The Lost Promise of Progressivism

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Progressive intellectuals and reformers were acutely aware that the success of their projects depended upon their ability to gain popular acceptance. Distrustful of governing institutions dominated by political parties and disdainful of the stilted and artificial language of the courts, they pursued two related options: to appeal directly to a broad public and to dominate institutions that had or could achieve popular acceptance and autonomous political influence. This latter task was to some extent automatically accomplished insofar as the Progressives were powerful across the entire complex of Protestant religious institutions (including their colleges and universities), in most of the women's organizations, and in the graduate divisions of those universities that increasingly defined, produced, and certified the emerging class of professionals. And insofar as their values and purposes were transmitted through the new national monthlies and weeklies, the Progressives were extremely well positioned to dominate the shaping of the public agenda and to define the terms by which that agenda was discussed.

Across this open vista, however, lay two major barriers. First, in nineteenth-century America the meaning of public opinion rested on the presumptions that it represented majority opinion and that majority opinion, in turn, meant the preponderance of individual preferences. Second, the institutional test of whether these conditions were met was assumed to be either the market or the electoral system—both of which were driven by the irreducible element of individual preference. Thus, the first task of the Progressives was to redefine the meaning of public and public opinion and to give opinion the legitimate power to act outside of the two arenas that so overwhelmingly privileged local, isolated, and individual choices. In this process, the concept of public opinion could be transformed from an authoritative register of prevailing individual preferences into an engine of social control and transformation. In short, public opinion could become the authoritative will of a democratic nation.
PUBLIC OPINION AS PUBLIC GOOD

The one point at which all Progressives seemed to agree was that public opinion did not represent simple and ad hoc majority preferences. "Public opinion," Charles Cooley's sociology textbook states, "is no mere aggregate of separate individual judgements. . . . It may be as different from the sum of what the individual could have thought out in separation as a ship built by a hundred men is from a hundred boats each built by one man." One can combine "a very slight regard for most of what passes as public opinion with much confidence in the soundness of an aroused, mature, organic social judgement." A resort to "the average theory as applied to public consciousness is wholly out of place" and is, in fact, confession of failure: "If a group does not function through its most competent instruments, it is simply because of imperfect organization" (Cooley, 1909, 121–25 passim).

Franklin Giddings's sociology textbook distinguishes public opinion as "a rational like-mindedness" from mere public belief, which is emotional and grounded in habit and tradition (Giddings, 1898, 155). Public opinion comes into being when shared beliefs are subjected to informed criticism, leading to "an opinion . . . to which many communicating minds can yield their rational assent." The formation of public opinion, then, "can exist only where men are in continual communication, and where they are free to express their real minds, without fear or constraint." Thus, in a democratic society the "social mind" consists of "combinations of traditions with new thoughts," and together they constitute the "standards, codes, policies, ideals, tastes, faiths [and] creeds" of that society. For Giddings, public opinion is by definition an engine of reform constantly transforming prevailing beliefs and practices. And because "public opinion is almost wholly an intellectual product," the real reformers are intellectuals—those who subject traditional beliefs and practices to critical scrutiny—and their allies—those who help to communicate that critique to larger audiences (Giddings, 1898, 155–57 and 160).

In a 1901 lecture at Berkeley, Arthur Hadley defined authentic public opinion as public sentiment, the basis of democratic government by consent. "Even the fact that a majority may be willing to vote for a measure does not provide that it has this basis [of public sentiment]. The desire may be simply the outcome of widespread personal interest . . . opinions which a man is prepared to maintain at another's cost, but not at his own" (Hadley, 1901, 25, 27). Hadley equates authentic public opinion with Rousseau's general will: it literally constitutes individuals into one sovereign people,
represented by a common public sentiment which includes all good men, minorities as well as majorities, who support the government not as a selfish means for the promotion of their own interest, but as a common heritage which they accept as loyal members of a body politic, in a spirit which makes them ready to bear its burdens as well as to enjoy its benefits.¹

Public opinion thus becomes "a judgment formed in accordance with the dictates of . . . political conscience, and represent[s] a theory which a man is prepared to apply against himself as well as against others" (Hadley, 1901, 28). Hadley explicitly contrasts this understanding to the conventional one in which artificial electoral majorities or the results of business success are said to be democratically legitimated. This false understanding flows from Americans having been taught "to regard business and politics as games, with no obligations profounder than the rules, and no authority higher than the umpire" (Hadley, 1901, 31). Cooley best expressed their shared conclusion: "In politics communication makes possible public opinion, which, when organized, is democracy" (Cooley, 1909, 85).

In translating public opinion into terms such as public sentiment (Hadley), public conscience (Hadley and Cooley), rational assent (Giddings), reflective consciousness and purpose (Cooley), public will (Cooley), social judgments (Giddings), or organic social judgment (Cooley), these writers were implicitly turning the concept into an institution of conscious social purpose. Edward Ross's influential textbook, Social Control, published at the turn of the century, made this connection most explicit. Public opinion is the first topic he discusses under the larger heading "The Means of [Social] Control." Here, public opinion becomes a three-sided "public judgement" (the sanctions of opinion), "public sentiment" (the sanctions of intercourse), and "public will" (the sanctions of violence). After reviewing its advantages as a means of control (flexible, penetrating, preventive, prompt, cheap) and its disadvantages (unclear, reactive, static, lacking memory, rarely unanimous), Ross concludes that public opinion can be shaped into a progressive agency of the "Social Will" with education, respect for limits, and "the ascendancy of the wise."²

1. Hadley, 1903, 35; see also Hadley, 1901, 139–40.
2. Ross, 1918, 89, 95, 97–100, and 101–3. The logic of this body of doctrine regarding public opinion reaches a kind of fulfillment in Croly, 1914, chap. 15, where authentic public opinion is to receive its highest expression in the autonomous political executive, now freed from the constraints of party-dominated legislatures and lawyer-dominated courts.
According to these writers, public opinion would (or should) increasingly supplant law and other forms of external coercion in society even as organized cooperation replaced market competition in an increasingly interdependent economy. This conclusion was reached from a variety of different directions. For Ross, under a regime of public opinion (''long . . . schooled to act in a particular way'') moral progress would be achieved because ''the contents of the social mind are morally superior to the contents of the ordinary individual mind'' (Ross, 1918, 365, 344). Functioning as a ''social religion,'' public opinion will constantly confirm and enforce higher ethical standards.

Hadley's formulation was an Americanist gloss of Rousseau. The conventional but false history of freedom stipulates the ''gradual passage of the human race from a system of authority to a system of liberty.'' A more accurate reading is that history ''represents a passage from a system of obligations imposed by the community to a system of self-imposed obligations.'' Freedom lies not outside the law, but in its spontaneous fulfillment in a socialized conscience. ''It is the ideal of a free community to give liberty wherever people are sufficiently advanced to use it in ways which shall benefit the public, instead of in ways which will promote their own pleasure at the public expense . . . and the most successful [i.e., progressive] communities . . . give freedom somewhat in advance of this ethical development.''

Ross termed the contrast between the rule by opinion and rule by law ''ethical'' versus ''political'' forms of control. Political forms of social control that operate through ''prejudice and fear'' are required in a society whose population is marked by ''antipathetic and jarring'' elements, where status and economic divisions are great and growing, and ''in proportion as the parasitic relation is maintained between races, classes, or sexes.'' Ethical instruments, ''being more mild, enlightening, and suasive'' are appropriate to societies with homogeneous races and cultures, where ''social contacts between all elements in the population are many and amicable'' and where ''the social constitution . . . conforms to common elementary notions of justice.''

3. Hadley, 1903, 74 and 82-83; see also Cooley, 1909, 403-4, on the relative merits and reach of ''public will'' versus ''government.''

4. Ross, 1918, 411-12; and see 106-25 on law. On the increasing power of opinion in a democratic society, Ross says: ''We are come to a time when ordinary men are scarcely aware of the coercion of public opinion, so used are they to follow it''
John Dewey, common ends not arrived at by "common, free voluntary cooperation in process of achievement" are common in name only, requiring "bribes of pleasure, threats of harm, use of force" [Dewey and Tufts, 1908, 304].

The Progressive editor and publicist Lyman Abbott carried this argument one step further. Full liberty is achieved only in a pure democracy of literal self-government, "that in which the best in each man controls the inferior in each man. . . . The object of all government is to destroy the necessity of any government, by developing such a public conscience that no other force than that of conscience will be needed to protect the rights of man" (Abbott, 1901, 99–100). As in Giddings and Ross, the formation and power of public opinion constitutes an index of the progress of democracy; and insofar as public opinion requires intellectual leadership and guidance, the prestige and power of Progressive intellectuals and their institutions were indices of the existence and growth of public opinion.

The more that public opinion was conceived as a form of public conscience and therefore a shared commitment to a common good, the more it took on the characteristics of a new national ideal of American democracy. Although the religious expression of this connection is obvious in the "kingdom" writings of the social gospel and among the early social scientists such as Commons, Ely, Ross, and Small, it received a less overtly Protestant religious formulation in the social psychology writings of Giddings and Cooley. And well after most of these ideas were encoded in college textbooks, Herbert Croly and John Dewey drew out more clearly some of the political and intellectual implications. In Croly, the "law" represents a form of "bondage to a mechanical conception of social causation . . . which assumed an essentially automatic harmony between individual and social interests." Genuine democracy, in contrast, is a faith which "carries with it the liberation of democracy from this class of social pseudo-knowledge." This shared faith "is indispensable to social progress" because it encourages skepticism toward legal-individualist solutions to social problems and because its democratic expression is grounded in pragmatism and modern social psychology (Croly, 1914, 175–77, 183).

It has been reserved for recent social psychologists to give a concrete account of the way social minds are formed, and conse-

[105]. About twenty years later, the reliance on the power of opinion over law becomes the concluding chapter in Croly's Progressive Democracy. There called "social education," its content and dissemination is in the liberal arts curriculum of the American university. Croly calls this opinion democratic "faith," but he does not go so far as to call the university its church (1914, 406–30).
quent to bring the idea of social minds into relation with the funda-
mental idea of society as a process . . . . Genuine individuality is
also essentially an idea which does not become of great value to
men and women except in a society which has already begun to ab-
stract and cherish a social ideal [wherein society] is an end in itself
and not merely a result of the harmony or the conflict of individ-
ual interests or wills. . . . The American nation is no longer to be
instructed as to its duty by the Law and the lawyers. It is to receive
its instruction as the result of a loyal attempt to realize in collec-
tive action and by virtue of the active exercise of popular political
authority its ideal of social justice.\(^5\)

John Dewey sought to explain why a reliance on commonly shared
values informed and shaped by collective experiences not only fur-
thered higher ethical and social ideals, but contributed to higher forms
of individual freedom. The externally coerced harmony produced by
law institutionalizes a false dualism of individual and society and pre-
vents the application of shared intelligence to the solution of common
problems. The agency of public opinion, in contrast, rests on the free
acceptance of shared purpose.

Only a voluntary preference for and interest in a social good is ca-
pable, otherwise than by coincidence or accident, of producing acts
which have a common good as their result . . . . [I]n truth a com-
mon end which is not made such by common, free voluntary coop-
eration in process of achievement is common in name only. . . . It
has to be continually buttressed by appeal to external, not volun-
tary, consideration; bribes of pleasure, threats of harm, use of
force. It has to be undone and done over.\(^6\)

Earlier, Cooley had maintained that the ethical self "is not less a self
for being ethical, but if anything more of a self, because it is a fuller,
more highly organized expression of personality." The social is not op-
posed to the individual; rather, "the right is the social as opposed to

5. Croly, 1914, 197–99 and 210. Croly saw this process of replacement as a sub-
stitution of "pragmatism" (faith) for an abstract "intellectualism" (law).
81, on Dewey in the larger context of American and European social theory;
Kuklick, 1985, 230–49, on the religious origins and dimensions of Dewey's concep-
tion of democracy; and Westbrook, 1991, 144–48 and 154–56, on the philosophical
basis of this argument.
the sensual.” Dewey linked these same ideas in order to demonstrate the emancipatory nature of public opinion for individuals.

Social influences enable an individual to realize the weight and import of the socially available and helpful manifestations of the tendencies of his own nature and to discriminate them from those which are socially harmful or useless. When the two conflict, the perception of the former is the recognition of duties as distinct from mere inclinations. . . . The conflict of duty and desire is thus an accompaniment of a growing self. . . . The phenomena of duty in all their forms are thus phenomena attendant upon the expansion of ends and the reconstruction of character. So far, accordingly, as the recognition of duty is capable of operating as a distinct reenforcing motive, it operates most effectively, not as an interest in duty, or law in the abstract, but as an interest in progress in the face of the obstacles found within character itself (Dewey and Tufts, 1908, 362–63).

FROM INFLUENCE TO LEADERSHIP

This stress on the internalization of common values and on the informal and spontaneous influence of opinion over the formal and conscious power of law might appear curious coming from those who were so concerned about the disorder and lawlessness they saw all around them. Although we will explore later some political and philosophical reasons for this emphasis, it is important to consider first some historical and institutional reasons. The political and religious culture from which these intellectuals came assumed that the “free institutions” of family, church, school, and township had traditionally held primary responsibility for creating the kinds of citizens required to sustain free government on a large and impersonal scale. Even after the early nine-

7. Cooley, 1902, 374 and 378; Patten, commenting on the need for family financial planning in the new industrial order, concluded: “This brings on a self-repression which is the essence of character building. The struggle for supremacy is now changed from a race and class struggle to an internal struggle for self-control” (1912, 339).

8. Discussion of these assumptions are found in Howe, 1990, 121–45; Stout, 1990, 62–76; and Bloch, 1990, 54–59. Lyman Beecher’s A Plea for the West (1835), although its main enemy is the danger of Catholicism in America, is the locus classicus of this assumption as a political-cultural appeal. The republication of
teenth-century disestablishment of the churches in New England, clergymen, both in their official roles as ministers and as college and university professors and presidents and in their quasi-official roles as public lecturers and moralists, served as the primary articulators and guardians of shared societal values. Whereas these clerical roles were no longer legally authoritative, throughout the antebellum period they remained officially powerful and unofficially influential through their domination of high literary culture and moral discourse. And even with the spread of sectarianism within Protestantism and the arrival of large numbers of Catholics, the residual power of this tradition continued after the Civil War, both through the older channels and in new ones dominated by Protestant clergymen and their lay allies—imaginative literature, the religious and secular periodical press, public school boards, moral reform organizations, the women's movements, and the new universities.8

In Ann Douglas's terms, this pre-Civil War shift in the ways in which cultural authority was exercised represented both a retreat and a "feminization." The shift from formal-legal "power" to informal "influence" especially typified the condition of northeastern and midwestern middle-class urban women whose families as institutions had lost their economic and social roles and who were themselves reduced to the privatized and isolated world of child rearing and consumption. In alliance with the eastern liberal clergy—who had also lost formal authority—these women then sought to regain their lost "official" power, but indirectly, through influence. Through the Sunday School movement, moral reform societies, and the writing of didactic short stories, novels, hymns, and poetry, these women and liberal churchmen dominated a powerful segment of moral discourse and spread a socialized and sentimentalized religion into popular culture.10

Beecher's book in 1977 was a striking symbol of how distanced liberal academics had become from the horizons of their Progressive forefathers: it is part of the "Anti-Movements in America Series" published by a New York Times company, which includes publications of the Ku Klux Klan, Joseph McCarthy, and a huge array of other anti-Catholic, anti-Asian, anti-Semitic, and anti-Communist writings. The main readers of Beecher's book were those who powered the abolitionist movement.

10. Douglas, 1988, chaps. 1–4. See especially her discussion of literary success in novels, 103–15, and periodicals, 227–34, and their domination of hymn writing, 217–20. Hofstadter, 1962, 172–96, uses this same gender imagery to contrast the Gilded Age reformer to the political boss, but then points to the new "masculine" image of Theodore Roosevelt, who also carried with him into the Progressive era the tough-minded, no-nonsense academic expert.
Progressive feminist writers translated the equation of law: power = opinion: influence directly into gender as part of their claim that full equality for women is a necessary part of evolutionary moral progress. Charlotte Perkins Gilman states the case most forcefully.

The coercive [sic] attitude is essentially male. In the ceaseless age-old struggle of sex combat he developed the desire to overcome, which is always stimulated by resistance; and in this later historic period of his supremacy, he further developed the habit of dominance and mastery. . . . The use of force is natural to the male; while as a human being he must needs legislate somewhat in the interests of the community, as a male being he sees no necessity for other enforcement than by penalty. . . . [T]he woman, the mother, is the first co-ordinator, legislator, administrator and executive. . . . Democratic government is no longer an exercise of arbitrary authority from those above, but is an organization for public service of the people themselves—or will be when it is really attained. In this change government ceases to be compulsion, and becomes agreement; law ceases to be authority and becomes co-ordination (Gilman, 1911, 180-85 passim).

Whereas Douglas tends to characterize this process as a retreat, invidiously contrasting it to the "real" (and thus masculine) worlds of party politics, economic development, and frontier revivals, a quite different reading of feminization is available in light of the abolitionist movement and the Civil War. Feminization as a realm of influence and feeling also carries forms of philosophical idealism, religious enthusiasm, and political romanticism that are hardly passive and often generate political movements that delegitimate and even destroy existing formal-legal political and economic institutions and practices. Indeed, major political transformations often require mobilization "out of doors" and the creation of new and counter social roles, cultures, and institutions. In these matters, nothing succeeds like success, so what might first appear as "feminine"—passive, indirect, outside the main channels of overt power—might suddenly become "masculine" in the form of new institutions of power. There was a close, even symbiotic, relationship between Uncle Tom's Cabin and Battle Hymn of the Republic—and both were penned by "sentimental" women.

FROM LEADERSHIP TO POWER

Feminists and clergymen were not the only ones to use these gendered images. Simon Patten's study of English moral philosophy in
terms of a social evolutionary and materialist interpretation is organized by gendered typologies. As he traces and periodizes English social, economic, and political history, he writes of the rise of Puritanism as "womanly," given its stress on the home and family, against Cavalier communal pleasures. Later, he speaks of the supersession of Puritan values by the "manly" virtues of Wesley and Adam Smith. Finally, in addressing the moral and economic philosophy of John Stuart Mill, Patten speaks of Mill's temperament and sympathies as "womanly," and his Benthamism as "manly," resulting in an intellectual achievement which was unsurpassed in Mill's day in combining historical and psychological concreteness (woman) with the power of abstract reasoning (man) (Patten, 1899, 123–24, 138–39, 251–74, 286–96, and 318–43). These images were not meant to "rank," but rather to portray a dialectic of thought and history. What Patten terms the "stalwarts" will represent the final synthesis of the opposing principles. The victory of their way of life "will make character a test of citizenship, will exalt women and womanly standards, and intensify the 'home' ideal," resulting in a synthesis of each quality in every person when a just society is finally achieved.11

Progressive intellectuals and publicists shared many biographical, institutional, cultural, and religious connections to Progressive feminists and to the earlier New England genteel tradition. As with Douglas's women and clergymen and later the Mugwumps, there was an abundance of self-deprecatory contrasts of raw men of wealth and power to genteel people of ideas and moral sensitivity.12 And there was often a parallel in the identification of their own claimed "powerlessness" with that of the direct victims of power—the laboring poor, the unemployed, the sharecropper, the tenement dweller.13 But just as Ann Douglas's writers and intellectuals gained real power and success (and often fame and wealth) by this very strategy so, too, did many Progressives, especially in the new or expanding universities. Thus, a kind of intellectual pride and moral elitism could ride easily with declarations of "powerlessness," and together could be declared a morally superior and more democratic form of authority in America.14 And as declared

11. Patten, 1899, 393 and see 394–98. Norton, 1986, interprets Puritan-Cavalier or North-South oppositions in exactly the reverse images. Whatever its plausibility, it makes both antebellum and postbellum women's movements in the North quite inexplicable.
12. Hofstadter, 1962, 188–96; Lasch, 1972, 44–55 and 80–99, uses these same gendered distinctions, but then condemns them all as finally unworthy.
13. This was especially true of those economists and sociologists who were closely tied to the social gospel movement, for example, Ely, Commons, and Small.
14. This same set of attitudes could also lead to conservative retreat, as in the
spokesmen of the great mass of the truly powerless and victimized in America, their own invisible influence would rightly increase in proportion to the achievement of social justice. As America increasingly democratized (or socialized, or moralized, or Christianized) its institutions and practices, the carriers of ethical influences would increasingly supplant the bearers of formal-legal authority and the holders of great wealth. The tie between feminism and Progressivism is here almost complete.\footnote{Discussed in chapter 6 below.}

This combination of humility and pride attached to the logic of "influence" was clearly embedded in discussions of social class and personal ascendancy found in the economics and sociology textbooks that came into wide use beginning in the 1890s. The most complete canvass of these themes is found in Cooley's discussion of social classes. After first distinguishing a rigid caste system from a more fluid class system, Cooley defends more open variants of systems of class differentiation typical of America because they provide outlets for social innovation and personal expression. Because "all organization is, properly, a means through which freedom is sought" so long as mobility is maintained within and between class organizations and so long as new forms of class organization can be created, these forms of differentiation and inequality will contribute to progress and justice (Cooley, 1909, 245).

Wealth gives disproportionate ascendancy to capitalists as a class but of a "pedestrian" kind, incapable of affecting "the profounder destinies of the race" and rarely accorded "enduring fame." Only because the man of wealth "goes attended by an invisible army of potential servants, ready to do for him anything that the law allows, and often more," can money buy real power; and when allied through corruption to "shrewd and unscrupulous political ambition," this power can become formidable and "truly perilous." Money can gain power over public sentiment partly by its visible and tangible marks of success and partly by the indirect power of wealth on some professionals, especially lawyers and newspaper publishers. Capitalists as a class, however, are not only internally divided between those wanting to consolidate privilege case of intellectuals in stagnant or declining areas of the country, for example, Boston. Thus, those who carried these traditions into the twentieth century were both more conservative and more radical than prevailing opinion. The most radical reading was given by Progressive feminists, some of whom combined claims of the superior moral natures of women with the powerlessness of those who live lives of atonement-victimization. Gilman, 1911, is the most comprehensive statement of this position.
and those needing to destroy extant forms to get rich themselves, they "are liable to moral deficiencies analogous to those of the conquerors and organizers of states[,] . . . a certain moral irresponsibility which is natural to those who have broken away from customary limitations and restraints" (Cooley, 1909, 268, 273, 259–60).

Real and lasting power is always "spiritual"—even the power that money can acquire. According to Cooley, "primary power goes for the most part unseen . . . much yielding only posthumous reputation and much . . . and perhaps the finest sort, having never any vulgar recognition whatever." Indeed, standing above his three-fold classification of classes based on occupation or profession, wealth, and culture and refinement is "the real upper class, that which is doing the most for the onward movement of human life [and] not to be discerned by a visible sign. The more inward or spiritual a trait is, the less it is dependent upon what are ordinarily understood as class distinctions" (Cooley, 1909, 265, 252).

The relationship between exalting the power of public opinion and asserting the influence of an unmarked and invisible spiritual elite was underlined in other writings as well. In Franklin Giddings’s textbook the organizing category of his sociology is like-mindedness. "The social mind is that sympathy and concurrent intelligence of the like-minded which results in common purposes and concerted acts" (Giddings, 1898, 128). Given this perspective, he can ignore at the start the external and formal marks of power in his analysis of class and leadership and stress inner qualities almost entirely. There are, he said, three types of classes in society, categorized by vitality, personality, and social consciousness. Vitality is largely biological, marked by levels of fertility, longevity, and energy; personality, by levels of inventive power and willingness to change; and social consciousness, by the reach of sympathy and depth of caring for others, marked by leadership, self-sacrifice, and philanthropy (Giddings, 1898, 105–10). Noteworthy in this classification is the complete absence of class divisions based on formal-legal position and wealth. More noteworthy is that Giddings, like Cooley, then posits a small group standing above and cutting across the upper reaches of these three divisions, called "the preeminent social class." Imagine, he says, the qualities of those who are simultaneously in the upper reaches of all three groups:

Small as it is in numbers, it accomplishes the greater part of those undertakings which, in their totality, we call progress. It gives to society the new inventions, the improvements in law, industry, art,
religion, and morals which make life richer in its achievements and larger in its possibilities.\textsuperscript{16}

As Giddings expands his description of this "true elite," two characteristics loom largest. The first is the requirement of "an enormous amount of knowledge" to put its intelligence to productive use, especially knowledge of society and its constituent elements. The second is that the "power" of this group is informal influence, consisting of its ability to set exemplary standards for others in society to imitate, to generate new and original ideas that are then used by those immediately below them to organize and direct society, and, last, to generate higher forms of beauty and happiness.\textsuperscript{17}

Feminist expressions of influence followed this same logic. Here the claim was that women qua women—at least those freed from the corruptions of power-seeking and male-dominated politics and economy—constituted a spiritual elite born of suffering and domestic servitude. Charlotte Gilman constructed an elaborate social-evolutionary anthropology to ground her conclusions, but its contemporary purchase was purely Progressive:

With the entrance of women upon full human life, a new principle comes into prominence; the principle of loving service. . . . The feminine attitude in life is wholly different. As a female she has merely to be herself and passively attract; neither to compete nor to pursue; as a mother her whole process is one of growth; first the development of the live child within her, and the wonderful nourishment from her own body; and then all the later cultivation to make the child grow; and all the watching, teaching, guarding, feeding. In none of this is

\textsuperscript{16} Giddings, 1898, 114. Toward the end of the book he concludes: "The stability of democracy thus depends, first, upon the acceptance of the many of guidance from those whose superiority is real because consisting in intellectual abilities and in moral character, not in artificial social distinctions or in pretentious claims; second, upon an unselfish activity on the part of the superior few. They must not only have the ability to plan and guide; but they must also put forth that ability, if need be at the sacrifice of their personal comfort and ambition" (321).

\textsuperscript{17} Giddings, 1898, 116–18. Lest one conclude that Giddings hid the power implications of this influence from himself and from his readers, note should be made of the conclusion of his next book, Democracy and Empire: "It would be a ludicrous ignorance of all scientific facts which should leave sympathy out of the inventory of manifestations of power. Not less are all the higher virtues—philanthropy, compassion, and forgiveness—manifestations of power. . . . It is only the men that have energy to spare who are normally altruistic. . . . The meek shall inherit the earth, not because they are meek, but because, taking one generation with another, it is only the mighty that are or can be meek, and because the mighty—if normally evolved—are also by differentiation meek" (1900, 351).
there either desire, combat, or self-expression (Gilman, 1911, 251-52).

Much of what Cooley and Giddings wrote regarding the relationship between the power of public opinion and the ascendancy of a new kind of elite was foreshadowed in a long series of articles by Ross, first published in 1896 and later collected into his book, Social Control. Though expressing traces of populist cynicism absent in these later books, Ross unravels the ways in which narrow groups can achieve control of society by controlling its opinions. Drawing heavily on ancient, medieval and modern European history, he gives the reader a rich catalogue of means by which some groups dominate others: ceremony, art, personality, religion, and illusion are examined in turn for their use and abuse as agencies of informal social control (Ross, 1918, chaps. 19–23). But inside this tale and determining its direction is a larger evolutionary theory of social and ethical progress. The genesis, selection, maintenance, and progress of 'ethical elements' in social control are all attributed to various elites at different periods of history. And when Ross gets to the contemporary period, cynicism disappears. Many groups, he says, have a personal stake in preserving the ethical gains a society has achieved at any given point, but they also have an equal and even stronger stake in resisting new and higher ethical standards as well. Only an 'ethical elite,' defined as 'those who have at heart the general welfare and know what kinds of conduct will promote this welfare,' can underwrite both ethics and ethical progress: "The other groups in the party of order . . . want order, any kind of order, while the elite stand for an order that is right, one that squares with their instincts of sympathy and fair play.' The contrast between this form of elite leadership and 'class control' could hardly be more striking. The former rests on 'special learning beyond the common ken' and lives within 'a tradition embodying the ethical elements that have been contributed by the prophets and elite of the past.' The latter is defined tersely as 'the exercise of power by a parasitic class in its own interest.'

MATERIAL PROGRESS AND HIGHER OPINION

Perhaps the most original explanation for the emergence of the power of opinion is found in the writings of Simon Patten, the Wharton School

economist well known even today for his innovative work in marginal utility theories of consumption (Dorfman, 1949, 182-88; Fox, 1967, 44-60). His wider influence lay in his theory relating economic changes to social forces and to social evolution. The foundation of this theory was the distinction he drew between a "pain" and "pleasure" economy, the former driven by scarcity and survival, the latter propelled forward by increasing abundance and more refined consumption choices. This materialist basis of his social theory would seem to have left little room for the role of intellectual elites, public moralists, and public opinion. But this was decidedly not the case. Following Lester Ward, Patten maintains that "the movement of a society to a more general environment lessens the dependence of its members upon the conditions of the objective [i.e., material] environment and increases their dependence upon the conditions of the subjective [i.e., mental] environment" (Patten, 1896, 55).

In the period of transition between a pain and a pleasure economy, the task of social theory is to "measure the influence of the forces of the pleasure economy toward which the race is tending, and see what effect the new conditions will have upon its ideals, impulses and institutions." This is best done by positing a hypothetical history of "normal progress" toward the social commonwealth of a pleasure economy and then measuring the institutional, intellectual, religious, and psychological barriers to its achievement. According to Patten, a Hobbesian world of law backed by fear of punishment and a Judeo-Christian God as ruler and punisher are the ideas appropriate to the older pain economy. These beliefs and forms now stand as barriers to the achievement of the social commonwealth. This is especially evident in the realm of the economic motives. With abundance, competitive motives necessary to insure survival in the older economy of scarcity come increasingly into conflict with the social bonds created by the increasingly interdependent economic networks. But because even these new economic bonds rest on "the more or less conscious calculus of utilities," without the development of larger social bonds "there would be no check to the actions of individuals when their interests conflicted with the welfare of the race." A regime of law premised on "the conscious calculations of individuals" must be subordinated in the emerging regime to shared collective ideas as "social bonds" first expressed through art, then through morality, and, at their highest, through religion.

19. Patten, 1896, 85, and extended discussion, 75-98; see also Patten, 1899, 144-57, on Hobbes, and 1-56, for an outline of this general theory.

20. Patten, 1896, 90 and 91-94. He concludes: "The citizens of [the future] social commonwealth would not understand what a state is if the word were used in
With Patten as with Cooley the religious beliefs appropriate for the coming age mirror the appropriate instruments of social control. Formal power and physical coercion are replaced by inner control enforced through shared ideas. The public moralist, the social scientist, and charity worker should all reflect the new image of Christ.

He comes not as the ruler of men, but as their servant. He has so little power that a corporal's guard can crucify Him. When men are transferred to a pleasure world, their evils are internal. They are their own foes. They want relief not from persecution, but from temptation. The concepts of a powerful God and of a future retribution are of little help. . . . They want rather a model for imitation, one who remains pure even though subject to the passions and temptations of men. . . . [Christ] is a better ideal because he is powerless and helpless. 21

In the coming era, "intelligence and self-control will be the great virtues" conveyed and spread through imitation and inspiration. Indeed, says Patten, this process is already evident in America. Everywhere one finds the development of higher "civic instincts," representing the standards or "type-producing forces" of those whose values are the vanguard ones for an economy of abundance. Those who meet these standards will flourish in the emerging order; those who do not, will perish. Whether the issue is work habits, consumption patterns (especially alcohol consumption), the use of leisure time, or the use of economic and political power, "when social co-operation becomes a requisite for survival [flourishing, progress], those persons against whom the civic instincts are aroused cannot remain a part of society. They must depend on their own exertions and these efforts are not sufficient to enable them to compete with those who are efficient parts of a society." 22 In this new environment, character and cooperation replaced cunning and combativeness as mechanisms of survival.

21. Patten, 1896, 80. Note the affinity of this image to that of the liberal clergy and women in Douglas, 1988, 121-64; and, for its use in abolitionist literature, see Walters, 1977, 54-69 and 91-110; see also Cooley, 1909, 377; Addams, 1902, 275-77; and Vida Scudder, 1898, 305-18, for similar imagery.

22. Patten, 1896, 107-8, 137, and 136. There is even indirect support for a feminization thesis here: "The struggle for existence is now determined by other quali-
As part of this coming regime of affluence and influence, the work of helping the weak and other victims of the remnants of the pain economy took on a new urgency and required new methods. In an influential series of lectures for the New York Charity Organization Society, Patten proposed a new ethic of charity appropriate for an economy of abundance. The leading motif was that charity should provide the means by which the standards of the larger society can spontaneously enter into the lives of the afflicted. "Character is acquired by example, not by blood; by the activities and amusements in the shop and street, not by restraints of church and home. . . . Social work has to do with the means of progress and not with its ends" [Patten, 1896, 215]. With the change from a pain to a pleasure economy, charity work, too, must change.

We encourage self-denial when we should encourage self-expression. We try to suppress vices when we should release virtues. We laud country life when we should strive for the improvement of cities. . . . We judge the poor by their family history when we should judge them by their latent powers. We impose penalties when we should offer rewards. We ask for the gratitude of the poor when we ought to point out their rights to them. . . . The aim of social work is democracy rather than culture; energy rather than virtue; health rather than income; efficiency rather than goodness; and social standards for all rather than genius and opportunity for the few.

In Patten's theory of the evolutionary progress from external coercion to internal influence, public opinion becomes something like a theory of appetites than appetite; and a new class of men gain the ascendancy, over whom the appetite has less control." Every increase of the food supply "allows men of weaker appetites to survive," and "[alcohol] abstainers will . . . gradually acquire a larger share of the land and capital of this country, and force the drinking-class into the less favored occupations. . . . The temperance people will increase in numbers and wealth until they are able to crowd out or suppress their opponents. The only question is whether drinkers shall be forced to reform, or gradually be crushed beneath the weight of their growing disadvantage" [Patten, 1889, 45 and 65].

23. The New Basis of Civilization, 1907. Edward T. Devine, one of Patten's students at Wharton and the most influential spokesmen of the "new" charity, borrowed heavily from Patten's ideas. See Boyer, 1978, 220–32; and Fox, 1967, 95–114.

24. Patten, 1907, 213. And, in the context of less advanced nations and races: "The characters of men improve, not by addition, but by differentiation. . . . Reform should . . . be directed toward helping the weak. The blocks to progress lie in the aggressions of the strong which prevent the weak from getting in the current of differentiation which evokes natural characters. A backward race does not have to be made over to fit it for civilization . . . the desired changes will come spontaneously if the initial evils are removed" [1903, 190]. Jane Addams [1902, chap. 2] made many of these "new charity" arguments earlier.
of the incarnation—a term he in fact uses to describe the processes by which higher types of ethical standards and ways of life supplant lower ones [Patten, 1899, 408]. And, as we have seen, these conflations of authentic public opinion into social conscience as the "Christ ideal" were both explicit and implicit in almost all of these writings. So, too, was an identity between the growth and power of public opinion, the growth of social intelligence, and the increasing prestige and power of exemplary groups and individuals. Moreover, insofar as public opinion as "social intelligence" took on the characteristics of a common faith and underwrote the growth of democracy, the values or content of this opinion became the measure of American identity and the political standard by which institutions and practices were measured. These shared perspectives should not blind us to some important disagreements. Progressive academic philosophers, sociologists, and economists differed over the meaning and operation of social knowledge and on the degree of activism and institutional power required of the vanguard of higher sentiments. They also disagreed over whether social knowledge, its creators and transmitters, were only indices and signs of moral progress—recorders of the progress of the spirit, as it were—or prophetic expression and witness to a higher religion and a more democratic social ethic. To take just the economists, Patten and John Bates Clark seemed to locate themselves more clearly in the former category, whereas Ely, Commons, and Ross seemed to belong in the latter.

Despite these differences, the poles separating them define the same axial principle and share the same social evolutionary assumptions. It is appropriate, then, to inquire of the entire group how they came to see themselves as qualified, both morally and intellectually, to define and articulate public opinion. What special qualities did they think they had that qualified them as members, or at least representatives, of an intellectual and moral elite? What warrants did they offer to back their claim that they were in a unique position to "see" what so many other Americans evidently failed to see concerning the causes of and solutions to America's political, economic, and moral troubles? What gave them motive and confidence to present themselves and their characteristic institutions to the larger public as exemplary of America's preferred future? On what basis could they claim to know the public good?

PUBLIC OPINION AND HIGHER LEARNING

I am . . . an aristocrat rather than a democrat; but when I use the word "aristocrat," I have in mind of course not a legal aristocracy, but a natural
aristocracy; not an aristocracy born for the enjoyment of special privilege, but an aristocracy which lives for the fulfillment of special service.

These words, written by Professor Ely of the University of Wisconsin in 1894, were part of his defense of academic freedom in response to the charge in the Nation that he was teaching socialism (Herbst, 1965, 172). With a ringing defense of academic freedom from the Board of Trustees of the university, helped in no small part by Ely’s personal standing in the state and among his professional colleagues, Ely’s claim prevailed. The self-proclaimed aristocrat could continue his fight for social democracy. More than twenty years later Ely would serve on the committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure of the newly founded American Association of University Professors. Of the fifteen members of the committee, eight had studied in Germany.

At the 1904 Congress of Arts and Sciences in St. Louis, held in conjunction with the World’s Fair, the world’s academic aristocracy in the arts and humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences met to share the results of their knowledge. Organized by Albion Small of Chicago and Hugo Munsterberg, a German teaching social psychology at Harvard, the program consisted of the presentation of more than three hundred scholarly papers. The nationalities of the presenters included 202 from America, 41 from Germany, 21 from Great Britain, and 17 from France. More strikingly, 106 of those not from Germany (mostly Americans) were German trained, including half of the social scientists and historians and more than three-fourths of the chemists. Among the social scientists giving papers in addition to Small were John Bates Clark, Richard Ely, Franklin Henry Giddings, Arthur Twining Hadley, Simon Patten, Edward Alsworth Ross, and Edwin Robert Anderson Seligman. All of these men except Giddings had studied in Germany, all were in their mid-forties through late fifties, all held professorships in well-established and highly respected universities in America and were recognized leaders of their respective disciplines and professional organizations. But their positions and the public recognition of their achievements were by no means foreordained. When these men and women began going to Germany to study in the 1870s, there were few or no academic positions in America corresponding to their specialized training. Indeed, many of those who went to Germany had

no intention of entering academic life on their return.\textsuperscript{26} Nor was government service a real option at this time. Why, then, did they go to Germany to study, and why did they often return to pursue graduate work at Johns Hopkins or Michigan or Chicago when the vast majority of American colleges and universities had no places for them that would do justice to their learning?

Three general answers suggest themselves. The first is that their intellectual curiosity and demands could not be met or met nearly so well in America as they could be in Germany. They went to Germany for self-development, defined as disciplined and specialized theoretical study. As early as the 1860s, Americans who studied in German universities returned to launch powerful critiques of American colleges and universities and strongly urged adoption or adaptations of German models.\textsuperscript{27} Thus, a second answer is that they studied in Germany to free themselves from what they saw as a confining intellectual atmosphere in America. Their critique of higher education broadened and blended into a critique of American intellectual and "spiritual" life generally, finally to become direct attacks on its leading political institutions and practices. And in so doing, a third answer emerges: study in Germany served as preparation for what Ely termed "the fulfillment of special service." This service was the cause of reforming—even redeeming—

\textsuperscript{26} The extent of their insecurity and the paucity of serious academic positions in America is well documented in Dorfman, 1949. This is especially evident in the case of Patten, who, after receiving his German Ph.D. in 1879, returned to live on his family farm in Illinois for four years, then served as a public school teacher for six before his appointment to Wharton in 1889 at the age of thirty-seven. James, the colleague at Wharton who rescued Patten, himself spent six years after receiving his German Ph.D. teaching in high schools in Illinois and free-lance writing (Dorfman, 1949, 160). For similar career shifts and job scarcities in Dorfman, see 162 (Ely), 276–77 (Commons), and 189–90 (Clark). Coats, 1968, 179–99, uses the life and career of Henry Carter Adams as a case study of the ambivalence of trained economists in this period, toward both their vocations and the American academic and intellectual environment they confronted. Among women such as Jane Adams and Florence Kelley, travel and study in Europe were undertaken with even more vocational uncertainty and did not include even the remote prospect of an academic career. This remained true for the first women graduate students in American universities until World War I; see Fitzpatrick, 1990.

\textsuperscript{27} Hofstadter and Smith, vol. 2, 1961, contains a good collection of these reform suggestions informed by German examples. The first (1890–91) volume of the \textit{Annals of the American Association of Political and Social Science}, 78–102 and 272–88, carried a complete listing of all public and private lectures and seminars in both public law and political economy in every German university for the coming semesters, prefaced with an aggregate summary of numbers in each academic rank and total hours taught per week in each of the specialized subfields. That same journal regularly carried professional notes, notices of publications, and other professional news from the law and relevant philosophy faculties in Germany.
Chapter Three

America. By the first decade of the twentieth century the connection between study in Germany and reform in America had become clear.

A comprehensive description of German university life written by an American academic was published in 1874. Based on the author's four years of study at three German universities in the mid-1860s and return visits in the early 1870s, it combines a narrative of his personal experience with a comparative analysis of German, American, and English higher education and German with American intellectual life generally. After devoting long sections to description and personal experiences, the author takes up the issue of the meaning of a university in Germany. Immediately he makes clear to the reader that the German university, no matter what its size and number of courses, differs in kind and not in degree from all of its American counterparts, from the smallest college to the largest university. Because of their shared intellectual purpose, each German university has equal standing with all other German universities; each "aims at theoretical knowledge and meets the requirements of free teaching (Lehrfreiheit) and free learning (Lernfreiheit)." These conditions result in a very clear demarcation of what should and should not be studied and taught. Because universities are freed from "the practical and the technical," they can pursue a wondrous array of subjects in all their depth and subtlety and in whatever directions free minds will lead. All practicing professionals in Germany have gone through these universities where they are taught the real foundations of their practice and learn alongside those who study for the sake of knowledge only. "Hence the perfect rapport that exists in Germany between the lawyer and the jurist, the pastor and the theologian, the practicing doctor and the speculative pathologist." The purpose of the university is knowledge itself, and "all its energies are directed [to] the development of great thinkers, men who will extend the boundaries of knowledge." In this sense, the university is a

28. Hart, 1874. James Morgan Hart (1839-1916) descended from mid-seventeenth-century New England ancestors, was from Princeton, completed his B.A. there, studied and received degrees in law and in philology in Germany, and taught modern languages and English literature at the University of Cincinnati, 1872-90, becoming professor of rhetoric and English philology at Cornell in 1890. The book was republished in 1878.

29. Hart, 1874, 250 and 258-59. The contrast to English universities is equally striking. The churchman Frederick Denison Maurice was recommended as a candidate for the Drummund Chair in political economy at Oxford in the 1830s. In a letter to a friend, Maurice agreed to stand in these words: "Finding there was no one else ready to come forward on this ground, that political economy is not the foundation of morals and politics, but must have them for its foundation or be worth nothing, I have consented to be proposed. . . . I shall of course endeavor to master the details of the subject" (quoted in Hilton, 1988, 47).
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self-sufficient corporation, above and apart from the needs, contingencies, and demands of the larger society. Recounting the ways in which graduate students, Privat-docenten, and professors freely circulate and rise within this enclosed university world, he concludes that the faculty "is thus a close corporation, a spiritual order" which is self-perpetuating [Hart, 1874, 257].

Given the weight and direction of this description, invidious comparison with American higher education—even at its best—inevitably follows.

How many of our college professors have been professors, and nothing else? How many have qualified themselves directly for the respective chairs which they occupy, by a life of special study? How many of them formed the resolve while still students, to lead a college life forever, to devote themselves exclusively to instructing others in turn . . . ? How few of the hundreds and thousands of men, from New York to San Francisco, calling themselves professors, can say with a comfortable degree of pride: I selected my specialty in youth, I have pursued it without intermission, without deviation ever since, and I have produced such and such tangible evidences of my industry as a specialist [Hart, 1874, 255].

On the heels of this general comparison, Hart makes a specific one between a small German university and his own American alma mater. In student numbers and setting, Marburg and Princeton are almost identical, but there the comparison ends. Marburg has almost four times the number of professors and tutors, divided into four distinct faculties teaching students who have chosen them and who have proven their preparation for and dedication to specialized study. Its students "pass three and four years of their life in generous devotion to study pure and simple, without casting a single forward glance to future 'business.'" Although he admits that some universities in America are now recruiting, training, and appointing

30. Hart, 1874, 252-53. Though he uses the term university in the singular, he makes clear that he means all collectively, both because of the constant circulation of students and faculty among them and because of the bonds of common purpose and standards within each discipline.

31. Hart, 1874, 258. And to make his point even more clearly, he says of Marburg: "its aim is not to turn out clever, pushing, ambitious graduates, but to engender culture" (257). The contrast in the position of the faculty is equally striking. Perhaps reflecting on some unpleasant experiences at Cincinnati, Hart idealizes his German counterpart in these words: "The [German] professor is not a teacher . . . He is not responsible for the success of his hearers . . . only for the quality of his instruction . . . The professor is his own master. His time is not wasted in cudgeling the wits of refractory or listless reciters. His temper is not ruffled by the freaks or the downright insults of mutinous youths" (264 and 267-68).
"energetic young men, enthusiastic in their vocation," America "is still indifferent, as a public. It is not aroused to the vital connection between the State and education in all its stages, highest as well as lowest" (Hart, 1874, 339-40).

But what has the "State" or politics to do with the quality of higher education in America? And why would reforming the American university be part of a larger political project? Hart makes an explicit connection between the individuality and freedom fostered in German universities and the disinterested devotion to self-development made possible by an ideal of professionalism as public service for the common good (Hart, 1874, 287-93). Are the shortcomings of American colleges and universities indicative of the absence of shared conceptions of public good and disinterested service on its behalf? Hart's proof that American colleges and universities have failed to embody high and disinterested intellectual standards is a political test—the failure of America to heed the call of Civil Service Reform, to elect better officeholders, to hold officials to high standards of conduct. But why this connection? Why the assumption that individual "emancipation" through disciplined study and self-development is of one piece with national social and political reform? His answer in the first instance is that America's low estimation of and even lower expectations put upon a college education simply reflect the larger fact that "the public does not perceive the importance of anything [that is] higher and more systematic." Indeed, American colleges often "exceed...the demands of their friends. They give more than is expected of them" (Hart, 1874, 339-40). A second answer is that the American dedication to the "practical" or the "useful," born of the pressures for individual success within a competitive business culture, corrupts both political and intellectual life.

32. This critique of American colleges was by no means original with Hart. Henry Tappan, who became president of the University of Michigan in 1852, explicitly compared German and American universities in a book in 1851. In the context of discussing a report on Brown University, he praises parts of it for its attempts to move somewhat toward a German model. However, one part of the report speaks of adapting the institution to "young men who are devoting themselves to the productive professions," that is, business careers. This adaptation, Tappan warns, would subvert the very idea of a university at the start. "Shall we not have a large commercial institution, which, instead of gathering around itself classical associations, and impressing us with the worth and dignity of scholarship, shall only give us the hum of preparation for the business life in the industrial and productive direction?...Students seeking after science and philosophy for their own sake, and dreaming of high mental cultivation and profound learning, will be rarely seen, we fear, when candidates for the 'productive professions' form the overwhelming majority and create the esprit de corps" (quoted from Hofstadter and Smith, 1961,
between a liberal education as "emancipation" from low ends and American higher education as a political and cultural redeemer of America. This connection became a litany chanted by the next generation of German-trained American academics and reached a crescendo in the Progressive Era that followed.\(^{33}\)

Thirty-five years after Hart's book was published and on the crest of a powerful wave of Progressive reforms, Herbert Croly repeated Hart's argument, but in the explicit contemporary context of reform. Economic and political life require "constructive regulation" in the form of "fruitful limitations on individual freedom" to provide a climate within which authentic individuality can flourish. In contrast, intellectual life in America requires much more individual freedom, not less. To reform economic and political life means to emancipate them from the more "stupefying and perverting" aspects of American intellectual tradition.\(^{34}\)

"The nation, like the individual, must go to school," but this school, consisting primarily of "experimental collective action aimed at the realization of collective purpose," requires teachers. Thus, a mutually sustaining relationship must be established between individual and collective intellectual emancipation. But where to start? How to break out of "a sterile and demoralizing Americanism—the Americanism of national irresponsibility and indiscriminate individualism" (Croly, 1909, 407, 426)?

Croly is aware that this process of emancipation and specialization was well on its way\(^{35}\) and that the competent individual does not "feel

\(^{1}:495-96\). As an ironic self-commentary, Hart ended his book with a series of "practical hints," not only regarding preparation in America before going to Germany, but in selecting courses of study there "with a knowledge of what the home-public will receive with favor" (Hart, 1874, 389).

\(^{33}\). And whose liberal echo was heard again as if for the first time in the late 1950s and early 1960s, symbolized by the success of Richard Hofstadter's *Anti-Intellectualism in American Life*, 1962, especially 233-52. Although this book did not seem all that different from critiques almost a century earlier, it received the Pulitzer Prize and went through eight printings or editions between its original publication in 1963 and 1974.

\(^{34}\). Croly, 1909, 421 and 424. At the start of this analysis he stated: "It is . . . essential to recognize that the individual American will never obtain a sufficiently complete chance of self-expression [freedom], until the American nation has earnestly undertaken and measurably achieved the realization of its collective purpose" (409). And see his earlier discussion of German nationality, 246-54.

\(^{35}\). Here it should be pointed out that Croly is simply wrong to assume that this "escape" from the confines of American exceptionalism by academics and intellectuals began in the 1870s and 1880s; this is the same mistake that Ross, 1991, makes concerning the origins of American social science. Two generations of American academics preceded the founders of American social science to Germany and for the same purposes (see discussion later in this chapter).
so much of an alien in his social surroundings as he did a generation or two ago.'" However, "his independence is still precarious" because it remains the political task to forge a clear connection between the discipline of self-development and the public good. The specialized and therefore emancipated individual needs to do what he has been doing, only more so, and with the conviction that thereby he is becoming not less but more of an American. His patriotism, instead of being something apart from his special work, should be absolutely identified therewith, because no matter how much the eminence of his personal achievement may temporarily divide him from his fellow-countrymen, he is, by attaining to such an eminence, helping in the most effectual possible way to build the only fitting habitation for a sincere democracy (Croly, 1909, 431).

FROM SECTARIAN CHURCHMEN TO PUBLIC PHILOSOPHERS

In one sense, Progressive academics and intellectuals did not need to be told by Croly in 1909 what they not only knew but had vigorously practiced in their lives and writings over the previous thirty years. And by so pointedly contrasting a future national regime inspirited by common values to the fragmented one then artificially held together by law, they also already knew that expert legal knowledge, crowned by constitutional law, was a powerful standing intellectual alternative for defining public doctrine. Moreover, along with Croly, these Progressives assumed that this intellectual tradition was both sterile and unfit to guide America to a more democratic future. That is why they were so energetic in founding graduate and professional schools and research degrees. Until those trained as lawyers first received the kind of emancipatory college education the Progressives were trained to give—which was not to become a regular practice until the late 1920s—the legal mind in America would remain about where it began in the mid-nineteenth century despite radically changed social, economic, and political conditions.

A second powerful standing alternative as a source of new and eman-

36. These same factors also help to explain why German-trained sociologists and political economists were so much more intellectually daring and theoretically creative than their counterparts in political science, a discipline in America historically bound to the Constitution and its articulation in constitutional law. See chapter 4 below.
Cipatory public doctrine was the educated churchman and Protestant theology. Here the relationship was more complex and interesting. So long as a handful of Protestant denominations dominated American religious life, and their theological schools and colleges defined the higher reaches of moral philosophy, there always existed a powerful alternative vision of America—one which, in today's language, embraced more "civic republican" than "liberal-individualist" values. And no better proof of the latent power of this de facto religious and moral establishment exists than the powerful critique of American life, symbolized by but not restricted to abolitionism, beginning in the 1830s and culminating in the Civil War. Insofar as Progressivism represented an attempt to recapture this spirit, its intellectual expression can be seen as a continuum of Protestant theology and moral philosophy. But insofar as Progressivism represented an attempt to transcend this earlier moment, its intellectual expression was in opposition to that theology and its moral philosophy. In either case and unlike their relationship to American legal and constitutional thought, Progressive intellectuals shared long-standing affinities to churchmen across almost every dimension that one might construct. This is why Richard Hofstadter could call academic reformers the "collateral heirs" of the New England clergy and compare the role of intellect during their ascendancy in colonial and early national America to that of the Progressives.

One connection that has not been explored, however, is the way in which "churchmen" provided direct role models for Progressive academics. In the area of academic training, for example, American churchmen discovered German universities well before the Civil War. A surprisingly large number of Unitarian, Congregational, and Presbyterian churchmen who taught in religion departments and theological schools from the mid-nineteenth century on had German training. To take the most notable example: from Yale University, which the founding presidents of Johns Hopkins (Daniel Coit Gilman), Cornell (Andrew Dickson White), and Chicago (William Rainey Harper) attended as undergraduates, the list of faculty and presidents who studied in Germany at midcentury, which includes most of the history, theology, linguistics, and philosophy faculty, is quite astonishing (Stevenson, 1986, Table 1, p. 36, and Bibliography, pp. 200–205).

This training not only profoundly affected the direction of American theology and its relationship to moral philosophy, it also constituted a

37. The book which encodes this opposition, but as a cri de coeur for the American soul, is Diggins, 1984.
38. Hofstadter, 1962, 220; and see also 55–116, on churchmen, and 172–213, on the link between academic reformers and Progressives.
model of the relationship between trained intellect and public doctrine in America. Three of these German-trained churchmen-faculty (Dwight, Porter, and Woolsey) became presidents of Yale and continually addressed public issues in their books and in periodical literature. Woolsey helped to found the New Englander, a highly respected journal that bridged the intellectual worlds of churchman and philosopher and provided the major vehicle for addressing public issues at the highest level. Two others in this group, Fisher and Porter, also served in administrative and editorial capacities, with Fisher later helping to establish the Yale Review.

The academic model exemplified by Yale was not unique. Harvard Divinity School, under the leadership of Charles Everett during the last quarter of the nineteenth century, had a faculty of six professors, five of whom had studied in Germany beginning in the 1850s (Herbst, 1965, 93–94). The editors of the three leading American theological journals at midcentury had also received German university training: Charles Hodge, Princeton Review [editor, 1825–71] studied in Germany in the mid-1820s; Edwards Amasa Park, Bibliotheca Sacra, published by Andover Seminary and then Oberlin [editor, 1844–83], in the early 1840s; and Henry Boynton Smith, American Presbyterian Review, published by Union Seminary [editor, 1859–71] (Kuklick, 1985, 203–15). The Andover Review, although not part of this German-trained editorial oligarchy, was also a major vehicle for German philosophy and historical criticism. Those who later became Progressive academics had before them, in full view as it were, models of training, scholarship, publication, teaching, and public roles in the liberal Protestant churchmen who immediately preceded and overlapped them.

By 1900 these churchmen had been integrating German historical scholarship and German philosophy into American religion and moral philosophy for more than sixty years. Equally noteworthy is that just as Progressive social theorists were coming to the fore as articulators of public doctrine, churchmen suddenly began to disappear from the first ranks of American intellectual life. It was as if the pool of replacements to succeed them suddenly dried up, leaving successors who were no longer leaders in American thought at its highest levels. Very quickly and just as the German-trained social scientists were becoming "public" men, the successor churchmen were becoming "private," that is, increasingly confining their audience to their own denominations and no longer presuming to write for and to instruct the nation. Indicative of this retreat were the fortunes of their leading journals, which, from the 1840s onward, had published most of the sophisticated philosophical writing in America. First to fall was the American Presbyterian Review in 1871, absorbed by the Princeton Review, which in turn folded
in 1888. Then, in three successive years starting in 1891, three more prominent journals ceased publication, *Unitarian Review*, the *New Englander* and the *Andover Review.*

That churchmen as academics and intellectuals were the primary models available to the Progressives has a number of important implications. Although this is not the place to retrace their intellectual affinities, it is important to note that it was German idealism and philosophy of history that were initially responsible for transforming American theology. And in so doing, the older millennial/national themes in American Protestantism became increasingly merged into theories of social evolution. Put differently, Hegel was the framework within which "Darwinism" was incorporated into religious thought, and German historicism was the means by which God's spirit was charted in both church and society. On this reading—and here the evidence in Progressive writings is simply overwhelming—the social gospel was both the fulfillment and the death knell for academic theology as the highest expression of American thought. Its denominational

39. Despite this early demise, both John Bates Clark and Henry Carter Adams managed to publish in the *New Englander*, and John Dewey, Richard Ely, Arthur Hadley, Edmund James, and Vida Scudder published in the *Andover Review*. The demise of these theological journals in the East was partly offset by the formation of new ones in the Midwest—signaling both a regional and a denominational shift of influence. William Rainey Harper, president of the University of Chicago, founded and edited *Bible World* in 1893, and four years later, faculty at the Chicago Divinity School started the *American Journal of Theology*. These journals, however, never attained the influence and academic respect of those that had ceased publication. In 1900 the Disciples of Christ began what later became a very influential religious weekly, the *Christian Century* (Mott, 1957, 1: 301).

40. Kuklick, 1985, and Stevenson, 1986, are two excellent and detailed studies. Herbst, 1965, is an earlier study of the influence particularly of German historical thinking. Two older textbooks, Schneider, 1946, on the history of American philosophy and Gabriel, 1956, on the course of American democratic thought, remain the most richly documented and comprehensive studies of the ways in which articulate theological argument provided the primary means by which new modes of thought were received in America.

41. For expressions of the exhaustion of theology and of "creeds" for the furtherance of democratic values, see Cooley, Commons, Ely, Patten, Ross, Small, and also the social gospel writers themselves, especially Washington Gladden and Walter Rauschenbusch. For a late example of the latter, see Rauschenbusch's last book, *Theology for the Social Gospel*, from a lecture series in 1917, especially "The Social Gospel and Personal Salvation" (chap. 10) and "The Social Gospel and the Atonement" (chap. 19). Another factor is that the denominational framework for this theology represented an ever decreasing proportion of American Protestantism and American religion generally. Discussion of some of the implications of this merging of religious modernism and academia in America is found in George M. Marsden, "Preachers of Paradox: the Religious New Right in Historical Perspective," and Edwin Scott Gaustad, "Did the Fundamentalists Win?", both in Douglas and Tipton, 1982.
and church framework, the tendency toward internecine battle, and the inner logic of theological speculation itself combined to direct this demise. Social gospel clergymen contributed to this passage insofar as they read the church out of any unique institutional role in the achievement of the Kingdom and merged the gospel into sociology with hardly any doctrinal theology in between.42

The quick passage of John Dewey from the world of churchman to that of philosopher is both exemplary and causal. He most clearly pointed out how democracy and the methods of democracy themselves fulfilled the ends of a religious commonwealth.43 Religion as creed and individual salvation were replaced, respectively, by democratic faith and democratic citizenship. But this passage was made possible only because those Americans who studied in Germany viewed the disinterested pursuit of knowledge as personally and socially transformative and the university as the redemptive engine of this transformation. Perhaps the best symbolic admission of this changing of the guard was in 1894, when the one surviving theological journal, Oberlin's Bibliotheca Sacra, added a subtitle: A Religious and Sociological Quarterly.

This same replacement of "churchmen" by "philosophers" also represents a more ambiguous kind of transferral. As legatees as much as conquerors, there was a decided blurring of roles. Just as the church pulpit was also a public lectern, so the university lectern became a public pulpit. The social gospel transition worked both ways, sacralizing sociology and philosophy and maintaining a powerful religious element in American public doctrine and national identity. In this sense, it is not at all clear who was a churchman and who a philosopher—whether Richard Ely or Jane Addams, for example, were less "religious" figures than clergymen George Herron or W. D. P. Bliss. All were quite consciously "public moralists" who worked through the variety of institutions and venues to fulfill their common redemptive vocations. Nor is at all clear whether liberal Protestant theology as the democratic "Religion of America" is a secularization or an indirect hegemonic conquest by Protestant theology now restated as public doctrine through academic social science and philosophy. That American Protestantism split down the middle precisely when the Progressive aca-

42. Herron, 1894, 8: "I would save the church from the false position of existing and working for its own glory and religious aggrandizement, from the fatal Jewish position of seeking to bring the world under the dominion of itself, and speak some word that would help to convert it to the Christian pursuit of sacrificing itself for the world." And "Jesus Christ offers sociology the only scientific ground of discovering all the facts and forces of life. That ground is his revelation of universal unity. . . . Sociology and theology will ultimately be one science" (23 and 32).
demics became the chief beneficiaries of theological "modernism"—occupying all the strategic institutional positions previously held by liberal churchmen—may only indicate that religious modernism, in conquering new and valuable territory, was forced to yield some less valuable assets, namely, those denominations or religious factions that retreated from the task of reforming and perhaps even "reconstituting" America. Beginning around World War I, members of what later came to be called "fundamentalist" churches were increasingly consigned to the cultural equivalent of resident alien status. But it was modernized evangelical theology and the new social sciences and not secular liberalism that drew up the expulsion orders.

However this issue of transfer from churchman to philosopher is understood it is clear that Progressive intellectuals and earlier churchmen, as public moralists, shared a common audience, a common set of enemies, and a common view of their own political and intellectual importance. And both groups believed that their strategic advantage lay in their ability to see America from a comprehensive view, their capacity to raise issues and offer solutions that their intellectual competitors, whether jurists or party spokesmen, could not or would not address. But the Progressives, both as social theorists and as secular academics in a new kind of American university, were compelled to address their competitors more directly than had their churchmen predecessors. As more direct competitors for institutional political power (e.g., expert bureaucracy) and as intellectual underwriters and publicists for institutional reforms across every area of American political and economic life, they, unlike the churchmen, had to engage in direct combat with jurists and with partisan carriers of American political tradition. Although they did not always avoid "the narcissism of powerless moral superiority" that sometimes characterized the pose of both churchmen and especially their female moral reform allies toward political and economic power, the Progressives often vigorously asserted their claims of moral and intellectual superiority over more traditional forms of political and legal thought in America. And to make those claims prevail—or at least directly competitive—they had to address this body of thought much more directly than had their clerical forefathers.

44. Even the great land-grant universities were initially headed by churchmen—Henry P. Tappan at Michigan and John Bascom at Wisconsin, for example—or by those who were active participants in modernist movements in theology, for example, Andrew Dickson White at Cornell.