"Harvard, We Have a Problem": Santayana and the New University

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In 1940, George Santayana looked back on his forty years in America, and remarked morbidly: "If I had been free to choose, I should not have lived there, or been educated there, or taught philosophy there or anywhere else."[1] He had come to Harvard in 1882 when it was in the middle of its most dynamic transformation; he succeeded both academically and socially as an undergraduate, and, in the company of William James and Josiah Royce, he became one of the most prominent and well-recognized participants in perhaps the greatest department of philosophy that ever existed.

Yet Santayana found something horribly wrong with the changing University. He worried that the mass movement towards practicality and specialization, which he equated with President Charles William Eliot's attempts to make Harvard a nationally-recognized institution, was draining the university of the aestheticism and humanism that had made higher education worth pursuing. He saw in Harvard's atmosphere of excessive materialism and utilitarianism an ailment of American society as a whole, an ugly new trend that had separated the national "will" from imagination, and rendered the intellect irrelevant. Unlike most other critics of the new university, the academic and cultural environment was so intolerable to Santayana that he decided to escape it altogether. He left for Europe in 1912, and although he would continue to write about America until his death in 1952, not once did he return.

Academia is still not at rest. The public's widespread admiration for higher education once prevalent in the postwar era has begun to reverse itself, and between harsh budget cuts on the one hand and Alan Bloom's vicious denunciation of the university on the other, the future of higher learning in America may look as bleak to the prospective graduate student as it ever has in recent history. Crisis, however, is nothing new to the American university, and Bloom is not the first to warn of the "collapse of the entire American educational structure,"[2] which, at last observation, was still standing.

The very revolution in education that gave the university its modern, recognizable form found itself confronting similar forecasts of gloom and doom at the turn of the century. Along with the adoption of the free elective system and specialization of knowledge that came to be the staples of higher learning there emerged a small but vocal force determined to curtail the excesses of utilitarianism and abstract research. Known as the "advocates of liberal culture," these men reacted to an institution they believed had lost its sense of purpose, and their opposition, like today's, was testament to the growing and deeply felt fragmentation of the university.

George Santayana was not at the forefront of this opposition. He was warm neither to Josiah Royce's optimistic Hegelian idealism nor to Abraham Flexner's call for colleges to meet the "social need." As a professor he never attempted to lead a movement against the forces that had rendered aesthetic beauty subordinate to the new ideals of utilitarianism and materialism. Yet the figure of George Santayana has come to define the criticisms of the emerging American university at the time and place where the university was changing the most.

Charles William Eliot's Harvard led the revolution in higher education, and Santayana's thirty-year stay at the university has given historians a first-hand look into the most fundamental changes ever to occur in the institution. He was not only at the center of this educational revolution as both a student and faculty member, but he was also keenly observant in articulating what the consequences of such a transformation might be. A close examination of Santayana's life, his philosophy, his academic criticism, and what others made of his dissension reveals not only what the university's critics believed was being lost, but also why it became increasingly improbable that such critics would ever be reconciled. Furthermore, the academic experiences of Santayana offer a stunning look at how the relationship between the university and the individual dissenter--whether it be the misunderstood genius or the cultural rebel--changed in accordance to transformations in the social structures of both student life and faculty politics. Finally, Santayana's own flawed but often brilliant take on the university reveals some of the most insightful views into the foundations of American intellectual tradition itself.

Unfortunately, Santayana was as much a brilliant myth-maker as he was an illuminating writer. He died in 1952, but even if he were alive today, he would doubtlessly do everything he could to dupe historians, admirers, and probably his own biographers into believing he had been a cultural loner since birth. The two autobiographies that he completed when he was eighty years-old--*Persons and Places* and *The Middle Span*--do not in themselves accurately explain why he came to feel so alienated from the academic community. If his personal accounts are taken at face value, Santayana was destined to be a solitary dissenter in whatever social context he might find himself. "The limitations of my Americanism are easily told," he wrote in 1940, going on to explain:

> I have no American or English blood; I was not born in the United States; I have never become an American citizen; as soon as I was my own master I spent every free winter and almost every summer in Europe; I never married or kept house or expected to end my days in America. This sense of belonging elsewhere, or rather not belonging to where I lived, was nothing anamalous or unpleasant to me but, as it were, hereditary."[3]

This is not to say that his autobiographical sketches fail to offer valuable insight into his unique view of the world, but rather that the elderly Santayana re-conceptualized his own experiences to square with his later philosophy.

Santayana's "Spaniard-ness," of course, was not totally irrelevant to his detachment. In the history of influential thinkers it would not be surprising that Santayana felt culturally alienated even before he began his academic career. From John Winthrop's puritanical mission to erect a utopian "city upon a hill" to Jack Kerouac's beatnik reaction against mainstream society, some of the most dynamic currents in American intellectual thought have been as much rooted in dissent from a dominant culture as they have been reflective of widely accepted ideology.

In Santayana's case, his autobiography describes him as a product of an unstable marriage, a native Spaniard transported in later childhood to American shores and burdened with the heavy pessimism and emotional detachment of his mother. Indeed, a brief look at Santayana's early childhood reveals constant transition and insecurity. Born in 1863 into a deteriorating household in Madrid, Santayana

spent his first nine years in Spain before coming to America. His mother, Dona Josefina Borras, was a native of Glasgow who had married George Sturgis of Boston in 1849. In 1862, six years following Sturgis's death and in the midst of raising three children, Borras married Don Agustin Ruiz de Santayana, a native Spaniard and member of the Spanish civil service. Yet since the Sturgis family of Boston occupied a higher social standing than Santayana's in Spain, in 1866 the dominating but despairing Dona Josefina left three-year old Santayana with his father and moved to Boston to raise her other children and earn a better living for the family. The temporary split between Josefina and her second husband became a permanent one; when Agustin brought his son to Boston in 1872, Josefina refused to return to Spain and her husband returned alone. Thus after having lived in two crumbling households, the nine year-old Santayana settled with his mother in Boston where he would spend most of his next forty years. Under the tutelage of his twenty-one year-old half-sister Susana, he began to learn English with astonishing speed. His uprooted adolescence, said Santayana, made him a product of two different worlds; in the homogenous community of upperclass Bostonians, he was unique: a "child born in Spain of Spanish parents" who came "to be educated in Boston and to write in the English language."4

Santayana described how his broken childhood and his mother's passivity left an indelible mark on the young thinker. Pointing to the death of his mother's first-born child as the source of fundamental despair and deterioration of her once-happy marriage, Santayana portrayed his mother as a source of coldness and emotional indifference:

> With my mother this event was crucial. It made a radical revolution in her heart. It established there a reign of silent despair, permanent, devastating, ruffled perhaps by fresh events on the surface, but always dark and heavy beneath, like the depths of the sea. Her husband, with his sanguine disposition and American optimism, couldn't understand it.5

Drawing a line to his own mid-life crisis at the age of thirty, Santayana conceded that he "underwent a similar transformation." Concluding that external events went beyond his control, he thus attempted to create a philosophy that justified passivity.6 In his near-psychoanalysis of Santayana, Bruce Kuklick suggests that in this passage the eighty-year-old philosopher exaggerated his mother's influence to offer a concrete explanation for his own mid-life crisis, pointing out that leaving a husband and moving to a new country are hardly acts of "passivity."7 Yet at the same time Santayana had been exposed to a world in which life-determining events seemed to be fundamentally out of human control, and if this upbringing differed from that of the usual Harvard undergraduate, it was further accentuated by his financial standing and unprestigious public school education.

His mother's connections to the Sturgis family kept the household income far above the impoverished conditions of most of the city's Irish Catholics, but it languished far beneath the comfortable level of Santayana's Harvard colleagues. Accordingly, Santayana's mother could not afford to send him to a private preparatory school, and between public education and polarizing cultural allegiances, Santayana described an environment seemingly destined to turn any immigrant into a solitary dissenter:

> This education in a public day school, among children of humble parents fortified me in the spirit of detachment and isolation. Not that the most luxurious of American surroundings--such as I afterwards had some contact with--would ever have made an American of me. America in those days made an exile and a foreigner of every native who had a temperament at all like mine.8

Furthermore, he recalled that his affinity towards his native religion seemed out of place in his new and traditionally Calvinist surroundings. The exact nature of Santayana's religion itself was ambiguous because he routinely identified himself as a Catholic and yet never seemed to adhere to any of the fundamental teaching of the Church. Noting that he never had any "unquestioning faith in any dogma," he explained that his religion was a "matter of sympathy and traditional allegiance, not of philosophy."[9]

This kind of balancing act between the life he imagined to have come from and the one he subsequently confronted put the young Santayana in a kind of perpetual limbo between the two worlds he would later visit in his famous "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy." Santayana looked back at how quickly and successfully he moved through the Boston Latin School and concluded that his Spanish origins made him forever incompatible with the modern American world. In his mind, external events that lay beyond his control had placed him in this cultural paradox. His roots lay in a tradition he had never fully experienced, and yet his past made his American surroundings equally alienating.

In addition, he found that opening up to American culture meant distancing himself from that of his native homeland. Writing in 1930 about his first return to Spain after his freshman year in 1883, he recalled: "I felt like a foreigner in Spain, more acutely so than in America, and for more trivial reasons: my Yankee manners seemed outlandish there, and I could not do myself justice in the language."[10] Failing to reconcile the world of his Spanish heritage with the world of his American upbringing, said Santayana, he consequently felt welcome in neither, and the gap between the two could only be widened by his experiences at any academic environment, even at one as relatively open as Harvard.

It is surprising, then, that what becomes apparent from looking at Santayana's undergraduate years is not how much he passively withdrew from the university, but the extent to which he actively participated in campus life. He drew cartoons for the *Lampoon*, co-founded the *Monthly*, contributed to the *Crimson*, starred as the "leading lady" in a Hasty Pudding spring play, and served as the colonel of the school battalion. At the same time he functioned as a member of the Everett Anthenaeum, the O.K., the Shakespeare Club, the Philosophy Club, the Art Club of 1873, and the Chess Club, and at the end of his four years he was still able to obtain the high academic distinction of graduating *summa cum laude*.[11] These are not the credentials of an inner-directed solitary youth estranged from his surroundings; on the contrary, the undergraduate Santayana comes across as the ideal well-rounded and active "college man" modern universities still seek.

Obviously the young Santayana was not as socially alienated as his later autobiographical sketches would lead one to imagine. Sometime between his undergraduate years and the time he openly declared his cultural secession from the United States, Santayana not only underwent a change of self-conceptualization but also formulated a reinterpretation of his younger years to fit his own later philosophy. That the academic environment around him was changing rapidly is no coincidence; it was precisely the structural difference between the Harvard of 1882 and the Harvard of Santayana's professorship that transformed him from an eager and active undergraduate into a withdrawn and bitter dissenter. As Eliot's Harvard wrestled to find a purpose to replace the old and fallen banner of "mental discipline," Santayana was forced to decide whether or not to embrace the new institutional changes that had rendered his own days as a leisured college gentlemen obsolete. In essence, Santayana underwent a personal identity crisis at a time when the university was resolving its own.

Although he was an active participant in college life, the roots of what Santayana would later develop into a full-fledged philosophical disassociation with things American can be found in his undergraduate writings, particularly in those submitted to the Harvard *Monthly*. Santayana entered

Harvard just as intellectuals disillusioned with politics and religion began to decry the cultural poverty they believed had stagnated American society. As a result, they began to construct the notion of a cultural hierarchy.

In *High Brow, Low Brow*, Lawrence Levine links the emergence of this sentiment to the influence of the Englishman Matthew Arnold. Arnold had given such dissenters something to fill the void when, in 1867, he redefined "culture" as "the best that has been thought and known in the world."[12] Liberal Republican "Mugwumps" like Henry Adams and E.L. Godkin sought to enlighten the whole of American society through the bastions of "high culture," a fine, universal standard to which all human beings were to aspire. These self-designated "apostles of culture" hoped to elevate ordinary persons to a higher spirituality and morality by encouraging them to undergo the process of coming to appreciate this new standard. While such growing sentiment would ultimately result in the mass building of "cultural cathedrals" to uplift the populace and surround them in an atmosphere of "sweetness and light," Arnold himself brought the storm to campus when he visited Harvard in Santayana's sophomore year.

In 1885, in the midst of this cultural war, a group of students met in Santayana's room to establish the Harvard *Monthly*, a magazine dedicated to defending Arnoldian humanism and aestheticism from the encroaching forces of scientific materialism. The group included Alanson B. Houghton, who would later become the ambassador to Berlin and London, and the transcendentalist Theodore Parker Sanborn. The *Monthly* sought to introduce its readers to the European culture that American society needed to emulate, and for the next decade it served as a springboard for Santayana's contribution to the Arnoldian movement.[13]

In their near-romanticization of Europe--a characteristic which would only grow stronger in Santayana--the members of the *Monthly* rejected America's own cultural and literary tradition from early romanticism to Ralph Waldo Emerson. In Santayana's "The Optimism of Ralph Waldo Emerson," an unsuccessful contender for the Bowdoin Prize in 1896, Santayana ultimately rejected Emerson as a naive "champion of cheerfulness" and "prophet of a fair-weather religion."[14] While admiring Emerson's fondness for aestheticism, Santayana faults the transcendentalist for equating the validity of mystical experience with that of reason; like Leibniz, says Santayana, Emerson's optimism ignores the reality of suffering in human experience.

Going further in attacking America's cultural landscape, in the *Monthly*'s 1886 article "Unimaginary Conversation," the main character decided that America is "not ready for art" and that he will leave for a country "where the pioneering has already been done."[15] Appearing under the pseudonym Margites Chitterly, the article was written by either Santayana or Sanborn, (it also might have been a collaboration between the two), and perhaps not coincidentally Santayana left for Europe after graduation.

Gradually Santayana began to connect his denunciation of traditional American culture with his rising concerns over the welfare of the academic community. In his satirical 1892 article "What is a Philistine?", written six years after his graduation, Santayana warned of a growing breed of American and Bostonian utilitarians, characterized by allegiance to conventionality, blindness to "the elemental," and indifference to the beauties of art. Santayana found this sublimation of beauty to practicality in both the increasing number of students shunning a liberal arts education and in professors more concerned with their specific branch of research than the quality of their teaching. Capitalizing on Arnold's popularized image of the Philistine, and foreshadowing Veblen's reaction against the increasing influence of business on campus, Santayana wrote:

> The prosperous business man, who is a radical, has prejudices without affections, and his thoughts are governed by insistence on a doctrine rather than by loyalty to an institution. His mind is empty without being free. And it is, I should say, of the essence of the Philistine mind to have rigidity without substance.[16]

Yet even as an undergraduate Santayana was not entirely one- sided on the issue. That Santayana criticized Emerson is significant, for it reveals a subtle difference between his outlook on academia and the archetypical Mugwump. An Arnoldian might have found in Emerson the atmosphere of "sweetness and light" he was looking for, but Santayana was fearful to accept at face-value any system of philosophy so well-defined that it was bound to lose the creative and vital force that had made it genuinely illuminating in the first place. Emerson had been vague, and that was good; as a method in seeking knowledge, Santayana believed Emerson had provided an invaluable lesson. Yet the avid humanist, by enshrining Emerson in a *system* of philosophy, was as likely as the "Philistine" to create a system of "rigidity without substance."

Still, even outside the *Monthly*, Santayana was not alone in calling for a cultural rebirth of the liberal arts. In fact, his poetry grew from a mass-campus reaction against the materialism of the increasingly "modern" world. By the 1890's Harvard Yard was home to a minor but substantial poetic movement, characterized by a detachment from American literary tradition. Santayana's first sonnets in 1884 found themselves in the company of William Vaughn Moody, Trumbull Stickney, Hugh McCulloch, Philip Heanry Savage, Mark Anthony DeWorlfe Howe, William Leahy, Herbert Bates, George Cabot Lodge, and Percy MacKaye.[17]

In effect, Santayana was just one of many students beginning a cultural expatriation four decades before Hemingway and the post-war modernists made it a widespread literary phenomenon, and his concerns over cultural poverty and academic stagnation became jointly intertwined. He had not, as he may have later believed, entered Harvard as a cultural loner, but rather he had actively defined himself as part of a prominent minority of students seeking to escape the crudity of American life, whether metaphorically or physically. His work for the *Monthly* and membership in many philosophical societies placed him in the company of collegiate "gentlemen" making sense of a university that no longer catered solely to their educational ideals.

That Santayana's colleagues became distressed over the university's changing structure helps explain why Arnold had met such a warm reception at Harvard. For thirteen years President Eliot had been attempting to transform Harvard from a provincially famous institution into a nationally-recognized and admired leader of higher education. To do so Harvard needed to attract students who came from all over the country, not just from Boston--and not just the wealthy. The academic curriculum needed to cater not just students in the liberal arts, but also ones who saw higher education as a path towards upward mobility, and as a way to pursue non-humaniststudies.

Laurence Veysey's depiction of Eliot in *The Emergence of the American University* poses a striking contrast to Santayana: "Eliot did not think of men's lives as being shaped by factors beyond their control."[18] Hence he believed that giving the students the ability to make free choices was a priority for a university. Academic freedom could achive both this object and also increase the diversity--and thus nationwide attention--that might put Harvard at the forefront of the revolution in higher education. As a result Eliot introduced a free elective system that for the first time gave the individual student the opportunity to define the purpose of higher education in accordance with his personal goals. Such measures ushered in a period of change that not only altered the academic structure of colleges across the nation, but also transformed the homogenous undergraduate social structure that had been dominant for the last century.[19]

The free elective system opened up the university to a wide spectrum of students who did not otherwise fit the wealthy Bostonian mold. Students who wished to pursue abstract research or self-interested economic betterment now became as welcome, academically at least, as the leisured college man, upsetting the traditional dominance of college "gentleman." Whereas "outsiders" before the 1870's--often poor students training for the ministry--had been virtually excluded from the undergraduate social hierarchy, the new "grinds" could pursue a course of study completely divorced from liberal arts tradition, thereby never even coming into contact with the students groomed in the role of college gentlemen. In *Campus Life* Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz explained: "Whereas earlier undergraduates had moved as a class through daily recitations, under the elective system each student maintained a separate schedule of courses, and no two students had the same program."[20]

The free elective system became symbolic of the changes at Harvard because it signaled that the university no longer sought to achieve a single all-encompassing objective. The old banner of "mental discipline" was dead, knowledge no longer had to be pursued simply for its own sake, and the university seemed willing to follow any vaguely-defined purpose as long as it attracted the greatest number of students.[21] Yet although alumni and advocates of liberal culture outside the university mourned the apparent trend of students seeking knowledge for selfish gain alone, the elective system itself was a difficult measure to criticize: it was highly popular among students, and it by no means prevented anyone from pursuing the traditional liberal arts education critics thought was disappearing. In blaming the system for having given him no "fixed plan of study" and ultimately an intellectually bland first year, even Santayana first criticized his own fondness for the measure:

> President Eliot's elective system was then in the ascendant. We liked it, I liked it; it seemed to open a universal field to free individuality. But to be free and cultivate individuality one must first exist, one's nature must be functioning. What was I, what were my powers and my vocation? Before I had discovered that, all freedom could be nothing but frivolity.[22]

By the time of Arnold's visit, Eliot's attempts at attracting a nationally-diverse student body began to take hold, and gradually a new group of ambitious students interested in higher education as a means of self-improvement made their presence felt on campus. Alarmed by the university's apparent catering to such students, culture-seeking men like Santayana used liberal education and the poetry it encompassed as a bulwark against this apparent trend saddling the university to utilitarian causes, business interests, and financial gain. To define oneself as a student of the liberal arts was to define oneself as an opponent to the increasing specialization, fragmentation and utilitarianism that seemed to be stripping the university of its once- noble and perhaps Arnoldian cause: to educate young men in the best that had been thought and known in the world.

Of course, if Santayana had been more financially desperate or had he developed an intense love for the blooming sciences, he might have joined the growing number of "grinds" and abstract researchers he felt were beginning to crowd the campus. In fact, after an academically unspectacular year--he failed a half-course in algebra--he speculated that he might have become a mathematician if only his uncharismatic teachers had presented the subject with more imagination and less blandness:

> If my teachers had begun by telling me that mathematics was pure play with presuppositions, and wholly in the air, I might have become a good mathematician, because I am happy enough in the realm of essence. But they were overworked drudges, and I was largely inattentive, and inclined lazily to attribute to incapacity in myself or to a literary temperament that dullness which perhaps was due simply to lack of initiation.[23]

However, if Santayana wanted to explore holistically the "realm of essence," it was doubtful he would find it in the increasingly specialized sciences.

Instead, in his second year (and not ironically in the year of Arnold's visit), Santayana found a well of inspiration in the works of Lucretius, a Roman poet whose philosophy to Santayana escaped both the irrational optimism of traditional idealism and the scientific finalities of raw materialism. It is difficult to distinguish whether Santayana became an advocate of liberal culture because he admired Lucretius or that he liked Lucretius because he was becoming an advocate of liberal culture: he might have found in Lucretius the Arnoldian humanism he was looking for--one that avoided the rigidity and stale idealism of the overly "genteel" aspects of liberal culture--or his fondness for Lucretius might have driven him firmly into the realm of the literary arts. His ties to Spain, even if exaggerated or imagined, may have predisposed him to a liking of things philosophical rather than utilitarian and specialized, but it should also be noted that it was shortly after his introduction to Lucretius that he wrote his first sonnets and thus started his writing career.[24]

Enticed by this new philosophical outlook, by his junior year Santayana found himself immersed in the lectures of William James, Josiah Royce, and George Herbert Palmer. This triumvirate constituted what was "probably the greatest department of philosophy that has ever existed in this country,"[25] a philosophical golden age at Harvard that would lose its momentum to the developing field of psychology after the turn of the century. Glad that the department was resisting the widespread tendency to make philosophy merely a biography of philosophers, Santayana was less swayed by the specific arguments of any of these individual thinkers than he was impressed by both the vigor with which they pursued them and the fact that, despite their mutually exclusive philosophies, they all seemed to get along. Rather than seek a single rigid philosophy its members could all agree on, the department prided itself on welcoming philosophical diversity, and the triumvirate in fact seemed to encourage each others' criticisms.

Recalling an atmosphere of bustle and activity, Santayana wrote:

> The whole Harvard school of philosophy was a vital unit, co-operative in its freedom. There was a general momentum in it, half institutional, half moral; a single troubled, noble, exciting life. Everyone was laboring with the contradiction he felt in things, and perhaps in himself; all were determined to find some honest way out of it, or at least to bear it out bravely. It was a fresh morning in the life of reason, cloudy but brightening.[26]

Ironically, in tolerating individual pursuit the department followed the same line of thinking that the free elective system encompassed; such welcoming of diversity--which Santayana attacked when institutionalized--was the single factor that later made Santayana's professorship at Harvard possible. Santayana secured and maintained his position at Harvard primarily because the department wanted conspicuous diversity among its faculty.[27]

Yet by defining himself as a student of philosophy Santayana allied himself with the Arnoldian cause, and he was by no means a solitary dissenter seeking to escape the cultural crudity of the "frontier country." In fact, a surprising number of Santayana's undergraduate and mostly upperclass friends left for Europe as well, searching for an environment that would allow them to pursue a life of high culture and aristocratic comfort unobtainable in America.

In this vein Charles Loeser, Santayana's close Jewish friend who had also felt alienated because of his religious background, sought solace in a life of Arnoldian self-indulgence. Unlike Santayana, Loeser had the financial means to seek refuge in the high arts without actually working, and yet at the same

time Santayana observed that a sort of Puritan work ethic made it impossible for Loeser to do so in America:

> There was a commercial presumption that a man is useless unless he makes money, and no vocation, only bad health, could excuse the son of a millionaire for not at least pretending to have an office or a studio. Loeser seemed unaware of this social duty.[28]

This realization took a double toll on Santayana. He shared his fellow colleagues' desire to enter a life of cultural and intellectual enlightenment, but he did not share their financial resources to do so. The American world outside of academia seemed to look suspiciously upon such apparent snobbishness in the first place, and Santayana lacked the means to escape to Europe. He had found his niche in Harvard only to discover the university itself was changing. He was a student of philosophy, a well-liked poet, essayist, and defender of Arnoldian humanism, in the company of like-minded peers who prided themselves on seeking knowledge for knowledge's sake. Yet Santayana could not remain financially independent after college, and as graduation loomed Santayana feared taking on any hands-on occupation, even that of a professor:

> How about me? Was I professional? Should I ever make a professor of philosophy? Everybody doubted it. I not only doubted it myself, but was repelled by the idea. What I wanted was to go on being a student, and especially to be a traveling student.[29]

It was thus a saving grace that he was able to take advantage of the Walker Fellowship to study philosophy in Germany after graduation. He convinced his friend and like-minded cultural expatriate Charles Augustus Strong--the only other serious contender--to ensure they both could travel by jointly sharing the fellowship upon George Herbert Palmer's and James's hesitant but eventual agreement. Thus, as the character in "Unimaginary Conversation" foretold, in 1886 Santayana himself left for Europe where he found, or imagined to find, the culturally-rich and tradition-deep Europe that the *Monthly* had idealized.

One might have expected the young thinker to become quickly disillusioned with the reality of Europe, that it contained just as many "Philistines" as America and that he would feel just as alienated in Germany as he had felt during his return to Spain. To be sure, there were aspects of Germany he did not care for--he found Berlin suffering from the same "modernness, ugliness, and bigness" of Boston--and at the end of his second semester he moved to England, which he found "infinitely more interesting and stimulating," before returning to Berlin six months later. [30]

Yet he blamed his first unpleasant experiences on his stubborn and regretful unwillingness to learn the German language. For finally Santayana was able to taste the life of the traveling student, and he did become intrigued by the continent's conspicuous attachment to its past. At one point William James feared his pupil had lost himself to the Old World without a shred of solid research or hint that he even intended to come back. In January of 1888, James wrote a sharp letter to Santayana: "Our fellowships are for helping men to do some definite intellectual thing, and you must expect to show next May (if the fellowship is to be continued) that you are on a line of investigation of some sort."[31]

Between his return to Cambridge in 1888 and his final departure from America in 1912, Santayana spent every summer thereafter in Europe, including two sabbatical leaves in 1896-7 and 1905-1907. As a Harvard professor, his cultural escapades became more frequent and prolonged; by the time he finally left America for good he had spent "thirty-eight fussy voyages abroad." Yet the continent was more of a refuge than a home. He never felt genuinely welcome anywhere until his retirement in Rome before his death, but unlike America, the continent allowed him to seek elevation without hassle. In essence, Santayana found a place that seemed to confirm his philosophical suspicions and

justify his cultural rebellion. It may be no small wonder that Santayana talked of two culturally opposing worlds in his "Genteel Tradition"; throughout his Harvard career Santayana lived in both.

It was also in Germany that Santayana had finally decided to seek a doctorate, more from necessity than desire:

> The life of a wondering student, like those of the Middle Ages, had an immense natural attraction for me--so great, that I have never willingly led any other. When I had to choose a profession, the prospect of a quiet academic existence seemed the least of evils.32

In essence, Santayana had run out of realistic options, and a professorship would at least keep him in familiar territory. Furthermore, his failure to immerse himself in German society made it logical to Santayana to return to Harvard where he at least *understood* the language and prevailing culture:

> I was wholly incapable of taking a Doctor's degree in Germany. The only thing for me to do was to return to Harvard and take my Doctor's degree there, where I was at home and sure of my ground.33

In fact, the professors Santayana most sympathized with were the ones who seemed to be caught up in a similar dilemma. One of them, "Archie" Coolidge, had become a professor of European history and politics when he was unable to pursue a diplomatic career. Santayana noted that Coolidge "stood in a position very much like mine, in that teaching at Harvard was for him a sort of expedient, rather than a chosen profession."34 Similarly, Barrett Wendell had been one of the founders of the *Lampoon*, and as a poor but Arnoldian advocate of liberal education, he became a professor at Harvard also by default, and Santayana drew on this personal connection:

> The age made it impossible for him to do well what he would have loved to do. Why should such a man ever dream of becoming a professor? His case, I imagine, was not unlike mine. He happened to have his pigeon-hole in Boston, he was not rich, he liked to browse upon belle-lettres; why not teach English composition and literature at Harvard? 35

Having developed in Germany an admiration for the works of Arthur Schopenhauer, Santayana hoped to write his thesis on the German author upon his return to Harvard in 1888 under Josiah Royce. Royce, however, was hardly a fan of German pessimism and instead persuaded Santayana to study Rudulf Hermann Lotze, whose philosophy was akin to George Herbert Palmer's. (Royce had said Schopenhauer might suffice for a "master of arts, not a doctor of philosophy."36) Santayana's thesis, though not exceptional, was impressive enough that the Philosophy Department asked him to teach a single class on Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. Realizing this was the closest he might come to obtaining a comfortable intellectual vocation, Santayana accepted, noting that the salary would allow him to stay in Europe for the summer. Soon after Santayana accepted, Professor Bowen abruptly resigned, leaving his class on Descartes, Spinoza, and Leibniz open, and so Santayana took on both courses at the same time, thus launching a career in the Harvard Philosophy Department that would last for the next twenty-two years.

That it was in these years as a faculty memeber that Santayana became disillusioned enough with America to leave it all together is somewhat surprising: he had succeded as an eager participant in undergraduate life, he had been fortunate enough to become a wondering student abroad, and now he would be financially stable enough to pursue a life of the mind at Harvard and a life of the arts in Europe all in the same year. Yet as a professor of philosophy Santayana became the disgruntled

solitary dissenter he would later imagine himself to have always been. He not only recognized his peculiar stature in the department, he eventually came to embrace it. More problematic is the fact that his philosophical outlook of his undergraduate years remained relatively unchanged. He may have not articulated a full-fledged system of philosophy by the time of his graduation, but his belief in aestheticism, his emphasis on humanism, and defense of the liberal arts against the increasing influence of the specialized sciences continued. He made no radical change of heart, except that his environment became so intolerable that he chose to leave it. Thus Santayana's true dissent lay in his reaction to an inhospitable environment--once again, to external events he felt he could not control, and those events manifested themselves in the rapidly changing academic environment Santayana had only tasted as a student.

For one thing, the Harvard that Santayana returned to was not the same Harvard he had attended as an undergraduate. As a student he had joined the ranks of the advocates of liberal culture, identifying himself as a dissenter from the university's newfound love of specialization, and more importantly as one in the company of many dissenters who imagined the institution would remain under their influence. Yet unlike the college rebels of the 1920's, the dissenters of Santayana's time were on their way out. The 1880's was in a sense the "last gasp" of the leisured gentlemen, the last time they would dominate the university's academic and social structure, though they might have been only vaguely aware of the repercussions of Eliot's reforms. Veysey notes that liberal culture "could not survive at the center of the academic map...although the recapturing of Harvard for humane ideals loomed as an exciting possibility toward the year 1909."[37] Looking over the span of two decades, Eliot's measures come off as sweeping, but only incremental change occurred within any four years. Eliot himself had not set out with a well-crafted plan to revolutionize the university; his reforms were slowly and gradually implemented according to environment and context, and as a result collegiate gentlemen never developed a sudden "siege" mentality.

By the 1890's the university was simply attracting more students interested in business and abstract research than ever before, departments were increasingly making specialization their hallmark, professors were coming to focus their abilities on a narrow branch of research rather than a wide breadth of knowledge, and Santayana's undergraduate friends had all either left campus for Europe or for Arnoldian cultivation somewhere else in America. Only a small clique of students ever fully admired Santayana for his actual philosophy, and Santayana acknowledged that both the purpose of higher education and the purpose of the new batch of students obtaining that education had changed:

> Education [now] meant preparation for professional life. College, and all that occupied the time and mind of the College, and seemed to the College an end in itself, seemed to President Eliot only a means. The end was service in the world of business.[38]

Santayana remained at Harvard in the decades after the cultural expatriates had departed, and their absence left him alone as a solitary voice still speaking out against the increasing crudity of the modern world on campus. Their absence virtually forced Santayana either to join the university mainstream or articulate a philosophy that justified his dissension, perhaps developing a cult of personality in the process. He chose the latter.

Yet Santayana's alienation also prevented him from becoming a throwback to the college of Arnoldian humanism. His trips abroad and acknowledgement that he did not wholly fit in European society undoubtedly coincided with his reevaluation of his upbringing. The fact that Santayana never felt comfortable in any environment except those in which he was left completely alone is highly significant, for it might explain why he never fully embraced defenders of humanism like Irving Babbitt who rallied for a return to emphasis on the liberal arts. At Harvard Santayana indeed became increasingly intolerant of President Eliot, referring to him as "an 'awful cloud' hanging over Harvard,"

but he also became simultaneously frustrated over such aspects of traditional American philosophy that prevented it from making substantial progress in the life of the intellect.39

By acknowledging himself as an alien to all cultures and all philosophies, Santayana was able to free himself from both the overly "genteel" humanism and formulaic traditional philosophy he might otherwise have unthinkingly defended out of traditional allegiance. Santayana had a bone to pick with Eliot, but the president whose mission it was to attract prestige could not alone be blamed for Santayana's carefully-crafted pose as a party of one. With no *Lampoon* or *Harvard Monthly* staff to align himself with, and with no place he could call home, Santayana came to take pride in his ability to feel detached philosophically and emotionally from the environment of his Bostonian colleagues. His self-conscious alienation in Spain had at the least made him painfully aware that there was no romantic, ideal Spain to return to. By defining himself as a Spaniard and as a Catholic--neither of which he was in any real sense-- he was in fact defining himself as one who did not belong to any institution. By becoming a passive, disinterested observer he could then form an "objectively impartial attitude towards all experience," and his journeys to Europe kept him from developing an overly subjective bias toward any one cultural setting or accepted system of philosophy.40

This did not prevent the community from considering Santayana essentially *other*, and even a little silly. Santayana took his observations seriously, but to much of the Harvard faculty engrossed in the gush and go of research life, a professor like Santayana may have come across as a remnant of the early 1880's, in a similar way that campuses today might view a modern-day "hippie" as a throwback to the 1960's: different, but mostly harmless. Both Santayana and Barrett Wendell saw themselves as dinosaurs wishing to return Eliot's Harvard to the imagined college of their youth:

> We were on the same side of the barricade....The most tangible sign of this sympathy between us was our common affection for Harvard--for the College, not for the University. We knew that the traditional follies were there...We both desired to screen those follies and to propagate that *virtu* against the steam-roller of industrial democracy."41

One might imagine that Santayana would have used his position as a faculty member to incite such a movement, to rally his students against the "steam-roller of industrial democracy." Instead, Santayana continued to look upon his profession with increasing dissatisfaction, a temporary necessity that might allow him to save up enough capital to escape to Europe and make that ideal of the wandering student a permanent profession. In fact, he began to put away some of his earnings shortly before he even taught a course: "In other words, I began to prepare for my retirement from teaching before I had begun to teach."42

Unlike his colleague William James, however, Santayana did not find his niche in teaching. His early lectures were not overly coherent--one of his students, T.S. Eliot, described them as "soporific"--and in explaining Santayana's eventual road to prestige George Herbert Palmer recalled: "At the beginning Santayana was a poor teacher. By persistent effort he became about the best we had."43

At the heart of Santayana's early teaching difficulties may have been his belief that philosophy could not actually be taught:

> Lectures, like sermons, are usually unprofitable. Philosophy can be communicated only by being evoked; the pupil's mind must be engaged dialectically in the discussion. Otherwise all that can be taught is the literary history of philosophy.44

A combination of disillusioning personal events also intervened to transform Santayana from an active participant into a withdrawn, detached spectator. In his thirtieth year, his penniless and invalid father died, his pupil and "last real friend" Warwick Potter died, and his half-sister Susana married a Catholic widower about whom Santayana felt ambivalent. Furthermore, feeling that the age of thirty called for a retrospective analysis of his life thus far, he found his present position as a teacher of philosophy at Harvard a mediocre one, having little impact on his students and having little to look forward to. He felt detached from his students, from the faculty, and from worldly events as a whole:

> In my private life too there had come a crisis: my young friends had become too young for me and I too old for them; I had made a private peace with all religions and philosophies; and I had grown profoundly weary of polite society and casual gaieties."[45]

The death of Potter also emphasized the tragic ending of a number of Santayana's friends who had found themselves unable to find a place in mainstream society. The humanists of his undergraduate days who had *not* physically escaped the encroaching materialism of society fell victim to their own inability to integrate into the new culture. Thomas P. Sanborn, a poet who could not stand the "over-intellectualized transcendentalism of Concord" committed suicide; Philip Savage and Cabot Lodge were also "visibly killed...by the lack of air to breathe...The system was deadly, and they hadn't any alternative tradition to fall back upon."[46] Santayana may have seen in the early deaths of his comrades the inevitable tension between a genteel past and an increasingly industrial present; accordingly, he made pains to steer clear of both.

So instead of actively taking part in the university as he had in his undergraduate days, he drew inward, he observed, and he wrote. Yet it was not until 1900 that Santayana published his first moderately-successful book, and if Santayana was both a poor lecturer and reclusive member of the faculty, it may be surprising that Santayana was allowed to teach at all. In fact, in 1888 when Santayana become a candidate for an assistant professorship in the department, President Eliot hesitated, remarking:

> I agree with you that Dr. Santayana's qualities give a useful variety to the Philosophical Department, and that he is an original writer of proved capacity. I suppose the fact to be that I have doubts and fears about a man so abnormal as Dr. Santayana. The withdrawn, contemplative man who takes no part in the everyday work of the institution, or of the world, seems to me to be a person of very uncertain future value.[47]

Yet, as may be surmised from Eliot's first sentence, the Philosophy Department prided itself on diversity and found Santayana an appropriate "specimen." His teaching mannerisms did improve greatly, he became more confident of his distinction among the faculty as the "abnormal one," and an increasing number of students became fascinated by his self-cultivated exoticism and cordiality in dealing with undergraduates: "As a teacher Santayana was apparently not very successful at first, but he improved."[48] It appears that once Santayana had been defined as "abnormal," he turned the situation to his advantage by propogating and embracing the image of a wise and detached foreigner. Veysey notes: "Outsiders resent this coterie around him. . . In hostile eyes, Santayana seemed 'the Yard's spoiled bright boy,' someone who was always accusing his neighbors, silently or openly, of bad taste.'" [49]

He purposefully began to dress completely in black and wore an exotic European cape, and in his later years the small clique of students who found this amusing began to dress like him. One of his later students, Baker Brownell, remembered: "He was quietly dressed, neither arty nor academic, and usually wore fastidious, faintly trans-Atlantic black."[50] Accordingly, Santayana found his voice in lecturing by giving almost theatrical performances that accentuated his *otherness*. One of his most

admiring students, Walter Lippmann, was just one of the many "undergraduates who found him mysterious and exotic. Always elegantly dressed, often with pique vest, spats, and suede gloves, he would stand at the lectern, stare into space, and, never once glancing at a note, give lectures that could have been printed verbatim."51

By playing the part of the caped foreigner, Santayana may have been simply physically emphasizing the fact that he did not come from New England Calvinist or Harvard Unitarian culture. Here was George Santayana, the mysterious caped foreigner with burning dark eyes and a heavy brow (Lippmann described him as "resembling Leonardo's Mona Lisa with a little pointed beard"), the aloof cultural observer who, through his very detachment, could make an objective and accurate judgement of Boston society and the philosophy it encapsulated. It is not hard to wonder why Santayana believed he found his only true friends among undergraduates. It is also not difficult to imagine President Eliot clenching his teeth while watching the black-clad Santayana and his clique of similarily-dressed students following closely behind. Needless to say, Eliot did not promote Santayana to full professorship until 1907.

No, Santayana did not fit in the faculty. He felt at odds with his colleagues in the department--even Royce, whom he had liked as a student--because they felt at odds with him. Despite his mumblings of Catholicism, he never developed the "robust religious orientation" that was almost a staple of contemporary philosophers, and they did not embrace his belief that religion was a form of poetry. Such stubborn insistence in hanging onto traditional religion may have also kept Santayana from becoming overly "genteel" himself. Not only had the university gotten out of hand by tying itself down to utilitarian models, but those who were best situated to defend liberal culture--the members of the Philosophy Department--were too busy mulling over their irritating form of Protestantism that had long grown stale. Only William James, who found some good in everybody and everything, offered the comradeship he enjoyed, but even then Santayana admitted: "James would have liked me less if he had understood me better."52

Yet if the deparment was aiming at diversity, Santayana was definitely a suitable choice, a token dissenter who proved that the Harvard Department of Philosophy knew no bounds:

> 'He was,' said James, 'unwordly,''a spectator rather than an actor by temperament,' and Harvard needed 'a specimen' of someone like him. In effect, Santayana was a good example for the students of the accuracy of the Harvard analysis of what would happen to one without religion. If you don't believe us, the philosophers almost seemed to say, just look at Santayana.53

In justifying such a philosophy, George Herbert Palmer recalled:

> When a new member was proposed we at once asked whether he had not the same mental attitude as someone we had already. If so, we did not want him. There is therefore no Harvard "school" of philosophy. As soon as our students leave college they are sure to encounter all sorts of beliefs. We wished them to have a chance to study these beliefs under the guidance of an expert believer and then to have the difficulties in them presented by an expert opponent. This we held accomplishes best the great aim of a college: it leads a student to think for himself."54

If Harvard had insisted on making moral virtue or mental discipline its prime objective, it would not have had any space for the "abnormal" Santayana, and he never would have been able to seek a professorship at a comparably prestigious but less accommodating institution such as Yale. In a sense it was Harvard's tolerant atmosphere that turned Santayana into an eccentric. Had he taught at Yale, he

could have marked his individuality without so many affectations. In the same way that modernists would attack the very outlets of communication that allowed them to thrive, Santayana attacked the institution that allowed him to become an accomplished writer, if not wholly-respected philosopher.

Thus while the department had been so willing to welcome Santayana as a different, if not entirely reclusive member, he felt oddly out of place, so much so that when he later reconstructed his personal history he concluded that he must have always been a dissenter, a detached observer in a crowd of culturally homogeneous participants who had always managed to "fit in." However, as has been demonstrated, Santayana was not a cultural loner when he entered Harvard in 1882. By 1912 he had become one by choice and by self- definition, not just in reaction to Eliot's reorganization of the campus structure, but also in reaction to the changing structure of the faculty itself. What Santayana saw in his faculty years at Harvard was an increasingly complex campus with divergent participants all growing further apart from each other, with little communication between them; such fragmentation meant the university had lost its sense of purpose, and Santayana put the blame squarely on Eliot's reforms:

> Harvard, in those the waning days of Eliot's administration, was getting out of hand. Instruction was every day more multifarious and more chaotic; athletics and college life developed vigorously as they chose, yet not always pleasantly; and the Graduate and associated Schools worked each in its own way, with only nominal or financial relations with Harvard College. In public opinion a reaction was beginning to appear; but it had not taken visible form before the change of Presidents.[55]

Santayana believed the growing specialization in the various fields of research denigrated the true value of the individual professor. Professors were increasingly judged on their credentials in narrow fields of research rather than on what they were actually instilling in their students, a syndrome William James called the "Ph.D. Octopus." By making the educational needs of the student subordinate to original research as the end goals of professorship, a thinker such as Santayana who tried to connect disparate elements of philosophy together rather than focus on a specialized field would remain in the academic background. In its hustle to become prestigious, the university had lost its purpose. As he wrote in "What is a Philistine?":

> We have multiplied our instruments, and forgotten our purposes...We have forgotten that there is nothing valuable or worthy in the motion, however rapid, of masses, however great, nor in the accumulation of objects, however numerous and complicated, nor in the organization of societies, however great and powerful, unless the inward happiness of men is thereby increased or their misery diminished.[56]

Furthermore, Santayana hated the department's expectation that he create a system of philosophy--something he thought could not inherently be taught--and by refusing to ever fully do so he felt further distanced from his colleagues: "I was expected and almost compelled to be 'constructive' or 'creative' or to pretend to be so. Or as they put it, I must take up some special subject...A man must have a "specialty."[57] "Aesthetics" may have been Santayana's only specialty, and accordingly he was not taken very seriously, either inside or outside the institution, on philosophical grounds alone. Palmer warmly called him "no less a poet than a philosopher."[58] A contemporary thesis advisor was likely to paraphrase Josiah Royce, telling his students that Santayana might suffice for a master of arts, but not a doctorate of philosophy. Santayana felt, in a word, irrelevant.

More importantly, Santayana believed this irrelevance of the intellect to utilitarian concerns was an inherent flaw in American society as a whole. He saw in Harvard a microcosm of American intellectual and cultural society: Eliot was off building new residences, peppering graduates with

multiple degrees, while literary associations were self-absorbed in fixed issues of religion and philosophy that had grown stale. Traditional philosophy and literature had become genteel, but there was a new vital force brewing in America, and it was this force-- one unfortunately detached from intellectual academia--that had put Harvard at the forefront of higher education. In the same way that Eliot's greatest strength lay in making the university publicly attractive rather than actually improving the quality of higher learning, the greatest achievements of Americans lay in their desire to improve continually their materialistic conditions, not in their spiritual or aesthetic worth. The United States was everything the old world of Spain was not: modern, industrial, innovative, and eager as opposed to traditional, spiritual, contemplative and, to Santayana, beautiful.

Curiously, however, he felt no despair over the outcome of the Spanish-American War in 1898; the end of the once-glorious "Spanish empire overseas" had been inevitable, said Santayana. In the same way that Bostonians failed to combine their overwhelming sense of purpose and determination with a genuine system of philosophy, Spain had become so hardened in its tradition that it failed to keep up with the technological and materialistic improvements of the modern world: "For me the tragedy lay in Spanish weakness rather than in American prepotency...due to tragic and comic disproportion between the spirit and the flesh."[59] In fact it was the anti-imperialist William James who became so distressed over the situation that he confided to Santayana that he felt he had "lost his country." [60]

Santayana, who no longer had a country to lose, may have seen in the Spanish-American War the two opposing forces that had always been present in Santayana's life but had failed to become intertwined: On one hand, the resourcefulness and ability to create conceptions of reality had ignored all that was fresh and new; and on the other, the determination and faculty of deliberate action had lost sight of the intellectual substance it needed to encapsulate.

Ironically, Santayana earned his greatest recognition as a critic of American culture when he articulated this vision after having finally resolved to leave the States forever. His works until then had not focused on America as a subject. The *Life of Reason* (1905- 1906) and *Three Philosophical Poets*: *Lucretius, Dante, and Goethe* (1910) had encapsulated his philosophical positions on religion and science, but he never fully articulated his own detachment from American culture until after he had left. Curiously, he left no written mention of James's death in 1910, but it might have brought the young dissenter closer to departure. The final link with America broke in 1911 when his mother died. At that time he decided he had saved enough capital to leave America and reside permanently in Europe, where he would pursue his writing and philosophical career in earnest. So in 1912, after making his last round of farewell addresses, he left America for good and entered Harvard folklore forever.

Somewhat appropriately, his final lecture as an American resident was his first insightful and somewhat biting analysis of American philosophy itself. In 1911 he delivered his now well-known "The Genteel Tradition in American Philosophy" before the Philosophical Union of the University of California. In giving his interpretation of the history of American philosophy from Jonathan Edwards to William James, he explained that the European Calvinism the Puritans had imported and the European transcendentalism Emerson had made anew both formed the foundations of American intellectual tradition, and the adaptation of both explained why the American "Will," "Intellect," and "Imagination" were all becoming increasingly detached from each other.[61]

Calvinism and transcendentalism had been fresh, vital and alive in their own day--"living foundations" Santayana called them--but after becoming modified to better fit the American environment, both had become increasingly stale and irrelevant to the leaps of progress Americans were making in modern industrial society. Calvinism, said Santayana, characterized by the sincere belief "that sin exists, that sin is punished, and that it is beautiful that sin should exist and be

punished" had lost that sense of sin to Emerson's portrayal of Nature as divine and benign. What characterized Boston society was a Calvinism that had been stripped of its theological basis.

American transcendentalism, which succeeded Calvinism as the center of intellectual thought, held that knowledge, present in the "here and now," was as self-evident as sight. As a *method* Santayana appreciated transcendentalism, but in supplanting Calvinism it had gone awry by becoming an actual conception of reality and system of philosophy. As a result, the foundation of American thought had become bland, stale, and formulaic, no longer accurately representing the progress made by the increasingly aggressive American spirit of modern industrialism. Philosophy survived only as an archaic conception in the esoteric discussions among intellectuals and academics about literature and religion. The "genteel tradition" was precisely that which described the "polite society" of the traditional academic environment of New England, Royce, Babbit, and Harvard.

Meanwhile, a truly innovative philosophy of life was being created where it was least suspected and most unacknowledged: the sphere of industry, invention, and business. This newly aggressive spirit-- the American "Will"--encapsulated everything that was instinctive and pragmatic of the modern age. Yet it was wholly detached from the mind of the intellect, blazing down its path of materialistic progress for progress's sake. Santayana conceptualized this model in a symbolic architectural metaphor:

> "This division may be found symbolized in American architecture: a neat reproduction of the colonial mansion--with some modern comforts introduced surreptitiously--stands beside the skyscraper. The American Will inhabits the skyscraper; the American Intellect inhabits the colonial mansion...The one is all aggressive enterprise; the other is all genteel tradition."

Thus the academic mind, by failing to confront the immediate problems of the present, had been left behind by the business forces that needed to deal with the economic and social matters of the "here and now." Eliot's Harvard was blossoming by embracing the practical America instead of the genteel America, but in attempting to increase its importance it had forgotten what had made it so important in the first place. Santayana offered a way out: The American Will and the American Intellect needed to be reunited. He found hope in the figures of Walt Whitman, Henry James, and William James, all of whom had undermined the genteel tradition through confrontation, analysis, or even by emphasizing the practicality of the sciences.

Santayana never fully attacked the humanism he had defended as an undergraduate, but in a sense he found himself at the far end of the argumentative spectrum. The Eliots of the world were unstoppable, and if they could be instilled with a new creative sense of intellect it would be good that they were unstoppable. Like the demise of the once-glorious Spanish Empire, the developments in American business and industry was inevitable; but now the responsibility for ensuring that this newly aggressive force aided intellect and imagination fell on those who, through the blindness of traditional allegiance, had made it irrelevent. Santayana, however, was leaving the picture. This was his final wisdom on the only America he had known: half farewell, half good-riddance.

Santayana left Harvard on good terms, claiming he felt a bit better about the future of the university than he had a decade earlier. In June of 1912 he simply wrote the newly elected President Lowell:

> I therefore enclose a formal resignation of my professorship, and I hope you will not ask
> me to reconsider it. This is a step I have meditated on all my life, and always meant to
> take when it became possible; but I am sorry the time coincides so nearly with the
> beginning of your Presidency, when things at Harvard are taking a direction with which I

am so heartily in sympathy, and when personally I had begun to receive marks of greater appreciation both from above and below. But although fond of books and of young men, I was never altogether fit to be a professor, and in the department of philosophy you will now have a better chance to make a fresh start and see if Harvard can secure the leadership of the next generation, as it had that of the last.66

In an odd twist of fate, his works on America, written a decade after he left, become his most admired. He wrote his first recollections of Harvard and his own take on the academic environment in *Character and Opinion in the United States* (1920). His most recognized work, an analysis of a fictional Bostonian Calvinist, was suitably titled *The Last Puritan*. (1936) His first autobiography *Persons and Places*--so-called because he had never known himself, but rather only "*persons* and *places*"--was one of few books banned by the U.S. Army in World War II because it was "dubious about democracy."67

Four decades after his death, academia is still not at rest, but instead of the sense of urgency involved in becoming an influential institution, the university is more worried about its declining relevence, if only imaginary. Whereas turn-of-the-century critics worried that business might take over the entire campus, today the typical student distresses that his choice of major will not be accomodating enough to business. It is interesting to imagine what Santayana would make of higher education today. Few would expect he would embrace it. He probably would feel as alienated at today's Harvard as he had in 1910. He would probably carve out his existence as a dissenter in the English Department, or perhaps in the field of Comparative Literature, where dissenters gather to dissent even more, and then write a book about how American literature had grown stale and old. His gift lay in observation. If the road of life is divided between "drivers" and "passengers," Santayana was a passenger. Walter Lippmann noted with particular insight: "There is something of the pathetic loneliness of the spectator about him. You wish he would jump on the stage and take in the show. Then you realized that he wouldn't be the author of the *Life of Reason* if he did...For it is a fact that a man can't see the play and be in it too."68

Santayana never really did feel wholly comfortable in Europe. He finally found a resting place in Rome, but it was decades after he had scratched out his name in the world. Yet in a sense America had made Santayana its own, because in the end it had freed his own mind, and had made his own philosophical inclinations a little bit clearer. No other country could legitimately claim him; he was alien everywhere and a citizen to none. Long after his death, Santayana's own words were used to describe his philosophical and cultural independence. In his preface to *Character and Opinion in the United States* he proclaimed that he was not an American, "except by long association."69

Few realized it was a compliment.

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