The rise of the intellectual around 1900: Spain and France

Storm, H.J.

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Eric Storm

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With Zola's open letter in *L'Aurore* of the 13th of January 1898 the figure of the intellectual was born. In fact, it was during the Dreyfus Affaire that the word 'intellectual' became widely used as a substantive. The term was rapidly introduced to other European languages, although the connotations attached to it differed substantially. Afterwards historians have projected the term to the past as well, applying it even to the Middle Ages. Thus we may ask ourselves if the introduction of the term also meant that the figure of the intellectual was new? Recent research has shown that at the end of the nineteenth century the position of the so-called intellectuals in France changed enough to conclude that the intellectual, at least in a modern sense, was born there. Pierre Bourdieu affirms that the rise of the intellectual was possible because of the increasing professionalization of the political establishment on the one hand, and on the other the growing autonomy of the intellectual field. This way, writers, artists and scientists depended more and more on an anonymous cultural market, whereas it became increasingly difficult for them to have direct access to political decision makers. Zola in a way invented the figure of the intellectual to bridge the gap. Claiming the independence he already had in the cultural field, and the authority of a disinterested man of letters, he tried to put pressure on the leading politicians, by adressing himself to the public opinion.[1]

Christophe Charle, in a more detailed analysis of the birth of the intellectual in France in the period between 1880 and 1900, pursued the course of Bourdieu. Charle tries to explain the rise of the intellectual as the consequence of an economic crisis in the cultural market in the 1890s. As a consequence of the growing number of young writers, artists and scholars

trying to make a living the social prestige of these professions diminished. And, according to Charle, in order to regain the lost prestige and improve their economic possibilities, the figure of the 'intellectual' was invented. It became an instant success as many newcomers adopted this new role.[2]

Both Bourdieu and Charle fix their attention on the social position of the intellectuals and their immediate predecessors, and their strategies to exert political influence. Although their writings are very stimulating, they do not give a complete picture of the rise of the intellectual. Their explanations would be convincing if all other parameters were to remain constant, but this was clearly not the case. In fin de siècle France not only the social position of the 'intellectuals' was transformed, almost everything changed. On the intellectual level, for example, the dominant currents of positivism and naturalism slowly gave way to vitalism and symbolism, whereas on the social and political level the 'société de notables' was substituted by mass society. Thus a convincing account of the rise of the intellectual has to take into account the changes that occured in the ideas they expressed and in the society they tried to influence.

Furthermore, the rise of the intellectual was an international phenomenon and not a specifically French development. A closer look at the changes that occured in other countries could therefore improve our understanding. Spain offers a good case. Taking into account Madrid's position as the centre of national culture, a position which paralleled that of Paris in the case of France, and considering that Spanish intellectual and political life was heavily influenced by French examples, events in Spain lend themselves favorably towards comparison with those in France. An analysis of Spanish developments even offers some advantages. First, the amount of intellectuals in Madrid was smaller than in Paris and

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Les règles de l'art. Genèse et structure du champ littéraire* (Paris 1992) 185-189.
[2] Christophe Charle, *Naissance des 'intellectuels', 1880-1900* (Paris 1990) 19-65. Although the book of Bourdieu was published two years after the study of Charle, Bourdieu had already expressed his opinions on this issue in various articles, some of which are extensively used by Charle.

therefore it is easier to get an overview. Secondly, Spain was still a relatively backward country and the effect of many social changes was less profound than in other European countries. Thus the actual changes could still be apprehended by the intellectuals; they were not overwhelmed by them. Finally, Spanish intellectual life was flowering at the end of the nineteenth century and various acute thinkers, who were well aware of developments abroad, appeared on the scene.[3]

Last but not least, a study of the Spanish situation in a comparative perspective, can improve our knowledge of the simultaneous birth of the intellectual in many European countries. It has already been noticed that the canonization of the French intellectuals as the intellectual par excellence, has limited our understanding of the phenomenon. In France, the intellectual, from the Dreyfus Affair onwards, became identified with the defense of Reason, of republican virtues, secularism and universalistic human rights. In other European countries, like Germany and England the social and intellectual background of the intellectuals was quite different, and so was the message they conveyed to their public. In these countries, academic scholars were more visibly active in the public debate than the men of letters who dominated French cultural life. And, in general, the message of German and English intellectuals was more pragmatic and concrete than the universal, abstract and programmatic statements of their French counterparts.[4] The question I would like to address here is how Spain fits into this picture?

The proto-intellectuals

[3] Apart from Madrid, Spain had another flowering cultural centre: Barcelona. Nevertheless, Barcelona's influence was mainly limited to Catalonia. The other periferal regions looked mainly to Madrid for guidance and inspiration.

[4] Stefan Collini, 'Intellectuals in Britain and France in the Twentieth Century: Confusions, Contrasts - and Convergence?' in: Jeremy Jennings ed., *Intellectuals in Twentieth-Centrury France. Mandarins and Samurais* (New York 1993) 199-227, Gangolf Hübinger, 'Die europäischen Intellektuellen 1890-1930', *Neue Politische Literatur* 39 (1994) 34-55, Gangolf Hübinger, 'Die Intellektuellen im wilhelminischen Deutschland. Zum Forschungsstand' in: Gangolf Hübinger & Wolfgang J. Mommsen eds*., Intellektuelle im Deutschen Kaiserreich*

Spanish society in the second half of the nineteenth century was, as other West-European countries, thoroughly bourgeois. Although Spain was still a predominantly rural society, and analphabetism was still the rule, the bourgeoisie and the middle classes were dominant in all areas. They were the most important economic class, it was they who determined the political agenda, they set the tone in social life, and they constituted the majority of both cultural producers and consumers. Nevertheless their dominance was of an entirely different nature than in present day middle-class society, as at the end of the nineteenth century the differences between the various social groups were immense.

The Spanish nobility still existed, but had retreated into its own world and in a way had left the stage to the bourgeoisie and the middle classes. Although some of the higher classes liked to imitate the nobility and if possible ascend to its ranks by buying landed property and getting new titles, which were awarded abundantly by the Spanish monarchs, most of them didn't have access to the aristocratic circles. The middle classes, although a very heterogenic group of its own, for their part also clearly distanced themselves from the lower strata of society. The working classes were not allowed to participate in their social life. The societies, clubs, casinos and theatres that were the domain of the bourgeoisie were inaccesable to ordinary craftsmen and workers. The difference was even visible. Wearing a hat or a cap made a world of difference, as did various other visible and invisible details. Even the traditional evening walk was made along different routes. In fact, the higher and lower classes almost exclusively dealt with each other in hierarchical situations, as worker and employee, or master and servant.[5]

(Frankfurt am Main 1993) 198-211, and Christophe Charle, *Les intellectuels en Europe au XIXe siècle. Essai d'histore comparée* (Paris 1996).

[5] The best picture of the bourgeois society in a Spanish provincial town is still to be found in Clarín, *La regenta* (Madrid 1884-1885). See for a stimulating study of bourgeois culture, norms and values in nineteenth-century Europe: Jürgen Kocka ed., *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* (München 1988) 3 vol.

It was supposed that the middle classes would slowly expand and that anyone who wished could, by hard work and thrift, ascend to its ranks. It was taken for granted that before being accepted newcomers had to adopt the norms, values, dresscodes and behaviour of the middle classes to become accepted as a respectable fellow citizen. The rural and urban proletariat accepted this as the natural order of things. In Spain, nearly nobody at this time had heard of Marx and the labour movement was still very weak.

Spanish intellectual life in the second half of the nineteenth-century has to be understood within this context. Novelists, scholars and artists formed an integral part of this essentially bourgeois society. Most of them had a middle or upper-class background, as the sons of the nobility and the working classes either showed no interest, or had no oportunity to pursue a literary, artistic or scientific career. The best way to become a part of the cultural elite was a study at the university of Madrid, become a member of the *Ateneo científico, literario y artístico* of Madrid - the club where the cultural and political elite of Madrid met - and start writing in the national press.[6] Most talented youngsters ended not only with a brilliant professional career, but also with a seat in a Royal Academy and in the Parliament. The academic, literary, journalistic and political circles were not seperate worlds, but formed in many aspects one elite. Politicians, scholars and writers met each other almost on a daily basis in the corridors of the Parliament, the library of the Ateneo, the halls of the various Royal Academies and in a few specific theatres, cafés and salons. Accordingly most of them were active in different fields.

A good example of this type of intellectual-dignitary was José Ortega Munilla (1856-1922), the father of the famous philosopher José Ortega y Gasset. He was of relatively humble origin, and started his career as a journalist of *El Imparcial*, the leading liberal newspaper. In

[6] For the Ateneo see: Francisco Villacorta Baños, *El Ateneo Científico, Literario y Artístico de Madrid (1885-1912)* (Madrid 1985).

1879 he became the director of the journal's cultural supplement, which thanks to him became one of the most important cultural platforms of the period. Two years later he married Dolores Gasset, the daughter of the owner. He published a few novels, and in 1900, when his brother-in-law became minister, he took upon himself the direction of the whole newspaper. A few years later he received the highest recognition possible for a man of letters, as he became a member of the Royal Academy. Meanwhile he also participated actively in politics. From 1892 onwards he was elected and re-elected many times into the Spanish Parliament as an independent liberal for the Galician district Padrón. This way Ortega Munilla could excert influence both directly in his contacts with the most powerful politicians, and indirectly by addressing himself to the public opinion, for which *El Imparcial* was a very apt medium.[7]

The situation among his colleagues was very similar. Gumersindo de Azcárate (1840-1917), a professor of law at the university of Madrid, was active as a publicist, writing in magazines and newspapers and publishing books. At the same time he embarked upon a political career and soon became a member of Parliament. And although as a republican he opposed the monarchy that was reintroduced to Spain in 1875, he became a respected member of the political and intellectual elite. This became clear, first when he was given the honour to preside the Ateneo of Madrid and, finally, when he became the Speaker of the Spanish Parliament. Other politicians, like Nicolás Salmerón, Emilio Castelar, and even the conservative statesman Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, were active as publicists and academics. On the other hand, a novelist like Clarín also worked at the university, his colleague Juan Valera belonged to the diplomatic service, whereas José Echegaray was a mathematician, a successful playwright and a politician. Even the full-time novelist Benito Pérez Galdós regularly published in magazines and newspapers and he couldn't resist the

[7] Ruth Schmidt, *Ortega Munilla y sus novelas* (Madrid 1973) and Juan Carlos Sánchez Illán, *Prensa y política en la España de la Restauración. Rafael Gasset y El Imparcial* (Madrid 1999).

political seduction as in 1885 he allowed himself to be elected for one term on the liberal ticket.

All these writers, scholars and polticians addressed themselves in their publications, speeches and debates to a public that had the same social background, and, generally, shared the same norms and values. The urban middle classes anyway were the buyers of their novels, the readers of their magazines and the public for their lectures. And this world was reflected in the literary masterpieces of this period. Most of the novels and political treatises, nevertheless, were quite critical, but the criticism was always from inside. These proto-intellectuals criticized the bourgeois world for not holding to its values, for being hypocritical, for not being rational, for not complying with civic and private duties and for behaving immorally. The bourgeois world was not wrong in itself. The main problem was that it did not uphold its own standards. This is true for the novels of progressive authors like Galdós, Clarín and Ortega Munilla and for political studies and lectures like those of Azcárate, Echegaray and Castelar.[8] Not only progressive authors criticized the bourgeois world for failing to uphold its own rational standards, in fact conservative catholic publicists like Joaquín Sánchez de Toca, Marcelino Menéndez Pelayo and José María de Pereda did the same referring to the widely shared christian values.

The fact that they all addressed themselves to an educated and well-informed public, also became manifest in their style. Their prose was elaborate, erudite, with long, well-wrought sentences. Castelar was especially famous for his brilliant and grandiloquent speeches. In extremely long, but well-written sentences, full of rhetorical undulations, he related the theme of his lecture with the progress of humanity and the course of world history,

[8] See for example: Gumersindo de Azcárate, *El self-government y la monarquía doctrinaria* (Madrid 1877), Gumersindo de Azcárate, *El régimen parlamentaria en la práctica* (Madrid 1885), Emilio Castelar*, La cuestión social y la paz armada en Europa* (Conferencia dada en el Círculo de la Unión Mercantil, Madrid 31 de mayo de 1890) and José Echegaray, *¿Qué es lo que constituye la fuerza de las naciones?* (Discurso leído el día 10 de noviembre de 1898 en el Ateneo de Madrid con motivo de la apertura de sus cátedras).

and he usually concluded by sketching a beautiful panorama of the ideal society that awaited mankind in a not too distant future.

These proto-intellectuals, thus, were not only socially well integrated in the society of their time, also the content of their writings and the channels of communication they choose were heavily influenced by this social context. In general they didn't bother trying to reach an aristocratic or proletarian audience as well. As the reign of the middle classes would extend in the future, there was no need to adapt their tone to those who were not yet integrated. Thus the newspapers, magazines, and lectures were in fact all addressed to the same, middle class audience. The message these proto-intellectuals wanted to convey was of a moralistic nature, but the norms and values they defended, in general were shared by their public. They in a way held a mirror up to their reader's face to show them their faults and weaknesses. Stefan Collini therefore, in his study about political thought in Britain between 1850 and 1930, has aptly coined the term 'public moralists' to characterize this type of proto-intellectual.[9]

Some changes in the fin de siècle

Around 1890 things started to change. In 1889 a massive strike on the London docks was commented all over Europe. In the next year the growing force of the labour movement became visible as in most European countries workers celebrated the first of May with parades and demonstrations. In the same year the German Socialist Party won nearly twenty percent of the votes. Wilhelm II consequently dismissed Bismarck and organized an international conference to discuss the best way to solve the so-called 'social question'. In 1891 Pope Leo XIII published the encyclic *Rerum Novarum*, which dealt with the same topic,

[9] Stefan Collini, *Public moralists. Political thought and intellectual life in Britain 1850-1930* (Oxford 1991). See for a good description of the 'public moralists' in the Netherlands: Remieg Aerts, 'Bevoegde autoriteiten. Burgerlijke intellectuelen in de negentiende eeuw. Een groepsportret', *De Negentiende Eeuw* XXII-1 (1998) 72-96.

pleading for a more active social and political role from Catholics. All these events had an impact on Spain as well. Especially the papal bull was widely discussed. And although the labour movement was still very weak in Spain, it participated in the first of May celebration, which in Bilbao got out of hand and ended in a massive strike that went on for several days.[10]

The situation was further complicated as in that same crucial year 1890 the Liberal government of Sagasta, in a manoeuvre to outflank the republican oppostion, introduced universal male suffrage in Spain. This move irked many members of the Conservative Liberal Party, particularly politicians like Cánovas, Sánchez de Toca and Raimundo Fernández Villaverde showed their disagreement. Giving the right to vote to the proletariat would endanger existing society, and, unless measures were taken, would in the long run relinquish power to the socialists, anarchists or other utopian dreamers. Some of these conservative authors, therefore, were not ill-disposed towards some social legislation, in order to keep the masses satisfied. In general, however, they pleaded for a more authoritarian, and moralistic policy.[11]

The republicans and progressive liberals, on the other hand, were still very optimistic about future developments. Although the vast majority of the new voters were unable to read, they thought it unneccesary to launch an educational offensive as they supposed that the concession of the right to vote alone would be enough to turn analphabetes into responsible citizens capable of forming independent opinions on political issues. For them the amplification of the respectable and rationally thinking middle strata of society was an automatic process that didn't need any help or guidance from above. Social legislation would

[10] Feliciano Montero García, *El primer catolicismo social y la 'Rerum Novarum' en España (1889-1902)* (Madrid 1983) and Juan Pablo Fusi, *Política obrera en el País Vasco (1880-1923)* (Madrid 1975) 82-93.
[11] Antonio Cánovas del Castillo, 'La cuestión obrera y su nuevo carácter (Estudios económico-sociales; Discurso en el Ateneo de Madrid, 10-XI-1890)' in: Idem, *Problemas contemporáneas* (Madrid 1884-1890) III, 451-523, especially 493, Joaquín Sánchez de Toca, *El régimen parlamentario y el sufragio universal* (Madrid 1889) 4-27 and 358-374 and Raimundo Fernández Villaverde, 'Consideraciones histórico-críticas acerca del sufragio universal como órgano de la representación política en las sociedades modernas (Discurso de recepción, leído ante la Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas, el 19 de Mayo de 1889)' in*: Discursos de recepción y*

only form an obstacle to the freedom of the productive forces, and thus impede economic progress.[12]

For the moment - contrary to what happened in some other European countries - nothing was done to improve the situation of the working classes. Nevertheless, for a growing group of politicians and publicists it was not self-evident anymore that the middle classes would automatically expand and slowly include most of the working classes as well. Many believed that measures would have to be taken, either, as the conservatives wanted, to protect existing society from an assault by the proletariat, or, as the more progressive minds preferred, to actively mitigate the situation of the working classes and educate them to behave decently. These changes also affected the position of the proto-intellectuals. By addressing themselves to a middle-class audience, some of them now became aware that they were not speaking to the whole nation. This new awareness for example came to the fore in the works and activities of Joaquín Costa.

Joaquín Costa (1846-1911) was the son of a poor Aragonese farmer, and thanks only to his strong will and powerful intelligence he had managed to study law and philosophy at the University of Madrid. Partly because of his social background, partly because of his stubborn and difficult character, he failed to win a post at a university, nor was he, for the moment, awarded with a seat in a Royal Academy or in Parliament. In fact, he never became a fully accepted member of the cultural and political elite. Costa was forced to find other ways to express his opinions. With unflagging energy he thus published scholarly articles in all kind of magazines and organized conferences on all kind of topics. After 1890 he changed his tactics. He decided to look for a new public, which he found in the independent farmers of his

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contestación leídos ante la Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas V *(1887-1890)* (Madrid 1894) 215-273, especially 248-262 and 269-272.

[12] Castelar, *La cuestión social*, 30-31 and 39-40, Gumersindo de Azcárate*, Alcance y significación de las llamadas leyes obreras, sociales y del trabajo* (Discurso en el Ateno de Madrid el día 10 de noviembre de 1893, con motivo de la apertura de sus cátedras) 64-71 and Vicente Santamaría de Paredes, 'El movimiento obrero contemporánea (Discurso de recepción, leído ante la Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas, el día 15 de

native region. Uniting them in Chambers of Agriculture he tried to mobilize the rural middle classes, which until then had been neglected by most politicians.[13]

The major turning point in his career took place in 1898 when Spain suffered a disastrous defeat at the hands of the United States, losing Cuba, the Philippines and Puerto Rico. Discontent was widespread, but nobody seemed to react. Costa thus decided to launch an attack on the political system. Spain was governed by two parties - the Liberals and the Conservative-Liberals - who alternated in power. Elections were systematically manipulated, and always turned out a friendly majority for the new government. The great majority of the population, in fact, only functioned as passive political subjects, and didn't have any decisive power. Costa wanted to change this situation. By calling upon all the productive forces of the country, trying to mobilize them actively - first in his National League of Producers, then in the National Union - he hoped to deal a decisive blow against the existing two party system.[14]

As his initiatives didn't prosper, he tried to mobilize public opinion as the Dreyfus Affaire had done in France. In 1901 he wrote a treatise in which he analyzed and indignantly condemned the political clientelism that systematically prevented the country from expressing its vote in freedom. According to Costa, a small oligarchy in Madrid, helped by its local clienteles, falsified elections and actually excluded the majority of the population from political decisionmaking. Costa sent his study to 171 leading politicians, intellectuals and pressure groups. But as this appeal to the intellectual forces of the country failed to have any positive effect - at least in his eyes - he started to radicalize his ideas. He pleaded for a

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Mayo de 1893)' in*: Discursos de recepción y contestación leídos ante la Real Academia de Ciencias Morales y Políticas* VI *(1891-1894*) (Madrid 1894) 361-499.

[13] For Costa see: George J.G. Cheyne, *Joaquín Costa, el gran desconocido. Esbozo biográfico* (Barcelona 1972).

[14] Sebastian Balfour, *The End of the Spanish Empire, 1898-1923* (Oxford 1997) 64-92.

temporary dictatorship, an 'iron surgeon', to clean up the mess and, paradoxically, prepare the country for a 'real democracy'.[15]

Nevertheless, Costa still operated within the limits of the nineteenth-century bourgeois society. He defended the same values of rationality, productivity, and responsability as did the optimistic liberal and republican proto-intellectuals. The main difference being that Costa wanted to broaden the politically and culturally relevant classes, stimulating the rural middle classes to actively participate in the government of the nation. On the other hand, he never tried to reach a proletarian audience, nor did he want to mobilize them. Although he is usually referred to as a 'regenerationist' - a term used in Spain for those who after the Disastre of 1898 wanted to 'regenerate' the country - he could best be defined as a social-liberal with a technocratic and authoritarian flavour, a combination that was quite common in this period.[16]

Most of the other 'regenerationists' could be characterized as social-liberals as well. They were, almost without exception, provincial publicists, who like Costa were not integrated in the national political and cultural elite. Probably the only major writer that changed his political views after 1898, and consequently tried to reach a new, lower middle class public as well, was Galdós (1834-1920). In 1901, for example, he staged *Electra*, an anticlerical drama, that caused a lot of social and political unrest. In 1907 he was elected deputy for the Republican Party, and three years later, he stood on top of the common list for the parliamentary elections that the republicans and socialists presented in Madrid. However, he did not betray his vocation as a novelist, and never became a professional politician.[17]

The true intellectuals?

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[15] Joaquín Costa, 'Memoria de la sección' and 'Resumen de la Información' in: Idem, *Oligarquía y caciquismo como la forma actual de gobierno en España: urgencia y modo de cambiarla* (1902; Madrid 1975) I, 3-99 and 99-247, especially 65-70, 188-195 and 231-234.

[16] Eric Storm, *Het perspectief van de vooruitgang. Denken over politiek in het Spaanse fin de siècle, 1890-1914* (Baarn 1999) 97-153. See also: Karl Holl, Günter Trautmann & Hans Vorländer eds., *Sozialer Liberalismus*

At the same time, a group of young writers and artists - inspired by avant-garde authors and painters abroad - consciously broke with bourgeois society, and its norms and values. This becomes especially clear with the writers of the so-called 'Generation of 1898', Miguel de Unamuno, Ángel Ganivet, Ramón María del Valle-Inclán, José Martínez Ruiz - who is better known under his penname Azorín - Pío Baroja and Ramiro de Maeztu. Around the turn of the century the last three frequently met in bars and in the redactional offices of some avant-garde magazines, where they became friendly with painters like Ricardo Baroja, Ignacio Zuloaga and the young Pablo Picasso. All openly rejected the bourgeois way of life. But this didn't happen from one day to the next.

As students all of these writers had been under the spell of positivism, which was the dominant philosophical mode in the second half of the nineteenth-century. Unamuno devoured the books of Spencer, Martínez Ruiz applied positivistic theories to the study of literature, Ganivet discussed positivistic philosophies in his dissertation and also Maeztu and Baroja were heavily influenced by this mode of thought. The use of reason, combined with their youthful ardour, led them to occupy radical political positions. It could not be tolerated that entire groups of society led a marginal life, without any hope of improving their situation in the short run. Something had to be done. The 'laissez faire' attitude of the older generation liberals therefore was heavily criticized by them. They even doubted that a solution of the social question would be possible within the context of existing society. If the existing modes of production prevented the lower classes from living a more dignified life, the economic order should probably be overthrown. Even before reading Marx Miguel de Unamuno became, in 1895, the first Spanish intellectual of a certain standing who joined the Spanish Socialist Party (PSOE). Martínez Ruiz, at the same time, sympathized openly with the

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(Göttingen 1986) and Richard Bellamy, *Liberalism and modern society. An historical argument* (Cambridge 1992).

anarchist movement and translated *The conquest of bread* of the Russian revolutionary Kropotkin.[18]

The period of socialist or anarchist inspired criticism of society was a short one, as these writers radicalized their rationalism. They now attacked the belief in progress, or more specifically the belief that material progress, combined with better education, would automatically result in a better society as well. It was this belief that lay at the base of both nineteenth-century liberalism as of more radical ideologies like socialism and anarchism. Possibly influenced by Schopenhauer and Nietzsche they started to doubt the possibility of man to really know the outer world and to doubt whether man was good by nature, or could be induced to behave well by education. Consequently they began to question the very possiblity of human progress. If moral improvement was not an immediate result of a better understanding of the world and a general increase in wealth, then all social and political theories that in the first place were intended to raise the level of education and welfare were worhtless. All scientific discoveries and economic growth in the end only amounted to vanity. Neither money nor knowledge helped people to live a more ethical life, nor did they help them to understand the meaning of life, or to die more at peace with themselves. Confronted with the ultimate finiteness of human existance all social and political questions lost their value.[19]

In this way they not only radically rejected bourgeois society with its norms and values, but also radical working-class alternatives like socialism and anarchism. Life itself became the supreme value. Everybody should be the sculptor of his or her own life, and in this task man should not be hampered by social conventions and practical considerations. A

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[17] For Galdós see: Pedro Ortiz-Armengol, *Vida de Galdós* (Barcelona 1995).
[18] Carlos Blanco Aguinaga, *Juventud del 98* (1970; Barcelona 1978). Unamuno's socialist phase ended in 1897. In that same year Martínez Ruiz started to turn away from anarchism.
[19] The term 'nihilist crisis' fits their situation well, see: Pedro Cerezo Galán, 'El pensamiento filosófico. De la generación trágica a la generación clásica. Las generaciones del 98 y del 14' in: José María Jover Zamora ed., *La*

free life dedicated to spiritual values or pure beauty were the only options worth living. This meant that they radically distanced themselves from existing society, and this became visible in the way they dressed and behaved. Valle-Inclán and Ganivet adopted the role of bohemian, whereas at the turn of the century Azorín and Maeztu acted like dandies. Unamuno and Baroja, although less conspicuously, also visibly distinguished themselves from their environment. They furthermore wanted to push aside the idols of the older generations, and like Nietzsche they wanted a complete break with existing society and a revaluation of all values.[20]

After losing their faith in progress, the future lost its interest in favour of the present and the past. What was the actual situation they found themselves in, and how was this situation created by past developments? These writers started not only to focus on their individual identity, but also on one's collective identity. How did the individual relate to the collective? And how did the national past and the natural environment determine the possibilities of the individual to give shape to his own existence? And as Maeztu pointed out in an article that appeared in 1903, nationalism could even offer a way out of the nihilistic cul-de-sac. Whereas man was doomed to die, the nation would never perish. Thus dedicating ourselves to strengthen the fatherland, our efforts would not be in vain.[21]

Accordingly they now had two options according to the public they wanted to address. The first option consisted of addressing themselves to a very restricted public of similarly refined spirits. This was the path of estheticism, of *l'art pour l'art*. Valle-Inclán, the poets Antonio and Manuel Machado and their Nicaraguan colleague Rubén Darío, at least at the start of their carreer choose this option, which in Spain developed into a literary current that came to be known as 'modernismo'. The other way was the nationalist one: addressing

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Edad de Plata de la cultura española (1898-1914) I, *Identidad, pensamiento vida. Hispanidad*. Historia de España Menéndez Pidal XXXIX (Madrid 1993) 131-317, especially 175-197.

[20] See for example: José Martínez Ruiz, 'Somos iconoclastas', *Alma Española* (10-1-1904) 15-16.

[21] Ramiro de Maeztu, 'Ceniza', *Diario Universal* (25-2-10-3).

oneself to all the people that spoke the same language, shared the same historical background and lived on the same soil. Contrary to addressing oneself to humanity - being nothing more than a chimerea - as the older cosmopolitan generation had done, and which in fact meant they only addressed themselves to the well-educated bourgeois elite of their own country, considering the whole nation as one's audience did make sense, as the nation was a living reality. Influenced by German and French historicism and by all kind of 'Volksgeist' theories, they argued that human existence was always formed, shaped and determined by the environment with its physical and cultural dimensions. So every human being was an integral part of a community, of a greater whole, of a nation. Someone's identity was in many ways formed by his or her national identity. The nation, thus, formed the public *par excellence* of the intellectual as his fellow countrymen were the ones who best could understand his message, both being part of the same organic unity. This was the option chosen by Unamuno, Ganivet, Baroja, Azorín and Maeztu.[22]

At least at the start of their carreer, they actively tried to reach a broader public, not limiting themselves to the existing middle and upper-class public who read the newspapers, went to the casinos and occupied all important political positions. Azorín, Baroja and Maeztu at the start of the twentieth century tried to reach a more lower class audience as well, writing manifestos and trying to found some popular newspapers and magazines. The best known example of their attempts in this direction is their collaboration with the popular magazine *Alma Española* in 1903-1904, which was sold at a very low price and even reached a circulation of 60.000 copies.[23] They also started to give attention to the actual situation of the lower classes both in the countryside and in the popular quarters of Madrid. Thus in 1904 Azorín began his trips to the countryside, writing articles and travel impressions - that were

[22] Eric Storm, 'El tercer centenario del Don Quijote en 1905 y el nacionalismo español', *Hispania. Revista Española de Historia* LVIII/2 (1998) 625-654. See for the influence of 'Volksgeist'-theories in Spain: Ciriaco Morón Arroyo, *El 'Alma de España'. Cien años de inseguridad* (Oviedo 1996) 107-147.
[23] Patricia O'Riordan, 'Prólogo' in: *Alma Española* (reedition; Madrid 1978) vii-xv.

collected in volumes like *Los pueblos* (The villages; 1904) - in which he described the miserable situation in the villages of Central Spain. At the same time his friend Pío Baroja gave the small criminals and urban poor of Madrid a literary voice in his trilogy *La lucha por la vida* (The struggle for life; 1904).

Miguel de Unamuno tried to actually reach a lower class-audience. Between 1895 and 1897, when he confessed himself a socialist, he wrote for the socialist weekly of Bilbao, *La lucha de clases* (The class-struggle). After losing his faith in the socialist gospel, he continued to address himself to a broad public. Especially in the first years of the twentieth century he gave lectures all over the country, showing a clear preference for provincial towns like La Coruña, Orense, Bilbao, Valencia, Cartagena, Almería and Béjar. Here he usually spoke in the local casino or Literary Circle, but he also tried to present his views in the Worker's Circle, or some other lower-class association. His attitude changed with his public. Confronted with an upper-class public Unamuno usually was very critical of them, trying to provoke them to change their views and attitudes. In front of a more humble public he adopted a more pedagogical attitude, stimulating his hearers in stead of criticizing them. He refrained from the use of irony and his tone was not harsh or bitter anymore. The message he tried to convey to them was a more optimistic one, inducing them to participate in local affairs, not let themselves be guided by others, but live a humble and responsible life, attending to their civic duties. This was also the purport of most of his many articles in the popular press, which he continued to write.

These writers did not only distinguish themselves in the public they choose, but also in the relationship they had with the centres of political and intellectual power. Only Unamuno obtained a universitary position. It took him seven years to be accepted by the academic establishment and be offered the post of professor of Greek in the decaying University of Salamanca. In this provincial town far away from Madrid he stayed the rest of his life.

Ganivet found refuge in the diplomatic service after being rejected as a candidate for a professorship in Granada. Baroja, Azorín and Maeztu almost immediately chose to be a professional writer, depending on the journalistic and literary market. In the same way that they were excluded from the official centers of wisdom, they were denied access to political power as well. Although some of them became deputies later on, at that time no one had regular contact with politicians. They even arrogantly rejected the possibility of coming into contact with the corrupt and immoral politicians of their age. Martínez Ruiz for example wrote in an article how Baroja, Maeztu and himself visited a few important politicians to protest against a clear case of abuse of power by a magistrate from Málaga. The politicians kindly listened to them, but couldn't or didn't want to do anything to change the situation. Therefore, he openly rejected the direct way of excerting influence as unfruitful.[24]

These writers were not so much excluded from the traditional channels of direct influence, they deliberately turned away from them. They didn't accept the existing bourgeois society, where a small minority of dignitaries took all decisions, and they therefore consciously tried to reach a broader public. In this way they accepted the new mass-society that was slowly coming into existence. In a country where all adult males could vote, an intellectual that took this fact seriously could not exclusively address himself to a small elite anymore. This also became clear in their style. They wrote a concise, precise and clear prose, and gave dialogues and colloquial speech a promintent place in their texts. The elegant but elaborate oratory of Castelar and his temporaries was dismissed as grandilocuent and pompous.[25]

[24] José Martínez Ruiz, 'El escáncalo general', *El Correo Español* (7-2-1902), this article became a chapter of his novel *La voluntad* (1902) as well. See also: Luis Granjel, *Panorama de la generación del 9*8 (Madrid 1959) 225-233.
[25] Azorín, 'Impresiones parlamentarios. La suspensión', *ABC* (30-V-1905) and Azorín, 'Impresiones parlamentarias. La nueva oratoria', *ABC* (15-V-1908).

The form they chose for expressing themselves was the new mode of the intellectual, and as early as 1898 these writers started to use the new term.[26] But what about the content? As we have already seen, they dismissed bourgeois society and the liberal ideology that sustained it. They understood that the lower-classes were unjustly treated and that a laissez-faire attitude would bring them no good. They therefore started to address themselves on the one hand to the working classes - as far as they felt capable to bridge the gap that seperated them from this type of audience - to stimulate them to participate in political life and make their voice heard. On the other hand they tried to draw the attention of the political and social elite on the miserable situation of the urban and rural proletariat. This way their position could be defined as social-liberal. And actually Unamuno between 1906 and 1908 waged a campaign for the renovation of Spanish liberalism and he gave support to the government of the José Canalejas, who in 1910 came to power with a clear social-liberal programme. Baroja at the same time decided to join the radicals, the only republican party that actively tried to involve the working classes in politics. Azorín took a somewhat different step, adhering himself to the conservative reformationist programme of Antonio Maura and Juan de la Cierva. Nevertheless he especially underlined the reformationist intentions of their policy.[27]

In some fundamental ways their political views differed from most of their contemporaries. In the first place they no longer believed in the possibility of creating a better society by indirect ways. Improving the economic situation of the poor, and giving the people a better education, wouldn't automatically induce them to behave more morally. The utopian projects of socialists and anarchists were dismissed by them as unrealistic dreams. Thus the only possible way to improve the moral standards of Spanish society was the direct one:

[26] E. Inman Fox, 'El año de 1898 y el origen de los "intelectuales"' in: Idem*, Ideología y política en las letras de fin de siglo (1898)* (Madrid 1988) 13-25, Carlos Serrano, 'Los "intellectuales" en 1900: ¿Ensayo general?' en: Serge Salaün & Carlos Serrano eds., *1900 en España* (Madrid 1991) 85-107, and Santos Juliá, 'La aparición de "los intelectuales" en España', *Claves de la Razón Práctica* 86 (1998) 2-11.

[27] Manuel María Urrutia, *Evolución del pensamiento político de Unamuno* (Bilbao 1997) 133-169, Cecilio Alonso, *Intelectuales en crisis. Pío Baroja, militante radical (1905-1911)* (Alicante 1985) 227-369, Azorín, *El*

trying to induce their fellow citizens to behave well, to be responsible, first of all for one's own life, but also for that of one's neighbours. Thus economic and social theories didn't interest them much. Concrete and pragmatic improvements were the only thing that mattered. Only nationalism could possibly help, as people felt a more intimate and concrete bond with their fellow-countrymen, than with complete strangers. Stimulating national feeling could therefore strengthen national solidarity.

Nevertheless there was one issue that was even more important. All these writers had gone through a 'nihilistic crisis', had lost their belief in progress and in the possibility of man to really know reality. The fundamental scepsis that was the result of this, made it impossible for them to pursue any political direction without hesitation. They could never silence the voice of doubt. Thus all their political and social activities were undertaken against a background of fundamental doubt about their value. Would it not be in vain? Their position therefore could best be characterized as tragic: they acted although they were not sure it would make any sense.[28]

Although they considered individual life to be more important than collective undertakings, they never totally abandoned politics. But in every situation the temptation to withdraw was great, and they often temporarily withdrew from active involvement, returning to more intimate themes. However they felt too responsible for the fate of their country to completely ignore political questions and stop giving their opinion on all kinds of issues for a longer period of time - although this has not always been recognized in later times.[29] But the

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político (Con un epílogo futurista) (1908; Madrid 1919) and Azorín, 'La obra de un ministro', *ABC* (2-11 marzo 1910).

[28] See: Cerezo Galán, 'El pensamiento filosófico. De la generación trágica a la generación clásica', 175-225 and Pedro Cerezo Galán, *Las máscaras de lo trágico. Filosofía y tragedia en Miguel de Unamuno* (Madrid 1996).

[29] Already intellectuals of a younger generation, like José Ortega y Gasset and Manuel Azaña, described the political attitude of the generation of 1898 as ineffective, not-pragmatic, pessimistic and fatalistic. This negative interpretation, which does little justice to the tragic struggle of Unamuno cum suis, has been generally accepted by most historians: José Ortega y Gasset, 'Pío Baroja. Anatomía de un alma dispersa' (1912) in: Idem, *Meditaciones sobre la literatura y el arte (La manera española de ver las cosas)* (Madrid 1987) 117-195, José Ortega y Gasset, 'Azorín: Primores de lo vulgar' (1917) in: Idem, *Obras completas* (Madrid 1993) II, 158-192, Manuel Azaña, '¡Todavía el 98!' (1923) in: Idem, *Obras completas* (Mexico 1966) I, 557-568, Pedro Laín

message they wanted to confer greatly differed from that of their predecessors. Rationalism and the values of the intellect mattered little to them. Life was more important than reason, and man was a sensitive being that should not be reduced to a rational machine. Unamuno therefore preferred the term spiritual to intellectual. He stressed spiritual values, and despised people that only listened to the voice of reason, not hearing the voice of their heart. As a modern Don Quixote, with whom he openly identified, he wanted to address himself directly to the Spanish people, the Sancho Panzas, leave home without thinking of practical affairs, and live a heroic life in the name of a new Dulcinea.[30]

In short, the form these Spanish writers choose was clearly that of the intellectual, but the content of their message was quite different from what has come to be seen as the defence of Reason, Progress and equal rights that was typical of their predecessors and of the French Dreyfusards. It therefore isn't a surprise to find out that they openly disliked the pseudo-scientific reasonings that Zola so often applied in his novels, reducing reality to an abstract scheme of all kind of physical forces that killed human freedom and responsibility. This cold and deterministic universe was not theirs. They protested against this positivistic world-view and on the contrary defended spiritual values and the importance of individual life.[31]

Paradoxically, they felt more attracted to the writings of Maurice Barrès, the leader of the anti-Dreyfusards who was one of the first to use the noun 'intellectual' to insult Zola.[32] Barrès was an anti-bourgeois dandy like themselves. Initially he felt sympathy for the socialists but soon he embarked upon a more populistic and nationalistic course. He despised

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Entralgo, *La generación del 98* (1947; Madrid 1997) 336-353, Donald Shaw, *The generation of 1898 in Spain* (London & New York 1975) 186-187 and 206-207 and Santos Juliá, '"La charca nacional". Una visión de España en el Unamuno de fin de siglo', *Historia y Política. Ideas, procesos y movimientos sociales* (1999-2) 149-165.

[30] Miguel de Unamuno, 'Los naturales y los espirituales', *La España Moderna* XVII, 193 (enero 1905) 40-59.

[31] See for example: Miguel de Unamuno, 'Cientificismo', *La Nación* (9-7-1907) also in: Idem, *Mi religión y otros ensayos breves* (Madrid 1910) 193-205.

[32] See for example: Ganivet in Ángel Ganivet y Miguel de Unamuno, 'El porvenir de España' (1898) in: Miguel de Unamuno, *Obras Completas* (Madrid 1958) IV, 953-1019, especially 1009, Azorín, 'Andanzas y lecturas. El espíritu de Barrés', *La Vanguardia* (8-6-1913), Azorín, 'Palabras. Barrés o la antinomia espiritual', *ABC* (14-XI-1913) and Christopher H. Cobb, 'Barrès, Azorín y el ideal conservador', *Neophilologus* LXI (1977) 384-396.

existing society for its materialism, and wanted a kind of spiritual rebirth of France. As a man of letters himself he directly addressed the nation, ignoring and even attacking the traditional elites. As a spiritual guide he hoped to lead the French people to new glories. In later decades his heritage was despised by more rational thinkers like Gide and Sartre and therefore he nowadays is nearly forgotten. But around the turn of the century he probably was one of the most original and influential French intellectuals, and it is not surprising that in a recent study on French intellectuals, the first two decades of the twentieth century is characterized as the age of Barrès.[33]

Conclusion

Studying the Spanish case, it becomes clear that an excessive stress on the French situation and the monopolization of the name 'intellectual' by progressive and rational thinkers like Zola, Gide and Sartre, has led to a very one-sided interpretation of this term. Especially looking at the forms of expression, it becomes clear that the first to adapt their strategies to the new society of the masses were anti-bourgeois authors like Unamuno, Ganivet, Azorín, Baroja and Maeztu in Spain and Barrès and similar writers like Charles Maurras and Paul Déroulède in France. They openly rejected existing society as unjust, positivism as neglecting the irrational aspects of human life, and the dominance of a small political and cultural elite as out of date in an age of democracy. As a countermeasure they started to address themselves directly to the lower-classes and Maurras and Déroulède in France, and Vicente Blasco Ibáñez and Alejandro Lerroux - both intellectuals that shared most of the sensibilities and attitudes of

[33] Michel Winock, *Le siècle des intellectuels* (Paris 1997) 9-155. See for Barrès also: C. Steward Doty, *From cultural rebellion to counterrevolution: the politics of Maurice Barrès* (Athens 1976) and Zeev Sternhell, *Maurice Barrès et le nationalisme français* (1972; Paris 1985).

the generation of 1898 - in Spain, even actively tried to mobilize the masses in a populistic movement.[34]

The situation in France and Spain showed a lot of similarities, like the predominant place of the men of letters in the public debate, the central role of the capital in the national cultural life, and almost simultanuous occuring cultural changes whereby Paris clearly took the lead. Nevertheless there were a few important differences as well. The main one being the political situation. France was a republic, where especially after the Dreyfus Affair the progressive political parties were in power. The intellectual revolt of Barrès, Maurras and Déroulède therefore directed itself mainly against the left-wing republicans. The national rebirth they advocated - also because of the dominant theme of the revanche against Germany - therefore was coloured by conservative, xenophobic and anti-semitic elements.

In Spain the monarchy was supported by two oligarchical political parties, that because of the lack of political consciousness in the countryside could continue to manipulate the electoral results and stay in power. The main question therefore was how to reform the political system and how to mobilize the electorate? Whereas Barrès and his friends tried to mobilize the masses in order to convert them in a disciplined movement, the young generation of Spanish intellectuals in the first instance tried to stimulate the masses to participate in politics. Only after the bloody riots that took place in Barcelona during the Tragic Week in July 1909, did they start to reconsider their mobilizing activities.[35] Another difference could be found in the nature of the nationalism they advocated. As Unamuno cum suis had to struggle against a conservative-catholic establishment, their nationalism did not take on the reactionary traits which were characteristic of the one defended by their French counterparts. Furthermore, as Spain had just suffered a humiliating defeat, they were more future-oriented

[34] Barrès was during some periods actively involved in the *Ligue des Patriotes* of Déroulède and *the Action Française* of Maurras. Significantly the Spanish populists were radical republicans and not right-revolutionaries, see: José Álvarez Junco*, El Emperador del Paralelo. Lerroux y la demagogia populista* (Madrid 1990).

than Barrès. Spain had become a backward country and they wanted to improve the situation of their country. It had to develop along its own lines, according to its own idiosyncrasy, not copying foreign examples. But as Spain still could learn a lot from the other European countries, and didn't have a clear enemy after losing the last remnants of its colonial empire, the nationalism defended by these intellectuals, in general, was of a more open and tolerant nature.[36]

Despite all differences, the same trends were visible in both countries. A detailed study of the rise of the intellectual in Spain has made clear that the most important innovation did not take place with the process of professionalization of both politics and literature as studied by Bourdieu and Charle, nor with the coming into existence of a group of reformist liberals that pleaded for a more interventionist policy of the government and a more active participation of the population, like Zola did in France and Costa and Galdós in Spain. The fundamental change and the rise of a radically new type of intellectual took place with the ideological break of avant-garde authors like Barrès and Unamuno with nineteenth-century bourgeois society. They were not integrated anymore in the political and cultural elite of the country as the preceding generation had been nor did they try to amplify the respectable and political influential classes within the existing, essentially bourgeois framework, as Zola and Costa had done. They consciously broke with existing society and adopted new strategies to influence the course of the new mass-society that was slowly coming into being. This decision and the consequent willingness of some of these intellectuals to adapt the message to the audience and develop a populistic political programme opened a completely new constellation

[35] Sebastian Balfour, 'The solitary peak and the dense valley: Intellectuals and masses in *fin de siècle* Spain', *Tesserae* 1 (1994-1995) 1-20, especially 9-11.
[36] In 1915 Unamuno for example put his own 'la humidad y los vivos' against the adagio of Barrès 'la terre et les morts': Miguel de Unamuno, 'La humanidad y los vivos', *La Nación* (4-1-1915) in: Idem, *Obras completas* (Madrid 1958) V, 394-403.

in which later on fascism - that would be totally unthinkable in the nineteenth century - became a possibility as well.[37]

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[37] Therefore it is surprising that in Germany, where recently a lot of research has been done on nineteenth-century bourgeois culture, this conscious break with existing society is considered by some distinguished historians as a quite superficial phenomenon. The avant-garde, they argue, did break with some bourgeois values, but stressed others like individual freedom, independance and originality: Thomas Nipperdey, *Wie das Bürgertum die Moderne fand* (Berlin 1988), Hans Mommsen, 'Die Auflösung des Bürgertums seit dem späten 19. Jahrhundert' in: Jürgen Kocka ed., *Bürger und Bürgerlichkeit im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen 1987) 288-316 and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und künstlerische Avantgarde. Kultur und Politik im deutschen Kaiserreich 1870 bis 1918* (Frankfurt am Main 1994).