of specialization and the bourgeois virtues that tended to encourage the development of skills and focused training. From the perspective of class the elevation of general learning was an attempt to ennoble the unfocused eclecticism of the leisured idler over the professional who had attained his particular skills through hard work and enterprise.

While the old-time college fortified an older aristocratic ideal that was to suffer dissolution with the emergence of the university and the entrenchment of a more bourgeois ideology, Porter, Eliot, and Wilson were not inclined to view the matter in such stark ideological or class terms. As it was, they were themselves educated under the auspices of the older pedagogy, and were therefore disinclined to reject the tradition altogether. This did not mean however that their affection for it was uniform, or that class as a category was entirely absent from their analysis. Their allegiances to an older gentry class, and to the institutions and ideology which bolstered it, differed and the resulting contrasts are attached to different ways of educating students for citizenship.

Porter, Eliot, and Wilson would probably never have been appointed to lead elite institutions had they been entirely averse to the idea of using their respective schools as vehicles that would promote the interests of a cultural and financial elite. But where Porter did not trouble much over these elite associations, and where Wilson

only began to express distress over this at the tail end of his tenure, Eliot was more likely to assess and reassess the proper balance at Harvard between what he termed on the one hand “educated classes” and on the other, “old families” and a “natural aristocracy”.

Himself a member of the Brahmin class, Eliot did not try to downplay Harvard’s connections with old wealth overmuch, nor for that matter, did he want to alienate alumni who had been molded by the old system of general learning and who wanted to retain fellowship with future generations by subjecting them to the same pedagogical traditions. But Eliot also felt compelled to compete with Johns Hopkins which aspired to become the first American university with extensive graduate training and advanced specialized research. As such, Eliot felt compelled to admit specialization into the Harvard curriculum. Where republican proponents of the old-time college had employed a language that associated citizenship with general learning, Eliot’s espousal of specialization (as it was thrust upon him by Johns Hopkins) may have led him to adopt a more bourgeois language that exalted market activity and specialized labor while at the same time marginalizing the older gentrified concerns for general learning and citizenship.

To give a little more definition to this portrait, it should be recalled that the specifically republican definition of citizenship we are interested in measuring is described as active participation in the determination of collective ends. In effect, citizenship emerges when people engage in normative conversation. By the 1920’s, specialized research at Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had become an enterprise which made concerted attempts not to tackle questions of normative import. Since Eliot was president before this became an entrenched method of social science research, it would be a mistake to directly tie him to this development. When Eliot promoted research he

was sponsoring researchers who, for the most part, still believed in the essential unity of ethical and descriptive truth. These researchers still believed that their efforts would uncover knowledge that would give clear and uncontroversial insight into the proper ends which society should pursue. In presuming that an essential unity existed between descriptive truth and moral truth, researchers, during Eliot's presidency, could picture themselves as citizens who were actively participating in the determination of collective ends. Given these convictions, it would be wrong to suppose that Eliot was directly complicit in encouraging the type of research that refrained from normative inquiry. But if Eliot was not directly implicated in the development of value-free social science, it would be a mistake to disassociate him from developments which discouraged citizenship. First of all, it is unlikely that value-free social science would have boomed as quickly as it did had Eliot been less willing to recruit and foster its more normatively laden antecedent. And if it seems unfair to burden Eliot with a development which only came to full fruition after he had already stepped down from the presidency, we shall see there were developments in other professions which suggest that Eliot was hastening or at least tacitly condoning practices that discouraged citizenship.

The rush to declare Eliot a villain, might seem inadvisable given the fact that he could not have fully anticipated how specialized research would end up becoming estranged from normative analysis. But if Eliot can be forgiven for a lack of prescience, professional associations were attempting to distance themselves from questions of political and ethical import even in his own day. Eliot's tacit assent to professionals who were striving for this political neutrality suggests that his commitment to citizenship was compromised when it came time to define how higher education should respond to specialization. Eliot may not have been the villain who

killed citizenship but his incautious sympathies for specialization hardly make him its guardian either -- especially when he is compared to Porter or Wilson. In what follows, I argue this with greater elaboration.

The Commitment to Specialization and the Ideal of the Well-Rounded Man

The problem of specialization is very evident in these three educators works and it occupied them to no end. The question of whether to specialize, how much to specialize, and whether specialization could be reconciled with a wider and more general learning demanded, at least among some of these men, no small amount of maneuvering. This was necessary not only to satisfy the demands of emerging professional organizations who were gradually realizing that the human and natural world was not about to reveal itself or become subject to human control without the purview of highly focused and specialized inquiry, but also to mollify Harvard professors like Barrett Wendell who harbored antipathies toward the Ph.D., and Irving Babbitt who could sing the praises of working "within limits" and "concentration" but who could also mock the "microscopic" endeavors of modern scholarship and its attention to the history of the "horsebridle or roman doorknob".

The writings of Barrett Wendell and William James aptly describe some of the positions which Eliot, Wilson, and Porter had to speak to, but it was Irving Babbitt who was particularly adept at describing the problem of maintaining some fidelity with general education (which he associated with humanism), while heeding the demands of the modern world. While sniping at one of his German trained colleagues in the Harvard philosophy department Babbitt wrote,

Professor Munsterberg praises his German teachers because they never aspired to be more than enthusiastic specialists, and he adds that 'no one ought to teach in a college who has not taken his doctor's degree.' This opinion is also held by many Americans, and hence the fetish worship of the doctor's degree on the

part of certain college presidents . . . The work that leads to a doctor's degree is a constant temptation to sacrifice one's growth as a man to one's growth as a specialist . . . The old humanism was keenly alive to the loss of mental balance that may come from knowing any one subject too well. The whole problem is a most difficult one: the very conditions of modern life require us nearly all to be experts and specialists, and this makes it the more necessary that we should be on our guard against that maiming and mutilation of the mind that come from over absorption in one subject.¹¹

William James, another Harvard notable, also expressed regrets about specialization, not because he thought that there was anything intrinsically wrong with it (after all, he was a specialist himself) but because the formalization and credentialing of expertise led people to specialize even when they were not really suited for it:

We know that there is no test, however absurd, by which, if a title or decoration, a public badge or mark, were to be on by it, some weakly suggestible or hauntable persons would not feel challenged, and remain unhappy if they went without it. We dangle our three magic letters before the eyes of these predestined victims, and they swarm to us like moths to an electric light. They come at a time when failure can no longer be repaired easily and when the wounds it leaves are permanent;....The more widespread becomes the popular belief that our diplomas are indispensable hall marks to show the sterling metal of their holders, the more widespread these corruptions will become. We ought to look to the future carefully, for it takes generations for a national custom, once rooted, to be grown away from....¹²

Although James was primarily speaking about the Ph.D., his remarks could have been applied to specialized credentials in general. James warned that if the Ph.D. became too valued a commodity, the university as an institution devoted to truth would give way to the university as an institution devoted to decorating people with

¹¹ Irving Babbitt, *Literature and the American College*, Introduction by Russell Kirk (Washington, D.C.: National Humanities Institute, 1986) 128.

¹² William James, "The Ph.D. Octopus," Originally published in the Harvard Monthly, March, 1903, *Memories and Studies* (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1911) 341.

diplomas. James wanted to preempt this as a way of preserving the university's custodianship of "spiritual spontaneity."¹³

In addition to these academic voices, there were the more distant concerns of farmers, who often welcomed the narrow and technical agrarian training which the land-grant colleges were beginning to offer but were in the end deeply ambivalent about specialization --especially when it seemed to be promoted by the finance capital of the urban east.¹⁴ Populists were able to raise antipathies toward specialization because it threatened to corrupt the virtue of the mythological yeoman farmer whose more varied labors allowed him to eke out a subsistence living that gave him a measure of social and economic autonomy.

While Wilson and Eliot's tenure are more contemporaneous to the voices cited above, the "culture of professionalism", as historian Burton Bledstein has termed the American embrace of a specialized "career", was not merely a turn-of-the-century development. Professionalism, or at least the specialization and credentialing institutions on which professionalism thrived, emerged over a broader course of time. If Porter was not responding directly to the voices articulated above (in the way that Eliot and Wilson could have), he was nonetheless, quite willing to respond to the call for specialization as it was emerging a generation or two earlier.

Porter

For historian Lawrence Veysey, Noah Porter was an emblem of the old-time college, ever ready to defend the ideals of discipline and piety against various new and often discordant educational theorists who were trying to realize the ideals of

¹³ William James, "The Ph.D. Octopus," 344.

¹⁴ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955) 123

"research", "liberal culture" and "utility". Porter did not favor many of the things that fall under the rubric of these ideals . Nevertheless, he did not in any categorical sense deny the value of specialization.

In detailing the admirable qualities of German scholarship, Porter spoke with praise of German scholars who had "devoted their thoughts and years to some great object of pursuit till it haunts them as with the force of a master passion."¹⁵ And in lines that are reminiscent of Eliot's inaugural antipathies to the "vulgar conceit that a Yankee can turn his hand to anything" Porter upheld the value of concentrated and focused labor:

. . . it is well for the student to reside in Germany, that he may gain the ideal of what solid learning is, and be conversant with living examples of patient and exhausting study. He will see for himself what a man can accomplish who devotes himself to study for his life, how he can train himself to toil and find in that toil a pleasure; how exhausting can be his labors, and how complete his success. Such an ideal cannot but instruct the student, especially the student in his youth. It will set before him a high ideal of what study is, and of what can be accomplished by study. Even if his own vocation is not that of a scholar, it will do him good, in the busiest and most distracting hours of his professional or business life, to have known by personal observation how success in learning may be achieved . . . He will be freed from the notion so current among our students, that inspiration is the work of a moment, that insight may dispense with reading, and pronounce with infallible truth on subjects the details of which it has but imperfectly mastered. Most of all, will he learn to despise laziness and to reverence labor, to rid himself of an American dread of long continued application, as well to contract by several dimension the inflation of his American self-conceit.¹⁶

Porter had no qualms about celebrating this kind of specialized research or for that matter using it as a model in his own attempt to uncover the structure of moral-science or the workings of the human intellect. One only has to page through Porter's

¹⁵ Noah Porter, "The American Student in Germany," A review of Philip Schaff's Germany, its Universities, Theology and Religion, *The New Englander*, November 1857: 595.

¹⁶ Noah Porter, "The American Student in Germany," 583-84.

ponderous work on psychology, which he titled the Elements of Intellectual Science, to realize that Porter was hardly opposed to specialized scholarly work. Psychology was, as Porter defined it in the opening lines of the text, "the science of the human soul....which has the soul as its subject matter." In using science to explore a subject which Porter defined by religious terminology, he was deliberately attempting to bring together two hostile camps which he once caricatured as the "indignant fulminations of unscientific and ignorant religionists" and the "contemptuous assertions of unphilosophical and one-sided scientists."¹⁷ Although Porter was a devoted Congregationalist, he did not want to cave into an anti-intellectual evangelicism. Thus, where some colleges like Amherst, were apt to stress revival, conversion and piety to such an extent that they "blighted the intellectual life of the college",¹⁸ Porter steadfastly stood behind rigorous intellectual activity as an expeditious path to religious uplift.

In The Moral Science, Porter's college textbook on ethics, he tried to do much the same. Here, Porter followed other ante-bellum American moral philosophers like Francis Wayland, Mark Hopkins, and Francis Bowen who drew heavily upon the Scottish common sense philosophers in using empirical investigation as a way of determining moral maxims. In contravening Hume, these men thought that what man *ought* to be could be derived from what man *is*. In following this tradition, Noah Porter used moral science and psychology to reveal the moral capability of man¹⁹ and

¹⁷ Noah Porter, *Science and Sentiment with Other Papers, Chiefly Philosophical*, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1882) 330.

¹⁸ Thomas Le Duc, *Piety and Intellect at Amherst College, 1865-1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1946) 26, 33.

¹⁹ Noah Porter, *The Elements of Moral Science* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1884) 21.

the particular moral dictates that man should follow. In particular, he claimed that his method was "inductive" and "scientific":

"Moral science . . . inquires what a moral agent is, in his constitution, in order to determine how he ought to choose and feel and act; but the conclusions which it derives from these observation of fact are conclusions respecting what ought to be, not what actually occurs. Hence, though ideal in its aims and rules, it is founded on fact and observation. It investigates the moral constitution of man, and, so far, is an inductive science."²⁰

Notably, Porter did not attempt to leave aside science in embracing Christian faith. Instead, he engaged in the specialized labor of his science to serve religious ends.

If Porter embraced specialization in his own life he also thought of it as a duty which most everyone else should pursue as well:

To most men . . . there is assigned by the necessities or circumstances of their condition some special sphere of activity for which a more or less definite training is required. The duty of such persons is obvious, to meet these demands by training themselves to intellectual and manual skill. The arrangement is beneficent by which, in civilized communities, special duties are assigned to particular individuals, involving a concentrated and continued subjection to special discipline.²¹

While this passage and Porter's own scholarship reveal an abiding and clear commitment to specialization, Porter was very vociferous in reserving the college as a place for general studies, or, as he termed it, "liberal education."²² He insisted that for those who did have the means, it was imperative to be educated broadly. Porter was

²⁰ Noah Porter, *The Elements of Moral Science*, 4.

²¹ Noah Porter, *The Elements of Moral Science*, 5.

²² Porter's sympathy for "liberal education" should not be taken as evidence to suggest that Porter harbored sympathies for liberal ideology. The term "liberal education" was initially used to describe the education available to men who were *free* to pursue activities other than work. Liberal education, as it was initially conceived, was associated with the freedoms provided by leisure rather than those provided by work. As such, the roots of liberal education lie much closer to republican than liberal ideology. See Bruce Kimball, *Orators and Philosophers*.

wary of an education that was not tempered by the "erudition" and "catholicity" of general education for a variety of reasons. In the aptly titled "Modern Education: Its Opportunities and Its Perils" Porter observed that:

The field of research is now so vast, that it must be divided and sub-divided into microscopic departments, and consequently its vision is in danger of being shortened and narrowed. The demands of each of these departments cannot easily be set aside. The enthusiasms are so absorbing that they will not be denied. Hence the danger that the man of research who is nothing else, will give himself to a single department of thought, and have neither eyes nor ears nor thought for the facts and truths which lie beyond his horizon.²³

A specialist such as this was "narrow and dogmatic" in proportion to the extent to which he had become master of his own field. Moreover, the type of specialist "who is nothing else" was also more likely to be "inappreciative or incredulous" of other perspectives and was "in danger of trying every theory by those facts and laws in which he is at home, and pronouncing upon every description of truth with the confidence which is justified in his own sphere"²⁴

While Porter was most apt to associate this type of specialist with so called secular "materialists" who thought of consciousness and spirit as mere manifestations of matter, Porter also perceived it in the elective system that threatened to take hold at Yale and Harvard in the mid 1880's. Porter directed most of his public responses on the elective system at Charles Eliot but this did not mean that he felt completely at ease about events closer to home. While Eliot had extended electives to the freshman

²³ Noah Porter, "Modern Education: Its Opportunities and Its Perils," *The New Englander*, November 1879: 771.

²⁴ Noah Porter, *The Old Chapel and the New*, Noah Porter Collection 1876.

year in 1883²⁵ by 1885 Porter could see that progressive members of his own faculty were bent on following suit.²⁶

Porter found electives particularly troubling because they would "render it possible for the student to prosecute many classes of professional studies in the college course."²⁷ While Eliot was inclined to think that electives would actually broaden students' horizons more than the older education, Porter felt that students would shirk the fixed curriculum that had been composed of classical reading, mathematics, physical science, philosophy and history, for more business-oriented courses.²⁸ Both recognized deficiencies in the older system. But while Eliot felt inclined to improve it by making it compete in a more open curricular marketplace, Porter felt that this risked too much. The *intent* of the older liberal arts curriculum was too sacred to subject to the curricular marketplace or to the pecuniary whims of students, who were sorely

²⁵ Charles W. Eliot, "President's Report for Harvard College, 1883-84," Harvard University Archives, Harvard Annual Reports, *Report of the President of Harvard College* 3-47.

²⁶ Brooks Mather Kelley, *Yale: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), 266; Noah Porter, "A Criticism from Yale of the Last Harvard Educational Move - Greek and the Bachelor's Degree," *The New Englander* VIII (May 1885): 423-34.

²⁷ Noah Porter, "A Criticism from Yale of the Last Harvard Educational Move - Greek and the Bachelor's Degree," 427.

²⁸ Noah Porter, "A Criticism from Yale of the Last Harvard Educational Move - Greek and the Bachelor's Degree," 427.

tempted by the "enormous" and "almost irresistible" "attractions of professional and business life".²⁹

As we saw in the chapter on civic duty, Porter and Eliot were both extraordinarily willing to sing the praises of civic duty. But where Eliot was content to allow students to embrace duty on their own as well as to define it in their own way, Porter felt that it could only be guaranteed by teaching a traditional prescribed curriculum that had been "arranged" in accordance to "the just demands of public life as tested by long experience and confirmed in the success of many generations".³⁰

The theory of education, after which a curriculum of study has been prescribed, has been that certain studies . . . are best fitted to prepare a man for the most efficient and successful discharge of public duty. By 'public duty' we do not mean merely professional duty, but duty in that relatively commanding position, which a thoroughly cultured man is fitted to occupy . . . The liberal education which the colleges have uniformly proposed to give is none other than what Milton calls the "complete and generous education," that "fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war."³¹

In speaking of the "cultured man" as one who occupies a "commanding position," Porter was undoubtedly thinking of the liberally educated man or the man of generalist learning as a person who occupied an authoritative position in a stratified society. Nonetheless, he would have been the first to say that even in a relatively unstratified society, general education would still be a necessary requisite for self-government. In following the tradition of civic education which had established broad education as a necessary requisite for governing others (not to mention governing oneself), Porter reaffirmed the connection between education and virtue.

²⁹ Noah Porter, "A Criticism from Yale of the Last Harvard Educational Move - Greek and the Bachelor's Degree," 427.

³⁰ Noah Porter, *The American College and the American Public*, 95.

³¹ Noah Porter, *The American College and the American Public*, 93.

Since some institutions of higher education had neglected to affirm this connection between republican virtue and general education, they had failed to uphold general education (and its conservation of the humanities) as the core of higher education. In response to this development Porter was witheringly critical. A university, he thought, could only rightfully be called such if it built on the foundations of a college in which general education was guaranteed. While Porter acknowledged that the university preserved the ideal of the college, it did not always do so in practice. Rather than preserving a place for the liberal or general studies that would teach citizenship and "elevate" men to true virtue, the university often appealed to "lower" pecuniary and "business" interests.

Other institutions claim that . . . they are entitled to be called universities . . . because they impose only the most general conditions and regulations with respect to previous preparation or the choice of the departments to be studied. They argue, in effect, that is indeed a university which teaches universal knowledge universally - i.e., to all comers - in which no man shall be denied who asks to be taught anything. But this feature, so far from elevating into a university what might have been a college, tends to degrade what might be a college into a preparatory school, and even to sink it to the level of those most superficial but most pretentious things called 'business or commercial colleges.'³²

In distancing himself from professional and business life in this way, Porter was responding to those who decried a lack of utility or mesh between college education and the demands of material life. Although the voices crying for greater utility were many³³ Porter was for the most part opposed to it. As Porter saw it,

³² Noah Porter, *The American College and the American Public*, 100.

³³ These voices are described in Laurence Veysey's chapter on Utility in *The Emergence of the American University*. Although there are many voices that fall under the rubric of "utility" they are epitomized in the Phi Beta Kappa address entitled "A College Fetish" given by C.F. Adams. In it Adams spoke of the orthodox education as unfit to serve the needs of the modern age. Recalling his college years some thirty years before, Adams called it a "vacation" rather than a "preparation for the hard work of life" that did not "fit its graduates for the work they had to do in the

education could have a utilitarian orientation but he opposed it when the word was understood as an education devoted strictly to pecuniary interests. The ideal utilitarian education, in Porter's view, could not strictly be professional or vocational but must also involve an "enlarged association with man and his history":

We are not opposed to trying every method and study by the criterion of usefulness, but we would always interpose the question, useful for what? We believe that those studies and that discipline which are the most useful to train to manly thinking, to nice discrimination, and simple diction; as well as to noble purposes, and an enlarged acquaintance with man and his history, are the most useful studies in fact: while the criterion of direct service for the exercise of one's immediate trade, calling, or profession, is sophistical and misleading.³⁴

Whether as a mere reprieve from "getting and spending" or as a genuine attempt to institute more civic oriented models for behavior, Porter saw the college as an institution that should not be utilitarian if this led to pre-professional education or

actual life which awaited them." Charles Francis Adams Jr., *A College Fetich*, 17-19.

³⁴ Noah Porter, *The American College and the American Public*, 271.

to pre-mature specialization.³⁵ If one had an obligation to become specialized, one should, if one had the material means, also pursue a more general education.

If breadth hopefully prevented one from becoming too wrapped up in business and the pecuniary and private practices more often celebrated by the ideology of liberalism, Porter also hoped that his educational ideals would function as a way of reinforcing the public orientation of republicanism. The best learning was emblemized by the ideal of the scholar. But rather than conceiving of this scholar as a reclusive and private thinker Porter saw him as a publicly oriented person who would not be allowed to "shut himself up in the narrow cave of his own studies", but would

³⁵ In Stevenson's *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends* Porter is portrayed as different than antecedent Yale administrators who tended to defend their Christian faith by less scholarly means. Although this was true, this did not prevent Porter from sharing with his predecessors an enduring commitment an education whose professional orientation was at least somewhat muted. No doubt, Porter agreed wholeheartedly with the Yale Corporation's 1828 curricular manifesto in which the appeal for a more utilitarian and vocational orientation was flatly denied: "...why, it may be asked, should a student waste his time upon studies which have no immediate connection with his future profession?....The great object of a collegiate education, preparatory to the study of a profession, is to give that expansion and balance of the mental powers, those liberal and comprehensive views, and those fine proportions of character, which are not to be found in him whose ideas are always confined to one particular channel. he who is not only eminent in professional life, but has also a mind richly stored with general knowledge, has an elevation and dignity of character, which gives him a commanding influence in society, and a widely extended sphere of usefulness. His situation enables him to diffuse the light of science among all classes of the community. Is a man to have no other object, than to obtain a living by professional pursuits? Has he not duties to perform to his family, to his fellow citizens, to his country; duties which require various and extensive intellectual furniture?" *American Higher Education, a Documentary History*, edited by Richard Hofstadter and Wilson Smith, 282. With these lines Porter no doubt agreed. If one had an obligation to become specialized, one should, if one had the material means, also pursue a more general education.

instead be "forced to bring his theories into the light of common day by attempting to teach them to others"³⁶

In keeping with this need to communicate with others Porter held out that one should communicate in a language familiar to all. Apparently he did not think that this warning needed to be directed at the students who had learned Greek or Latin competently but he did advise the student of German to avoid gratuitously abstruse language and to avoid "the emptiness of verbiage"³⁷:

Never be content with your achievements till you can express them in the English language and can weave them into one web with the principles and reasoning which are familiar to English scholars. Many forget this rule. If they find new phraseology they think it a new truth. They do not inquire whether it may not be expressed in familiar English words, or translated into intelligible Anglo Saxon terms, but they catch the new phraseology as though the new casket must of course contain a new treasure. So tenacious are they of the novel dialect, that they do not even strive to seek out English idioms which are equivalent or nearly so, but either ignorantly or affectedly display on all occasions their newly acquired terminology. Many . . . reverse our rule, and instead of asking whether the new dress does not clothe familiar thoughts, seek to invest their old thoughts in the clothing of the newly found language. We do not...object to the private use of any philosophical or theological dialect which may serve the convenience of the student. But we do insist that the student should test the clearness of his own conceptions by expressing them in his accustomed language³⁸

In trying to avoid specialized discourse, Porter undoubtedly meant to impel students to more completely test the veracity of their claims. Porter's penchant for expression and communication, if not for agonistic debate, came from his understanding of the relationship between thought and language. Porter did not believe in the claim that someone could know something without being able to utter it. According to Porter, "No one, be he child or man, knows a thing . . . until he can speak

³⁶ Noah Porter, "Modern Education: Its Opportunities and Its Perils," 771.

³⁷ Noah Porter, "The American Student in Germany," 583-84.

³⁸ Noah Porter, "The American Student in Germany," 599.

it. If he cannot say what he thinks, he has not fully mastered it."³⁹ This epistemology was the ultimate impetus behind Porter's attempt to make people communicate and it also had something to do with his high esteem for more publicly oriented scholarship.

Porter tried to live fairly closely to these standards himself. Although Porter described his studies as "solitary" and as having been "prosecuted in a lonely way" he ultimately expressed a desire to bring his ideas to the "tribunal of public opinion," as in fact he did. Porter not only produced popularized versions of his works in psychology, he also published his serious tomes with varying sizes of type face so that the "less capable" or "less ambitious" reader could still understand him while leaving the more "minute researches" and "exact criticism" in smaller print.⁴⁰ Moreover, Porter wrote extensively in The New Englander which was conceived and published as a popular journal aimed at informing Christian readers on a wide variety of subjects.⁴¹ If Porter felt partial to scholarship and to the specialization upon which scholarship increasingly depended, he was also attuned to its dangers. He wanted to use scholarship for evangelical ends and for the concomitant ends of republican virtue. This virtue depended on an "enlarged acquaintance with man and his history" - an acquaintance which could not be provided merely by a professional or pecuniary oriented education. Porter upheld scholarship, but he was only willing to do so by maintaining at least as much fidelity to less specialized discourses and to an undergraduate education which conserved a place for the pedagogies of civic education by maintaining fidelity to breadth.

³⁹ Noah Porter, "The Youth of the Scholar," 98.

⁴⁰ Noah Porter, *The Human Intellect* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1868) vii.

⁴¹ Louise L. Stevenson, *Scholarly Means to Evangelical Ends*, 41-42.

Eliot

Lawrence Veysey has argued that in spite of the fact that Eliot was friendly to science, his sympathy toward scientific research and to graduate education was "extrinsic to Eliot's deepest desires". As Veysey saw it, Eliot's promotion of specialized research at Harvard was more a case of keeping Harvard up to date with the pioneering advances in graduate education that were taking place at Johns Hopkins, than with anything intrinsic to Eliot's educational philosophy. I think that Veysey has not been entirely on the mark here. For while Eliot harbored many sympathies toward general education, he was also attracted to specialization whether in advanced scientific research or in other areas of human endeavor. As I will show in the following section, this attraction to specialization interfered with Eliot's commitment to college level general education and to an understanding of the dangers inherent in specialization more discernibly than it did for Porter or Wilson.

Before becoming President of Harvard in 1869, Eliot had been an accomplished chemist. He had managed to attain his repute as a scientist without compromising his retention of a wider and more disparate understanding of the world - at least in so far as this knowledge was conveyed to him in the diverse subjects which he was required to study as a youth at the Boston Latin School and at Harvard College.⁴² Eliot's ability to concentrate in one field of study while at the same time maintaining and developing outside interests certainly could not have discouraged him from thinking that this balance could be pursued on an institutional level. And in 1869

⁴² Eliot graduated in the Harvard class of 1853. The Harvard College Catalog of 1849-1850 (which corresponded to Eliot's freshman year) required the study of Mathematics, Latin, Greek, Ancient History, Natural History and Zoology, French (Including Voltaire and Moliere), Moral philosophy, Physics, and Botany. Electives included German and Spanish.

during his inaugural address, Eliot encouraged this by arguing that the ability of the educated to acquire an "acquaintance with many branches of knowledge" was a prerequisite for the "intelligence of public opinion":

With good methods, we may confidently hope to give young men of twenty to twenty-five an accurate general knowledge of all the main subjects of human interest, besides a minute and thorough knowledge of the one subject which each may select as his principal occupation in life. To think this impossible is to despair of mankind; for unless a general acquaintance with many branches of knowledge, good so far as it goes, be attainable by great numbers of men, there can be no such thing as an intelligent public opinion; and in the modern world the intelligence of public opinion is the one indispensable condition of social progress.⁴³

While Eliot recognized a connection between critical thinking and broad education, he was careful to couch his advocacy in terms that would not lend too much credence to the pervasive distrust of expertise. In the same address Eliot remarked on this pervasive distrust and observed its dangers. Against these sentiments and in order to dispel the impression that Harvard was a haven for idle gentleman who pursued knowledge in an eclectic and unfocused fashion, Eliot tempered his call for general knowledge by paying his respects to expertise:

As a people, we do not apply to mental activities the principle of division of labor; and we have but a halting faith in special training for high professional employments. The vulgar conceit that a Yankee can turn his hand to anything we insensibly carry into high places, where it is preposterous and criminal. We are accustomed to seeing men leap from farm or shop to court-room or pulpit, and we half believe that common men can safely use the seven-league boots of genius. What amount of knowledge and experience do we habitually demand of our lawgivers? What special training do we ordinarily think necessary for our diplomatists? - although in great emergencies the nation has known where to turn. Only after years of the bitterest experience did we come to believe the professional training of a soldier to be of value in war. This lack of faith in the

⁴³ Charles Eliot, "Inaugural Address as President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869," 4.

prophecy of a natural bent, and in the value of a discipline concentrated upon a single object, amounts to a national danger.⁴⁴

From the very beginning of his presidency Eliot not only recognized the need for expertise, but seemed to envision expertise as a capacity that was available to anyone with a "natural bent." Specialization was not merely to be the special province of an elite, but a more broadly based mode of work in which the "division of labor" described the expansion and proliferation of specialties as much or more than a distinction between the expert and the amateur.

If at his inaugural Eliot made gestures to an "acquaintance with many branches of knowledge" that would ensure, or at least foster, a certain commonality of shared experience, he also maintained that the tendency to specialize would provide a countervailing shot of pluralism or "variety".

As tools multiply, each is more ingeniously adapted to its own exclusive purpose. So with the men that make the State. For the individual, concentration, and the highest development of his own peculiar faculty, is the only prudence. But for the State, it is variety, not uniformity, of intellectual product, which is needful.⁴⁵

These passages from the inaugural illustrate some of Eliot's first public attempts to negotiate between the ideals of professional and general education. Thirty years later, in the relative turbulence created by expanding professional organizations, Eliot was still trying to negotiate the proper balance between breadth and depth. In *The New Definition of a Cultivated Man*, Eliot tried to integrate the ideal of specialization into

⁴⁴ Charles Eliot, "Inaugural Address as President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869," 6.

⁴⁵ Charles Eliot, "Inaugural Address as President of Harvard College, October 19, 1869," 12-13.

the more eclectic and dilettante images that had previously been associated with men who professed to be refined and cultured:

Culture, therefore, can no longer imply a knowledge of everything - not even a little knowledge of everything. It must be content with general knowledge of some things, and a real mastery of some small portion of the human store.⁴⁶

Eliot was trying to invoke a new image of what it meant to be cultured as a way of bolstering deference to the educated gentleman who had by 1903, begun to suffer a decline in status vis a vis the emergence of new business class.⁴⁷ He wanted the educated gentleman to be a specialist.

But while Eliot was trying to bolster the status of the gentleman by calling on them to be specialists, he continued to believe that the cultivated (and by implication the educated) should be men of "wide affinities" who could harbor at least a modicum of general knowledge:

I ought to say at once that I propose to use the term cultivated man in only its good sense - in Emerson's sense . . . he is not a weak, critical, fastidious creature, vain of a little exclusive information or of an uncommon knack in Latin verse or mathematical logic: he is to be a man of quick perceptions, broad sympathies, and wide affinities⁴⁸

Eliot tried to implement these ideals in the Harvard curriculum. By requiring the B.A. as an essential criteria for admission to Harvard's professional schools, Eliot ensured that the drive toward specialization would be preceded by an opportunity to develop wider and more general "affinities". Moreover, by expanding the curriculum and by instituting an elective system for undergraduates, Eliot established a setting in which future specialists could, if they wanted to, sample widely and develop

⁴⁶ Charles Eliot, "A New Definition of the Cultivated Man," 15.

⁴⁷ Richard Hofstadter, *The Age of Reform*, 135-137.

⁴⁸ Charles Eliot, "A New Definition of the Cultivated Man," 4-5.

frameworks through which to think about how the problems of their own vocation could be related to a larger social and political milieu. In instituting the elective system Eliot allowed students to pursue depth while at the same time encouraging breadth. In practice, at least, this system seemed to have worked.⁴⁹ But if Eliot's elective system worked in practice to encourage breadth, it should nonetheless be noted that breadth was not guaranteed. Eliot's elective system was so radical that it dispensed with all distribution requirements and never went even so far as to check this by requiring a major.⁵⁰ By never instituting the major, Eliot could not guarantee that students would temper their specialized education with studies that could help develop a broader learning upon which the civic arts depended.

So, in spite of his curricular reform, Eliot still had not guaranteed that all students would partake of a general education in college. This unwillingness to lend full and unequivocal support to generalism was also evident in his public discourses. On occasion he would make a gesture toward broad education, for example in his attempt to define the new cultivated man as "a man of comprehensive interests and sympathies and a wide range of vision,"⁵¹ but the promotion of expertise and specialization was much more in evidence. And in trying to bring this vision to

⁴⁹ Specialization was not a rampant problem on the Harvard undergraduate level. According to the Harvard 1885 Annual report, there were only twenty seven cases of "highly specialized work". This constituted only eight percent of the class which corroborated the reports finding that "the ordinary college student does not wish to specialize much....the liberty to specialize is as yet barely used. Certainly it is not abused." "President's Report for Harvard College, 1884-85," 30-35.

⁵⁰ Hugh Hawkins, *Between Harvard and America; the Educational Leadership of Charles W. Eliot*, 84, 103.

⁵¹ Charles Eliot, *The Tendency to the Concrete and Practical in Modern Education*, 34-35.

fruition he emphasized the importance of professional knowledge and specialization over broad cultivation and educational breadth which could be too easily associated with the pejorative caricature of an effete and dilettante gentility. As we shall see, where Wilson was more apt to claim special political distinctions for elites on the basis of well-cultivated literary sensibilities (occasioned by being widely read), Eliot claimed distinctions on the basis of expertise and technical knowledge.⁵² Eliot distinguished between an electorate that was unenlightened with respect to the true detail of public policy and the highly educated expert who was equipped to deal with the issues effectively. Throughout his tenure as President, and even in retirement, Eliot reiterated the need to inculcate in the electorate a deference toward the expert and a concomitant respect for the universities which trained them:

Whenever just sentiments, widely diffused through the mass of the people, can furnish sufficient guidance to wise public action, right determinations by universal suffrage may be relied on. Questions concerning independence, union, personal liberty, and religious toleration turn on such sentiments, and will be wisely settled by the mass of the people. But when the judicious determination of a public policy depends on careful collection of facts, keen discrimination, sound reasoning, and sure foresight, *our republic must soon follow, as all other civilized governments already do, the advice of highly trained men*, who have made themselves, by long study and observation, experts in the matter in hand. *Questions of currency, taxation, education, and public health belong to that class of public questions which absolutely require for their satisfactory settlement the knowledge and trained judgment of experts; and the only wise decision which universal suffrage can make upon them is the decision to abide by expert opinion.* The more complicated and

⁵² Of course, the difference between cultivation and expertise are amorphous but they certainly existed in the minds of gentry living in the reform era. As Thomas Bender has put it the "gentry claimed a special role for cultivation, not expertise. Hence, though the issues bear some relation to the twentieth century problem of professional expertise in a democracy, there is a difference. Culture is not a claim of technical knowledge. It is a general claim, even a claim of superior character. There is not even the pretense of defining the line that might separate the technical from the political." Thomas Bender, *New York Intellect: A History of Intellectual Life in New York City, from 1750 to the Beginnings of Our Own Time*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987) 174.

difficult the public business becomes, the more pressing the need of expert management; and soon any other management will be simply ruinous. Now, the experts needed are going to be trained in the American universities which....maintain at large centers of population well-equipped schools for all the learned and scientific professions.(italics mine)⁵³

When Eliot wrote this in 1886 he was not yet able to discern this deference to expertise in the American public. Perhaps this was due to the strong chords of populism in the nation at that time. But by 1910, Eliot was able to perceive a greater critical ability in the electorate as well as an increased sense of deference to the expert policy maker. In Eliot's view the country had become more able to

. . . observe correctly, accumulate masses of fact, and deduce a wise generalization . . . Not only is the number of persons capable of sound mental processes greatly increased, but men and women by the million have learned to understand the processes of the strong thinkers, and to welcome their results with a contagious enthusiasm. The expectation now common that the masses should think is a great tribute to the prompt effectiveness of popular education.⁵⁴

Despite this new-found respect for the intelligence of the electorate, Eliot never gave up his respect for expertise or his promotion of it. Eliot maintained a place for general education but he was at least as attuned to the need for expertise. More so than either Woodrow Wilson or Noah Porter, Charles Eliot was interested in adapting elite education to the material needs of a modernizing nation. It was precisely because of this sympathy for expertise that we find Eliot somewhat detached from the tradition of civic education which had traditionally espoused the virtues of general knowledge. This lack of regard for the civic is especially evident in three tendencies that are

⁵³ 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..

⁵⁴ Charles Eliot, *The Conflict Between Individualism and Collectivism in a Democracy*, 84-85.

associated in his promotion of expertise. These include his endorsement of technocracy, his unwillingness to question the cosmopolitan character of professional organizations, and his incessant exhortation to work hard in one's specialty regardless of whether this work was alienating or whether it provided enough leisure to partake in civic concerns.

Perhaps because of the strong pretexts for accepting and promoting the authority of experts, Eliot was never problematized his position or reflected on how expertise could also have inimical effects on the development of critical thinking in the electorate.⁵⁵ Eliot recognized, at least at one time, the importance of suffrage and political participation in stimulating the electorate to critical reflection.⁵⁶ But he was not predisposed to articulate how expertise might actually inhibit this participation or how it might dull the critical faculties of the electorate by consigning the enlightening debate which accompanies the broaching of ambiguous and problematic political issues to the exclusive perusal of experts and administrators. Since Eliot felt that he was working against the grain of the populists with respect to the problem of expertise, it is not surprising that he failed to publicly register the sort of threats which technocracy could impose on republican government. While Eliot was hardly the only

⁵⁵ Thomas Haskell makes the same observation about Thorstein Veblen and the Progressives: "Veblen was of course a prominent member of the Progressive generation, which....was extravagantly enthusiastic about the virtues of expertise....Veblen was only marginally more cautious than his contemporaries about the rosy prospects of a world run by experts. Thomas Haskell, ed., *The Authority of Experts* (Bloomington: Bloomington University Press, 1984) xviii-xix.

⁵⁶ Charles Eliot, "Some Reasons Why the American Republic May Endure," Originally published in the "Forum," 1894, *American Contributions to Civilization and Other Essays and Addresses* (New York: The Century Co., 1897) 50.

reformer to endorse expertise uncritically, it is notable that he had models of reform discourse available to him that offered up more qualified and cautious endorsements of expertise.⁵⁷ That Eliot did not ever express more cautious assessments of expertise points to his embrace of technocracy as well as his endorsement of specialization in education. Eliot promoted the public status of experts not only to bolster the status of Harvard but also because he sincerely wanted to see more experts appointed to office. But while he partook of the Progressive spirit, he was not inclined to think carefully

⁵⁷ Although Wilson had elitist proclivities, he was capable of just this sort of qualification of technocracy in his famous endorsement of "The Study of Administration". In endorsing the establishment of a corp of highly trained civil servants Wilson made sure to describe them as executors or administrators of public policy rather than creators of such: "...to fear the creation of a domineering, illiberal officialism as a result of the studies I am her proposing is to miss altogether the principle upon which I wish most to insist...Steady hearty allegiance to the policy of the government [the administrator] serve will constitute good behavior. That policy will have no taint of officialism about it. It will not be the creation of permanent officials, but of statesmen whose responsibility to public opinion will be direct and inevitable." Woodrow Wilson, "The Study of Administration," Originally written for *Political Science Quarterly*, June, 1887, Vol. 2, pp.197-222, *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 1 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1925) 152. Another reformer who was willing to question the role of expertise in government was voiced by Henry George as the 1890 American Social Science Convention in response to the less qualified endorsement of expertise put forward by E.R.A. Seligman. Seligman had argued that since "we bow down before the specialist in natural science, American's ought to do it as well when it came time to decide on economic issues, and that popular debate on economic policy should be passed over in favor of expert knowledge. Henry George however, was not happy with this. "Political economy" was not the same as the natural sciences. It was concerned with "phenomena [that] lie about us in our daily lives, and enter into our most important relations, and whose laws lie at bottom of questions we are called upon to settle with our votes." If these questions were not tackled by the laymen then democratic government would be "doomed to failure" as government would then fall into the hands of the "rich and learned". Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States*, 57, 134-135.

about whether the promotion of expertise could significantly or perhaps dangerously narrow the spectrum of the political.

If Eliot was not as completely attuned to the manner in which the civic sphere could be impoverished by technocracy, he was completely blind to what Thomas Bender has called the "centrifugal pull" of professionalization.⁵⁸ Professional organizations were communities that were increasingly cutting across regions. Their focus was national or even cosmopolitan in character rather than city or regional. So while these associations certainly helped in the establishment of trans-local community and critical dialogue, it was not a community or a dialogue that was explicitly meant to serve a city like Boston. Certainly it could be argued that this merely displaced the focus of politics from the local community to a national one. But the limits of redemptive citizenship and participatory democracy usually fall short of the national level. The chance to have one's voice heard and to have a tangible effect on public policy are far less likely the larger the community is. Without tangible evidence that civic participation has an impact, civic participation is bound to fall off. Eliot, however, never considered these potential ramifications and his unqualified endorsement of expertise only threatened to impoverish the local community in which the obligations and rewards of civic commitment and political participation were more likely to be felt.

While I have already elaborated many of the ways in which Eliot's endorsement of specialization threatened the civic sphere, this endorsement was also associated with his embrace of the work ethic which compromised his exhortation to civic commitment even more. In the Gilded Age, Eliot had been a proponent of

⁵⁸ Thomas Bender, *Intellect and Public Life: Essays on the Social History of Academic Intellectuals in the United States*, 57.

laissez faire and had maintained along with many other genteel, a basic faith in the salutary effects of an open market. Just as he upheld liberty in the curriculum, Eliot upheld freedom in the market. Although Eliot began to recant some of these libertarian sentiments with the advent of Progressivism, he is best known for his animosity toward union attempts to limit the work day and to create a "closed shop." Eliot refused to entertain laws that would set limits on the amount of hours a worker could be required to work. These sentiments became publicly known during a 1902 anti-union rally in Boston where Eliot expressed his disgruntlement with labor's displeasure with work:

There is another similar doctrine taught by trade-unions which also militates against right human development in the same way. Labor unions always seem to regard labor as a curse. They always try to limit the amount of labor. In Genesis labor is represented as a curse - 'In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread.' Now, we do not generally consider the labor unions as religious organizations, yet they seem to have swallowed that doctrine whole.⁵⁹

In a scathing critique of Eliot's views a reviewer wrote:

Eliot seems to imagine that the battle for a shorter day is a warfare against human development instead of a struggle for a fuller, truer, and better life. This position is so amazing, so incredible, that it is difficult to believe....To us it is one of the chief glories of trade-unionism that it has been able to reduce the hours in which a man is compelled to toil over one kind of work, with its wearying monotony - work that is frequently rendered soul-deadening in influence . . . We do not doubt that the great educator finds joy in his labor, nor do we question that he works hard and faithfully in meeting the many duties imposed by his responsible position; but his work is of a nature entirely unlike that of the mass of those he criticizes, in that it is not only performed under pleasant conditions and in a congenial atmosphere, but it is of such a character that the imagination is constantly fed, the brain stimulated as well as fatigued, while the body is not kept on a strain that produces constant weariness . . . let us suppose that P. Eliot should suddenly be overtaken by an adverse fate that compelled him to spend ten hours a day working in the coal mines . . . after his experience, unless I am very much mistaken in the measure of his manhood,

⁵⁹ B.O Flower, "President Eliot and Union Labor," Harvard University Archives Charles W. Eliot Collection, box 486, *The Arena*, 22 November 1902: 192-200.

the president of Harvard would be one of the most zealous advocates of the shorter day for manual workers.⁶⁰

By this point in his career Eliot had become the grand old man of the academy, a celebrity of sorts, who was acclaimed on the slightest pretext. Accustomed to accolades rather than criticism, one can speculate that these types of reactions must doubtless have had an effect on him. In any case, Eliot spent a great deal of time on this issue in his later years, corresponding with factory managers and lecturing and writing about labor conditions.

Unfortunately, these communications did not serve to enlighten Eliot very much. In spite of his research, and in spite of becoming aware of the narrow and repetitive tasks that industrial workers had to endure, he refused to acknowledge that this work or any other kind of work could be fundamentally alienating. As Daniel Rodgers has described it,

Eliot refused to discard the conviction that the key to happiness in work lay less in the job than in the state of mind of the worker . . . 'The notion that if one could only cut down or stop work one would be happy, is fit only for a lazy savage,' he insisted. What made a people civilized was their capacity for hard, steady work, 'day after day, and year after year.' He preached the same message as readily to his faculty as to workingmen, reminding them that "the common amusements of society have no charm for scholars" and that an evening at the theater was simply wasted.⁶¹

As Rodgers, saw it, Eliot was basically caught echoing the values of a pre-industrial era. Eliot was recalling a time when the concept of work really did have a redemptive meaning, when idleness and leisure were condemned because the key to a fulfilling life really did exist in the realm of production. Whether in enjoying the distinction of being a credentialed specialist, or in suffering the indignity of being a specialist on an

⁶⁰ B.O. Flower, "President Eliot and Union Labor." 192-200.

⁶¹ Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 238.

assembly line, as Eliot would have it, both types of specialists should work long hours in order to develop themselves properly.

In Eliot's vision, there was no place for leisure in the life of either the credentialed or non-credentialed specialist. And it is here that Eliot's attempt to endorse civic spirit rings hollow once again. For without leisure, there can be little considered reflection about issues outside the work place and without leisure there can be little time for civic or normative concerns.

In expressing the hopes of the Progressive Era, Eliot had maintained that the gentleman (whom he often associated with the professional) ought to be a "disinterested laborer in the service of others." Eliot wanted to create a noble caste that would devote itself to the social welfare.⁶² But what distinguished Eliot's gentleman from the more eclectic and dilettante character of many past gentleman was their mastery of a small portion of human knowledge. In Eliot's mind, the gentleman was a specialist and the specialist was a gentleman.

In erecting a professional ideal that was, in his mind, closely tied to civic commitment, Eliot was attempting to erect an antidote to the selfish and pecuniary oriented self of a market society dominated by acquisitive individualism. He was, in

⁶² This attempt to encourage professionals to think of themselves as a trustee of vital public interests is also evident elsewhere in Eliot's speeches. In a Paper delivered to the Harvard Medical Alumni Association, December 17, 1902, Eliot complemented his audience for their "love" for humanity: "I hope, gentlemen, you regard your calling as something sacred, something holy, something which lifts humanity, a little at a time, always upward towards purer, safer, more perfect living. It seems to me to be the missionary profession of the present day in every sense, - a profession which calls for self-devotion, for self-sacrifice, if you please, - the only kind of self-sacrifice which is justifiable, the kind which has behind it the motive of love." Charles W. Eliot, "Moral Quality of a Physician," Paper delivered to Harvard Medical Alumni Association, December 17, 1902, *Harvard Archives, Charles W. Eliot Collection, Box 335, Folder 120*.

effect, attempting to confer upon the professional the qualities that had previously been the purview of the gentleman. Instead of envisioning the expert as one who used his knowledge as capital, as means for personal gain, and who has very little public commitment, Eliot was trying to convince experts to see themselves as trustees of socially valuable knowledge. But this ideal mostly served to add to humans' material welfare rather than to political virtue.

As theorists who are sympathetic to republicanism have argued, market liberalism may contribute to humanity's store of material goods but it also serves to destroy the political, by directing people away from the sphere of normative and ethical concerns to a sphere dominated by the concerns of the market. Republicans like Aristotle have sought to maintain the sphere of the political by ensuring that some people have enough leisure to attend to the articulation and defense of principles. But in Eliot's vision these conditions were hardly met; the credentialed middle class, and the factory workers too, were kept working hard. They might serve as a balance wheel in democratic politics, but they did not serve as provocateurs who could spark agonistic debate because they did not have any energy left over for political activity. So while Eliot promoted (and conflated) the professional and the gentleman as the disinterested laborer who could counter one of the perfidies of capitalism, he did not really go far enough; the idealized specialist combats the selfishness of capitalism but cannot spend enough time in countering the market's destruction of political life.

Eliot's educational activism and his protracted tenure are testimony to the fact that he lived in a manner that accorded with his exhortation to labor hard and long. And yet, at least on one occasion Eliot found himself gratefully luxuriating in the leisure of his summer home without which he admitted, he would "hardly have more

time for reflection and real living than an operative in a cotton-mill."⁶³ But this fleeting acknowledgment does not give proper justice to the place or need for leisure in a republic. Instead of being so callous in this regard, Eliot might have done well to consider more carefully the words of Irving Babbitt, who as Harvard's self-proclaimed spokesman for the value of high culture, defended the political virtue inherent in leisure:

Some of the duties that Plato assigns to his ideal ruler would seem to belong in our own day to the higher institutions of learning. Our colleges and universities could render no greater service than to oppose to the worship of energy and the frantic eagerness for action an atmosphere of leisure and reflection . . . The industrial democracy of which President Eliot speaks will need to temper its joy in work with the joy in leisure if it is to be a democracy in which a civilized person would care to live. The tendency of an industrial democracy that took joy in work alone would be to live in a perpetual devil's Sabbath of whirling machinery, and call it progress . . . The serious advantage of our modern machinery is that it lightens the drudgery of the world and opens up the opportunities of leisure to more people than has hitherto been possible. We should not allow ourselves to be persuaded that the purpose of this machinery is merely to serve as point of departure for a still intenser activity . . . it is only by a more humane reflection that we can escape the penalties sure to be exacted from any country that tries to dispense in its national life with the principle of leisure.⁶⁴

Of course, one of the reasons that Eliot did not adopt Babbitt's arguments was to prevent students from taking up the habit of the so called "gentleman C".⁶⁵ Leisure, by itself might not have upset Eliot overmuch (after all, Eliot seemed to value it himself in his forays to Mt. Desert Island). But when the popular mind conflated leisure with idleness and with the lack of discipline of the dilettante, Eliot could ill afford to endorse it. Leisurely students jeopardized the public status of higher

⁶³ Daniel T. Rodgers, *The Work Ethic in Industrial America, 1850-1920*, 239.

⁶⁴ Irving Babbitt, "Academic Leisure," Introduction by Russell Kirk, *Literature and the American College* (Washington, D.C.: National Humanities Institute, 1986).

⁶⁵ Charles Eliot, "Emerson," 512-38.

education, the repute of which Eliot had so carefully attempted to build up in the face of strong public anti-intellectualism. Babbitt's politics came too close to confirming the public caricature of Harvard as a haven for a cultured effete who had been brought to their condition by too much idleness. So in order to get away from this, Eliot embraced work - but only at the cost of distancing himself from Babbitt's politics and the civic qualities inherent in it.

The irony of using Babbitt to unveil Eliot is that Babbitt was of an insufferable aristocratic temper. While one could hardly accuse Eliot of sharing Babbitt's pretensions, Babbitt certainly revealed the extent to which Eliot was willing to push specialization at the cost of wide civic participation. Eliot lauded the value of civic spirit in name, but in his inability to anticipate how professionalization served to break down parochial commitments, in his inattention to the possible impoverishment of the political by expertise, and in his antipathy to a leisured specialist, Eliot gives truth to the lie. Eliot forwarded specialization in a manner that imperiled the civic spirit in American democracy.

Wilson

In the spring of 1909, Woodrow Wilson was recruited to give the Harvard Phi Beta Kappa address around the time of the inaugural of President Lowell, Eliot's direct successor. Lowell had recruited Wilson precisely because he knew that Wilson shared an ambivalence about Eliot's reforms. In this capacity, Wilson served Lowell very well. Wilson acknowledged the achievements brought about by Eliot's forty year tenure but reserved some criticism by calling into question Eliot's elective system and the "extreme" thrust of educational reform:

No one need regret the breaking-up of the dead levels of the old college, the introduction and exaltation of modern studies, or the general quickening of life

which has made of our youngsters more manly fellows, if less docile pupils. There had come to be something rather narrow and dull and morbid, no doubt, about the old college before its day was over. If we gain our advances by excessive reactions and changes which change too much, we at least gain them, and should be careful not to lose the advantage of them. Nevertheless, the evident fact is, that we have now for a long generation devoted ourselves to promoting changes which have resulted in all but complete disorganization, and it is our plain and immediate duty to form our plans for reorganization. We must reexamine the college, reconceive it, reorganize it.⁶⁶

Like Eliot, Wilson was no die-hard devotee of the educational techniques of the old time college. But this did not mean that he was willing to adopt Eliot's innovations wholesale. While Wilson was not an educational reactionary, he was far more attuned than Eliot to the merits of general studies and the idea of inculcating breadth in the nation's most elite students. While commending the expansion and plurality of thought which was happening in the university, Wilson envisioned Princeton as a university that could integrate and unify knowledge by providing a vantage point from which to discern the connections between disparate disciplines:

The university must stand in the midst, where the roads of thought and knowledge interlace and cross, and, building upon some coin of vantage, command them all . . . We have gained immensely in knowledge but we have lost system . . . the plain fact is, that we have so spread and diversified the scheme of knowledge in our day that it has lost coherence. We have lost the threads of system in our teaching . . .⁶⁷

The vantage point would be imbued by providing students "breadth of vision" by which the student could "give their special studies wide rootage and nourishment".⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Woodrow Wilson, "The Spirit of Learning," Oration delivered before Phi Beta Kappa Chapter at Cambridge, Mass. July 1, 1909, *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers Publishers, 1925) 105..

⁶⁷ Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," 445.

⁶⁸ Woodrow Wilson, "Princeton for the Nation's Service," 445.

Wilson's affinity for erudition, and his unsparing willingness to support what he called "catholic" learning, sometimes led him to question the scientific spirit - especially when it was overspecialized. Although Wilson actually helped to improve scientific study during his administration at Princeton, he was tempted on occasion to associate scientific endeavor with the type of specialization and "narrowness" of perspective that irked him most. Particularly troubling, in Wilson's view, was the lack of "sympathy and adaptability" in many scientists. As Wilson saw it, men who had been "trained only in science" were "confined" not because they lacked knowledge but because they lacked "sympathy and adaptability". This inflexibility was due to a spirit and method that "rigorously" held scientists to "a single point of view" which was exacerbated the longer one submitted to it. Particularly troubling in Wilson's view was that in serving this ideal of methodical rigor, it became impossible for the scientist to "understand whereof other men speak"; he was especially prone to incomprehension when knowledge could not "be subjected to exact tests or modern standards." Against this "narrow pedantry" Wilson recalled the value of the humanities (which he associated with the study of literature) not only because they avoided science's tendency to give us "agnosticism in the realm of philosophy, scientific anarchism in the field of politics" but because the humanities offered a more "opened view of life."

Wilson's aversion to specialization and to scientific learning is well illustrated in his own attempts to write history and in his own experience as a history graduate student. As a student of Herbert Baxter Adams at Johns Hopkins, Wilson found himself ill at ease; experiencing the classic graduate student's malaise of having to read too much. Leisure time seemed to be at such a premium that he reiterated in a letter to his sister the complaint of a fellow student who had compared graduate students to

"the unhappy spirits in Dante's Inferno who rose to the surface of the burning lake only to be thrust under again by the forked weapons of the guarding demons."⁶⁹ Although Wilson was well-liked by his professors and was seen as a promising student, he did not take very well to the well-heralded methods of historical analysis that H.B. Adams was introducing to a first generation of domestically-trained professional historians. Where Adams described his seminar as an event that was transforming American historiography "from a nursery of dogma into a laboratory of scientific truth"⁷⁰, Wilson was nonplussed by Baxter's incessant attention to detail and his obsession with primary documents.⁷¹ Despite having an abiding interest in history, Wilson did not cave into the "fact fetish" that was so pervasive in the early years of the American historical profession. If Adams was interested in the facts and in the growth of the profession, Wilson, in keeping with the humanist regard for rhetoric and eloquence, was miffed at his professor's lack of attention to style and to their "perfunctory lecturing".⁷²

Although Wilson's formal training in history was confined to the Adam's seminar at John's Hopkins and to two classes he took as an undergraduate at Princeton, he did go on to write a few texts on American history that enjoyed wide popularity in his own time. But even in his writing, Wilson entertained his affection for elegant expression sometimes to the point that it cost him accuracy. Neither was Wilson

⁶⁹ Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years*, 106.

⁷⁰ Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 33.

⁷¹ Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years*, 107.

⁷² Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years*, 107.

inclined to strongly embrace the nineteenth-century professional historian's focus on the fact. There is little to suggest that Wilson did any original research when it came to history, and he was inclined to base all his arguments on previously published sources.⁷³ In keeping with his great affection for Burke, Wilson was constantly in search of the edifying phrase even when it may have compromised the accuracy of his presentation. Delivery and expression were key, without which fact would lead nowhere. If content remained important, it was only in the stylized presentation of this content that it could retain any power or persuasive force. For Wilson, history needed more than empirically minded research; it could only have any meaning when it was presented with artistry. In an essay entitled "On the Writing of History" which he wrote in 1895 for the *Century Magazine*, Wilson contended that "No inventory of items will even represent the truth: the fuller and more minute you make your inventory, the more will the truth be obscured." Against this attempt to merely collect facts under the auspices that the truth would somehow precipitate out by itself, Wilson proclaimed that "Only by art in all its variety can you depict as it is the various face of life..... [Truth] is a thing ideal, displayed by the just proportion of events, revealed in form and color, dumb till facts be set in syllables, articulated into words, put together into sentences, swung with proper tone and cadence."⁷⁴

What Wilson was demonstrating in his history was less an inept attempt to comply with the standards of an emerging historical profession that was hailing all the tenets of the objectivist creed,⁷⁵ and more an attempt to comply with a rhetorical

⁷³ Henry Wilkinson Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years*, 232.

⁷⁴ Woodrow Wilson, *Mere Literature*, 166.

⁷⁵ Although Novick calls this creed a "sprawling collection of assumptions attitudes, aspirations, and antipathies" its principal elements include "a commitment

practice that was left over from the early nineteenth century. Whereas in the beginning of the century rhetoric served to maintain moral and political norms, by the end of the century new types of rhetoric had been established that were concerned with maintaining the authority of expertise.⁷⁶ As a relic of a former rhetorical era, Wilson did not take to the austere style of his colleagues' speech, especially when it was

to the reality of the past, and to truth as correspondence to that reality; a sharp separation between knower and known, between fact and value, and above all, between history and fiction. Historical facts are seen as prior to and independent of interpretation: the value of an interpretation is judged by how well it accounts for the facts; if contradicted by the facts, it must be abandoned. Truth is one, not perspectival. Whatever patterns exist in history are "found", not "made". Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 1-2.

Although the objectivist creed was most strongly rooted in the nineteenth century, the modern biographer Henry Bragdon used it to condemn literary historians: "By modern standards, these men can all be found wanting in method, judgment, and rigor. All betrayed obvious bias. All had a Messianic urge to inspire their readers toward right views about their country, which warped their presentation....[Wilson's] persistent desire to edify partly accounts for a style that was often too rhetorical. Frequently the striking phrase or the colorful adjective either substituted for the facts or distorted them." William Bragdon, *Woodrow Wilson, the Academic Years*, 232-33. Bragdon's use of words like "distortion", "bias", and "rhetoric" suggest that Wilson's attraction to literary style sometimes tended to mystify the true character of the past - in short, Wilson was not complying with what Peter Novick, the historian of American historiography, has called the "objectivist creed."

⁷⁶ As Gregory Clark puts it in *Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth Century America*, "Rhetoric....functions as a means by which American communities were defined and maintained at the beginning of the century....rhetoric served mainly to establish and maintain coherent moral and political parameters for the new nation state. By the end of the century, rhetoric mostly had to do with establishing and maintaining efficient economic authority and the authority of expertise. Rhetoric has always functioned to persuade and to bind people to a common case, what changed was the cause to which people give their assent."

Oratorical Culture in Nineteenth-Century America: Transformations in the Theory and Practice of Rhetoric, ed. Gregory Clark, and S. Michael Halloran (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993).

practiced by, what he called, the "dribbler" speech and "perfunctory lecturing" of his Hopkins professors. Wilson may have used rhetorical flourishes that sometimes compromised the precision of his histories but they were less a lack of competence than a symptom of a greater disregard for the rhetorical practices of American professional historians. Whereas his history colleagues used prose in order to pay heed to the objectivist creed and in order to bolster the authority of their profession, Wilson sought to use his history to mold the historical consciousness of a nation.⁷⁷

If Wilson found fault with men of specialized abilities including scientists, philologists and professional historians, he was also troubled by the professionalizing and specializing tendencies inherent in the practice of law. The root of Wilson's feelings on this matter stem from his abandonment of a legal career. Wilson attended law school from 1879 to 1881 and even set up a small practice in Atlanta in 1882. But after only a year, Wilson decided that the law was not for him. Shortly after accepting a fellowship from Johns Hopkins in 1883, he confided, in a letter to a friend, that "I am unfit for practice." Expressing his disenchantment with the law, Wilson complained, "the atmosphere of the courts has proved very depressing to me. I cannot breathe

⁷⁷ As Miriam Brody has said in reference to post structuralist philosophy, "all language is ornamental [and] language is most deceptively ornamental when it least claims to be." Most professional historians may have claimed to use a plainer style of speech than Wilson's, but if language is itself an ornament that is added on top of a preexisting world, it is impossible to say that Wilson's language was rhetorical whereas professional language was not. To claim otherwise, to claim that one can merely reflect an underlying reality is to ignore how each style serves to construct the world and to channel power in its own way. Wilson's aversion to the "plainer" language of the specialist may have struck some as a tendency which jeopardized objective history, but if one does not embrace this "objectivist creed", Wilson's distaste for professional language signals instead, a concern with the values and authority of another community than that of professional history. Miriam Brody, *Gender, Rhetoric, and the Rise of Composition*.

freely nor smile readily in an atmosphere of broken promises, of wrecked estates, of neglected trusts, of unperformed duties, of crimes and of quarrels."

More important still, Wilson felt that the law was making him too specialized; "I find myself hardened and made *narrow* and cynical by seeing only the worst side of human nature . . . my dread is lest by any such influenced as I now find to surround legal practice, my mind should be made, to use a figure of 'Dad's,' like a needle, of one eye and a single point." In abandoning the practice of law, and in taking up what he saw as the broader study of history and politics at Johns Hopkins, Wilson hoped to find something that could appeal to his emotive and spiritual side

I throw away law reports for histories, and my mind runs after the solution of political, rather than of legal, problems, as if its keenest scent drew it after them by an unalterable instinct. My appetite is for general literature and my ambition is for writing . . . I feel as if . . . I could write something that men might delight to read, and which they would not readily let die. My eager impulse consequently, is to seek as broad a field of study as possible.⁷⁸

Wilson's reactions are not surprising given the changing nature of the law profession especially as they are described by William Johnson's book Schooled Lawyers: A Study in the Clash of Professional Cultures. As Johnson argues, the practice of American law had gone through a radical change with the development of law schools. Lawyers, who had originally been trained through apprenticeships were replaced by "schooled lawyers" who, trained as they were in institutions that increasingly stressed the practice of law as a value-free neutral science, saw the role of the lawyer . . . [as] one of guiding clients through the existing thicket of legal rules rather than raising substantive questions about the rules themselves." Against this new professional focus on the trained counselor, attendant only to the technicality of the law, the older unschooled lawyers more often saw themselves as advocates who

⁷⁸ Woodrow Wilson, *The Papers of Woodrow Wilson*. Vol. 2, 343.

"Operating more in the courtroom than the office, . . . eschewed legal technicality and were impatient with narrow legal logic. They used their skilled personal and professional judgment to articulate basic social and moral values as they made, not simply discovered, legal rules."⁷⁹ The new emphasis on the role of counselor rather than moral advocate prompted the development of greater technical competence and familiarity with legal precedent, but in Johnson's words, it "did not provide lawyers with the knowledge and skills necessary to define and shape broad questions of public policy."⁸⁰ In 1884, Wilson touched only tangentially on this theme in his grievance that his legal focus prevented any attention to politics. But by 1911, Wilson's lament over the lack of advocacy in the law becomes much more clearly defined. As Wilson observed, in an address before the Kentucky Bar Association, modern lawyers had become mere counselors:

The truth is that the technical training of the modern American lawyer, his professional prepossessions and his business involvements, impose limitations upon him and subject him to temptations which seriously stand in the way of his rendering the ideal service to society which is demanded by the true standards and canons of his profession. Modern business, in particular, with its huge and complicated processes, has tended to subordinate him, to make of him a servant, an instrument instead of a free adviser and a master of justice . . . the prepossessions of the modern lawyer are all in favour of his close identification with his clients. The lawyer deems himself in conscience bound to be contentious, to manoeuvre for every advantage, to contribute to his clients' benefit his skill in a difficult and hazardous game. He seldom thinks of himself as the advocate of society . . . He moves in the atmosphere of private rather than public service.⁸¹

⁷⁹ William R. Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers: A Study in the Clash of Professional Cultures* (New York: New York University Press, 1978) xvii.

⁸⁰ William R. Johnson, *Schooled Lawyers: A Study in the Clash of Professional Cultures*, xvii.

⁸¹ Woodrow Wilson, "The Lawyer in Politics," Address before the Kentucky Bar Association at Lexington, Kentucky, July 12, 1911, *College and State; Educational Literary and Political Papers (1875-1913)*, vol. 2 (New York: Harper and Brothers

If Wilson lamented this lack of civic orientation in the modern legal profession, he was equally troubled by the associated tendency of lawyers to specialize: "His business becomes more and more complicated and specialized. His studies and his services are apt to become more and more confined to some special field of law. He grows more and more a mere expert in the legal side of a certain class of great industrial or financial undertakings."⁸²

Against this increasing specialization, confinement, and lack of civic orientation, Wilson advocated that lawyers attempt to adopt a "non-professional" attitude as a way of more adeptly embracing a civic vision:

[the lawyer] . . . should have a non-professional attitude toward law....he should be more constantly conscious of his duties as a citizen than of his interests as a practitioner. . . It is his duty to see from the point of view of all sorts and conditions of men, of the men whom he is not directly serving as well as of those whom he is directly serving.⁸³

In voicing his troubles with the increasing specialization of the law, in his troubles with professional history, and in his disparagement of the spiritual vacuity and narrowness of science, Wilson was articulating a strong vigilance toward the dangers inherent in specialization.

* * * *

Many anti-civic tendencies that were inherent in Charles Eliot's views were not as visible in Porter or Wilson's pedagogical visions. Wilson harbored stronger suspicions of specialization than Eliot ever did. And if Porter did not share this same

Publishers, 1925) 313-14.

⁸² Woodrow Wilson, "The Lawyer in Politics," 314.

⁸³ Woodrow Wilson, "The Lawyer in Politics," 314.

degree of distrust, he was, along with Wilson, more appreciative of the need for a course of general studies that would be imparted to all undergraduates. While Porter spoke fondly of a college that would ensure that students learned of a "common repast," Wilson longed to use the college as a "coin of vantage" that could systematize "the scheme of knowledge that has lost coherence." Although Wilson and Porter refrained from stating their case in explicitly political terms, the political content precipitates out almost by itself. In instituting an elective system, they probably thought that Eliot had fallen into a liberal way of thinking on the university level. In liberal politics, the state is prevented from ascribing to any single vision of the good life. Because the state is considered fallible, liberals refuse to allow it to forward a single good that could orient, focus and clarify the aims of life. In tolerating all types of competing disciplines, Eliot prevented the university from acting as an entity which could provide clear and uncontrovertible perspectives on the universe. Instead of helping to unify human activity, the university refracted it even more. By providing every man with a seemingly endless array of perspectives by which to understand and orient his life, the university was less able to guide and discipline men according to a single standard. As the advent and tolerance of competing disciplines rendered the universe more complex and less fathomable by a single mind, the university became less and less able to provide a single set of standards by which to guide and discipline the minds of its students. An education devoted to developing generalists who could resolve or at least negotiate over conflicting intellectual and political perspectives by reference to a common body of knowledge gave way to a balkanized set of specialties which had no common language by which to attempt to resolve disputes with others.

As we shall see shortly, Porter and Wilson may not have conceived of their respective colleges as resources that should be made directly available to the many, but

in attempting to establish intellectual connections and associations, their educational model might have helped to establish the networks and communicative resources that facilitate the collective and coordinative needs of democracy. Eliot's liberal pluralism, on the other hand, was more inclined to value those dimensions of democracy that rest on tolerance. While his promotion of specialization may have helped to bolster the professional associations, it is questionable whether these fostered the same sort of civic engagement inherent in Porter and Wilson's less specialized vision.

In comparison to Eliot, Porter and Wilson retained stronger suspicions of the culture of professionalism: they realized the importance of generalized learning and upheld it even in the face of strong infrastructural needs for specialization.

While Wilson came into the Princeton presidency toward the end of Eliot's long administrative rule, Porter came in for an eighteen year stint during the early years of Eliot's tenure. In trying to cloister the college from too much pre-professionalism one might be inclined to class Porter as an antecedent genteel and Wilson as a full blown one. In Van Wyk Brooks caricature, these men were inclined to "divide practical life from the life of the mind"⁸⁴ and to use their high brow attitudes as a way of preserving some distance between "university ethics and business ethics....between American culture and American humour....between academic pedantry and pavement slang"⁸⁵ In Porter's accolades to Matthew Arnold, in his conception of the college as a crucible for the articulation and apprehension of moral

⁸⁴ *After the Genteel Tradition*, ed. Malcolm Cowley (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1936) 18.

⁸⁵ Van Wyk Brooks, *America's Coming-of-Age* (Garden City: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1958) 3.

law, Porter was acting like the genteel. Wilson too falls largely under this stereotype as Henry May has pointed out: "In his literary essay, of which he was particularly proud, there is no shade of departure from the conventional tone. Literature to Wilson was a refuge and an inspiration, a repository of the ancient verities rather than a subject for serious and critical study like politics. Wilson liked Arnold....and became a fervent, sincere champion of conventional literary culture against scientific innovation and popular patience."⁸⁶ These are stereotypes that Porter and Wilson cannot easily shirk off; in envisioning the college as an institution that did not readily cave into the demands of an expanding commercial society, Wilson and Porter strived, in a slight reworking of Van Wyk's words, "to divide practical life from the life of the college". Nevertheless, their gentility should not at the same time allow us to too easily dismiss the civic aims inherent in Wilson and Porter's educational philosophy. While Eliot's elective system may have helped to align the nations colleges to the specialized needs of a modern economy, it was Porter and Wilson who aspired more tenaciously to use the curriculum as a means for inculcating republican citizenship. Like Eliot, their efforts were ultimately compromised. But at least with respect to this particular threat to republican citizenship, they jeopardized their civic commitments less.

⁸⁶ Henry F. May, *The End of American Innocence* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959) 114.