

CONSTRUING EZRA POUND'S *CANTOS*

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PROLOGUE

This article was written several years ago, just before I became acquainted with George Kelly's *Psychology of Personal Constructs*. I include it here because, first, I think that Ezra Pound¹, like George Kelly, believed that learning to discern *evil* from *good* is the most important task in life. Now wait a minute, readers might say. A man who was imprisoned in a mental hospital because of a charge of treason? A man accused of anti-semitism? Such a man was primarily concerned with morals and ethics? Of course. Like Shakespeare's *King Lear*, whom we have observed in the previous article in this volume Whitehead (2016 [1991]), Pound made some serious mistakes in his efforts to know *good* and *evil* in particular and reality in general, but at least, as the *Cantos* indicate, he tried to recognize the manifestations of good and evil throughout history, and at least he was aware of the importance of the enduring human struggle to know and deal with evil. The important thing is that we learn from the real poet's and the fictional king's errors of construction.

And, then, too, I believe readers of this article will see how in my own thinking I was struggling toward ideas about human thought which Kelly had already developed, and why, when I discovered him, I felt I had experienced an epiphany.

¹ Ezra Weston Loomis Pound (1885–1972) was an expatriate American poet and critic who was a major figure in the early modernist movement. His contribution to poetry began with his development of Imagism, a movement derived from classical Chinese and Japanese poetry, stressing clarity, precision and economy of language. His best-known works include *Ripostes* (1912), *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* (1920) and the unfinished 120-section epic, *The Cantos* (1917–69). (*Wikipedia*) (*Eds.*)

DEVELOPING A HYPOTHESIS

When readers first come to Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, especially if they have read no criticism of the work, they are likely to be perplexed about the themes, meaning, and purpose of the *Cantos*. One method for trying to understand these is for readers to begin immediately to form tentative hypotheses about them and test these hypotheses against Pound's ideas as they progress through the *Cantos*. If they wait to form a hypothesis until they have read all of the *Cantos*, they are likely to be overwhelmed by the material, and probably will be unable to hold all of the complexities in their minds while they combine and recombine elements of the work. Whenever a hypothesis seems to be refuted, or seems inadequate to integrate newly introduced material, the reader can form another hypothesis, perhaps at a higher level of abstraction, in order to handle the new concepts or the reorganization of the material by the poet. Finally at the end of the first reading of the *Cantos* readers will have a hypothesis about the whole work which they can compare with theories formed by other critics. It seems unwise to turn to the critics before a first reading and its resultant hypothesis lest one's thinking about the *Cantos* be influenced by a psychological set provided by another's perceptions.²

In my own reading of the *Cantos*, I began in canto 1 with the very narrow hypothesis, possibly universal to readers who come to the *Cantos* in total naiveté, that this is a traditional epic. It seems clear in canto 1 that this is the story of Ulysses told in a slightly different style but plain

² In his paper on *Don Giovanni*, discussed in the previous article on *King Lear* in this issue of *Constructive Criticism* (Whitehead (2016 [1991])), Kelly talks of seeing with a "nude mind," i.e., not seeing what someone else tell us to see but what we see when we are on our own.

enough in intent. The final lines of canto 1 and the opening lines of canto 2 forced me to reject this hypothesis and to be somewhat cautious about forming a new one, for the elevated style of canto 1, as if it were a dream that cannot be sustained by the dreamer, breaks into a sort of confused mumbling of waking, and the puckish, petulant, crabbed voice of Ezra Pound, as if fully awake now and speaking for himself, proclaims, "Hang it all Robert Browning, / there can be but the one "Sordello." / But Sordello and my Sordello?"

Until the Hell Cantos (14 and 15), although I tried, I could form no new hypothesis to explain the introduction of such diverse personages and subjects as Sigismundo Malatesta, Eleanor of Aquitaine, Pound's own memories of Venice and Verona, bankers' meetings, and Confucius (Kung). However, the contrast between the quiet beauty of canto 13 with its tone of approval of Kung and his principles on the one hand and the brilliant ugliness of Pound's Hell – so reminiscent of a painting by Hieronymus Bosch – on the other, led me to see Pound as dichotomizing *good vs. evil* for didactic purposes. One might of course see only contrast for artistic effect, and perhaps my concept of *good vs. evil* was an oversimplification³. Still it gave me a way of organizing my perceptions⁴ of the *Cantos* (I speak of the level of meaning, leaving considerations of poetics and poetic technique entirely aside). I felt that by using the very high level abstraction *good vs. evil*, I might be able to see a pattern, then perhaps take a few steps back down the ladder of abstraction to a more definite hypothesis or hypotheses about the meaning of the *Cantos*.

³ Having read Kelly, I now know that it would be more accurate to talk about a *construct* of *good vs. evil* rather than of a *concept*.

⁴ Again, the better word would be *constructs* rather than perceptions. From this point on, throughout the paper, the word *construct* in square brackets following such words as percept(ion) or concept(ion) will remind the reader of Kelly's view that we construe (place a construction upon) things, people, and events rather than perceive or conceive them. The bipolar nature of the construct as opposed to the unitary nature of the percept or concept makes it easier to understand the oppositional thinking of humankind.

In Ezra Pound's Hell the reader finds "politicians," "betrayers of language," "those who lied for hire," "...perverts who have set money-lust before the pleasures of the senses," "vice crusaders," "unamiable liars," "slum owners," "Usurers," "panders to authority," "pets-deloup ... obscuring the texts with philology," "monopolists," "obstructors of knowledge," "obstructors of distribution," "cowardly inciters to violence," "fabians," "conservatives," and "news owners." On the first page of canto 15 one finds for the first time in capital letters the word *USURIA* as an element of Hell. Thus, half way through the *Draft of XXX Cantos*, it is possible to postulate a clear-cut dichotomy in Pound's classification of people and events in history: that which is good is friendly to art and nature; that which is evil exploits art and nature. Art and nature for Pound seem to be identical at this point – at least art is not the mimesis of nature but the expression (or even perhaps the suspiration) of nature.

However the idea of a simple dichotomy is disturbing. Certainly a poet of Pound's sensitivity and sophistication does not perceive sharp black and white – surely he must see shades of grey. At the beginning of canto 16 it seems, indeed, that Pound does see shades of grey, for outside "hell mouth" in Limbo – an area not Hell but certainly not Paradise – he describes the mad figure of William Blake and with him Peire Cardinal, Il Fiorentino, Sordello, and Augustine. For Pound, these men all have admirable qualities but in some way have failed to be effective in life: Blake protested, but ineffectively (Pound, 1968, 7176); Cardinal and Sordello also protested against inequity but through satire and not directly, while Fiorentino "tried to whitewash Aristotle's character," and, although he freed his slaves, he did so only by testament after his death, thus offering an unfavorable comparison to Cunniza da Romano who, Pound has already told us, freed her slaves while she was alive (Pound, 1968, 102-08).

VISUALIZING POUND'S CONSTRUCT OF HELL

Until I had considered the beginning of canto 16 I had in mind a simple continuum for Pound's values similar to Osgood's semantic differential. It seemed at first that for Pound *good* was identi-

cal with *art* and *nature* while *evil* was identical with exploitation which for Pound was essentially the perversion of nature.

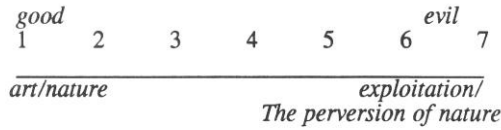


Fig. 1

Along this continuum particular people and concepts [constructs] might be placed. However, it seems from what Pound has said up to canto 16 that there would be no scores equal to 2, 3, 4, or 5 on the scale, for even the inhabitants of Limbo

would seem to deserve a score of 6 on the continuum. I wondered if there might not be a better way to visualize these concepts, and it finally occurred to me that I was oversimplifying and that there were really two dimensions: *good vs. evil*, and *art/nature vs. exploitation* which I was trying to represent in the above one dimensional schema. If I were to rotate one of these axes to the perpendicular, I might have a more flexible model. I could then imagine a line *Y-Z* which would intersect at the mid-point of the axes and below which would lie those persons and things consigned to Pound's Hell, while the segment labeled *B* in Fig. 2 below would indicate Pound's Limbo.

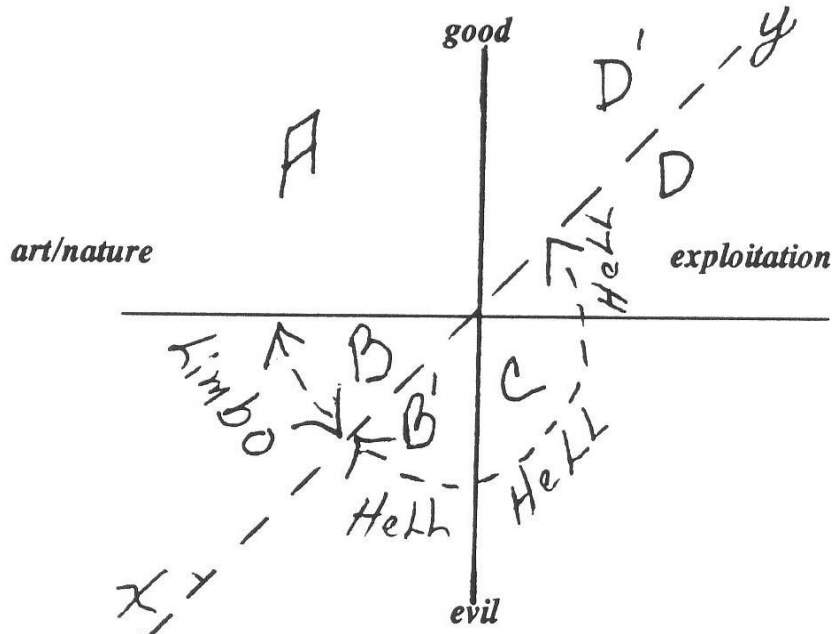


Fig. 2

Personalities and concepts already presented could now be arranged within this schema and new material could be included as I progressed through *The Cantos*.

It would be unprofitable to consider each personality and concept [construct] in the *Cantos* in order to place it in the above schema. However, major preoccupations appear and recur. Personalities, ideas, and institutions introduced which

would fall into quadrant A of Fig. 3 (*good* as well as *congruent with art and nature*) are Levy the Provencal Scholar, Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Thomas Hart Benton, those Chinese rulers who were Confucian in thought and action, and the Bank of Siena. Characters who would find themselves below the live *Y-Z* in Pound's Hell are Metevsky the armaments dealer, Winston Churchill, and Franklin D. Roose-

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vult. A special mention must be made of canto 30 also which offers pity as a concept [construct] to be placed somewhere below the line Y-Z also. I will consider this further after a discussion of

Pound's constructs which we might designate as *Kung* and *the Pagan Mystery Religions* vs. *Taoism* and the *Cult of Aty's* and *asceticism*.

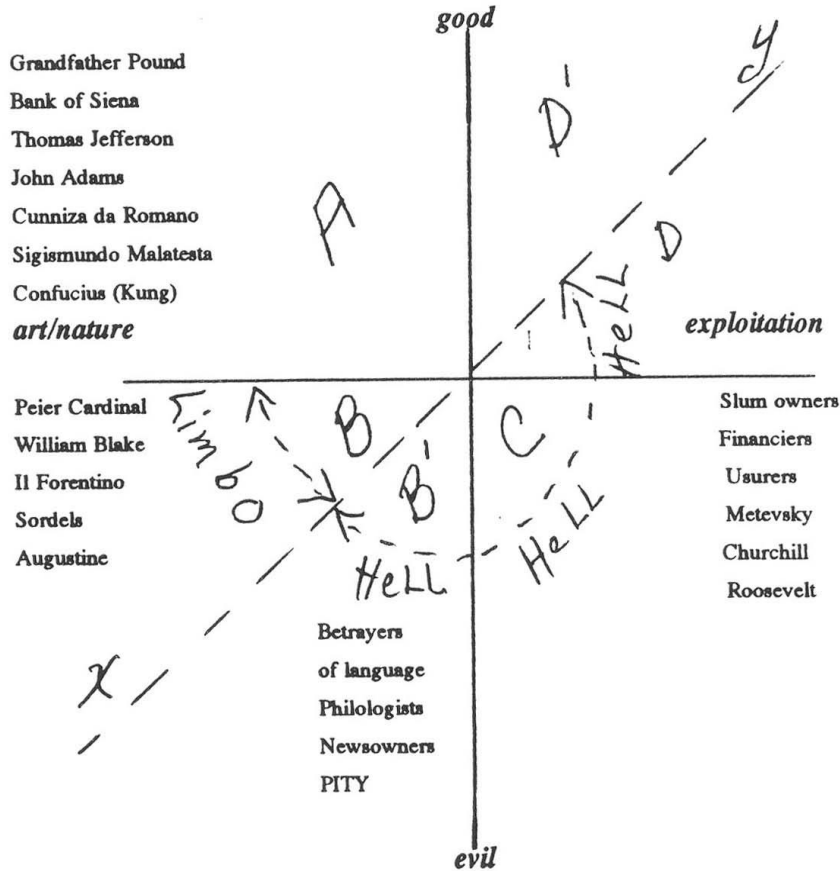


Fig. 3

As I progressed through the *Cantos* it became more and more clear to me that the Pagan Mystery Religions (particularly in view of Pound's repetitions of "Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu") were being equated with *art/nature*, while the ethics of Confucianism were being equated with [after reading Kelly I would say, were being subsumed under the construct of] *good*, while *usury* was emerging (cantos 45 and 51) as the most dangerous facet of *exploitation* and, indeed, was replacing that higher level concept [construct] in Pound's mind.

Noel Stock has suggested (lectures, University of Toledo, 1970-71) that there are three major themes in the *Cantos*: usury, the Pagan Mystery Religions, and factive personalities. Basically I

agree with this but recombine the themes in my own mind into one two-fold major theme (the Pagan Mystery Religions and Confucianism, the ethics of which would forbid usury), and one subordinate theme (the personalities). Pound's thinking, or at least the expression of his thinking in the *Cantos*, seems to climax in the Chinese and Adams cantos which I see as Pound's last statement of 'theory' before the trauma of World War II and his imprisonment at Pisa on a charge of treason which he has described in the *Pisan Cantos*. In these earlier cantos it seems that the Pagan Mystery Religions and the tenets of Confucianism merge in Pound's mind (he mentions "Kung and Eleusis" in canto 53). At least he accepts the two philosophies for the

same reasons. At the same time, as a necessary result of his acceptance of Confucianism and the Pagan Mystery Religions, he rejects the Cult of Aty's and asceticism and the tenets of Taoism. For lack of a better name I would call Pound's primary ethic *affirmation of life*. This ethic seems to equate art, nature, good government, and good economics. On the other hand Pound rejects *negation of life* which he sees in Taoism's withdrawal from the world, and especially in the chief evil, usury. Usury seems to be an economic but not purely monetary concept which includes other forms of exploitation such as the demands of a ruler for road work when the peasants need to be in the fields harvesting crops. Factive personalities are important in Pound's *affirmation of life* [construct] but are, I think, subservient to it. [Construct theory would say that the construct *factive personalities* is subsumed under the higher order construct *affirmation of life vs. negation of life*.] It is as if Pound sees a natural law – as if nature itself were the law – which man can work with or can frustrate but cannot eliminate.

CONFUCIUS AND ELEUSIS vs. TAOISM, ATYS, AND ASCETICISM

As a result of my first reading of Ezra Pound's *Cantos*, I believe that the *Cantos* are a statement in poetry of Pound's values for didactic purposes (I do not wish to argue that this is the *only* purpose). Perhaps saying that his purpose is didactic and that the goal of his teaching is moral and ethical sounds a bit puritanical to some modernists who believe that these concepts [constructs] have no place in art. However, I do not apologize for the assertion. [Neither, I think, would Pound or Kelly.] The very fact that Pound approves Confucius as he so evidently does and disapproves of Taoists ("... died of tonics and taoists," Pound says of TcIn Ngan in canto 54) points to Pound's own acceptance of the place of morals and ethics in art. Leonard Shihlien Hsu (1932, 11) in *The Political Philosophy of Confucianism* describes the conflict between Confucianism and Taoism in regard to morals in this way:

Lao Tzu maintained that the fundamental remedy of social chaos was to be found in the surrender of all discriminations between good and bad, right and wrong, beautiful and ugly, proper and

improper, just and unjust, long and short, rich and poor, and high and low. Confucius held on the other hand, that the business of government was to make these distinctions more clear, so that the people might be able to choose. Lao Tzu proposed the abolition of all government and all civilization, including all literature, class distinctions, money and political honors. Confucius believed that government, civilization, and literature should be developed to a higher degree; that property was essential, though it should be regulated; and that political honours and class distinctions were essential to induce the wise and the capable to render service to the society.

In Confucius' idea of making distinctions more clear perhaps we see why Pound seems to see things so clearly dichotomized.⁵ Pound with his western mind indicates some shades of grey in Limbo between *art/nature* and *evil*, but I found no person or idea in the *Cantos* which I felt could fit into the quadrant D/D' between the dimension [pole] of *good* and the dimension [pole] of *exploitation – now* become more clearly identified as *usury* (see Fig. 3). For Pound the distinction between these two concepts [constructs] is so clear that there can be no compromise between them⁶.

Other tenets of Confucianism which are important to the *Cantos* include the concepts of *li* and *jen*, of *Yang* and *Yin*, the principle of *shu*, the doctrine of rectification of names, and – possibly most important in relation to the *Cantos* – Confucius' method of teaching. I shall try to describe each of these concepts [constructs] briefly and relate it to the *Cantos*.

Rather than muddle the concept of *li*, I will quote Lin Yu-tang's definition:

In the narrowest sense, it means 'rituals,' 'propriety' and just 'good manners'; in an historical

⁵ Having read Kelly, I now see that human construing is always dichotomous. Our sense of shades of grey comes from our intermeshed echelons of constructs which make up our construct systems.

⁶ A construct psychologist might hypothesize that the pole of the dichotomous construct represented by the areas D and D' in Fig. 3 is submerged or suspended. Perhaps this area of "blindness" might help account for some of Pound's unrealistic and self-defeating political stances.

sense, it means the rationalized system of feudal order (that was supposedly realized in the early Chou period); in a philosophic sense, it means an ideal social order with 'everything in its place,' and in a personal sense, it means a pious, religious state of mind, very near to the word 'faith.' ... Among the Chinese scholars, Confucianism is known as the 'religion of li', the nearest translation for which would be 'religion of moral order.' It subjects the political order to the moral social order, making the latter the basis of the former (quoted in Burt, 1957, 162).

We can see a variation of this concept [construct] in Pound's historical progression in the *Cantos*. He begins in canto 1 with a blending of ancient Greece (the story), Italy (the translation from which he was translating), and Old English (the style); he progresses through the Renaissance and into the twentieth century expressing his adaptation of *li* – "reverence for the best that has come down from the past." (Ibid.) For Pound and for us other values are interwoven, but surely Cunniza's freeing of her slaves, the art of the Tempio, and the interpersonal relationship of Sigismundo with his artists may be seen as part of a western *li* which Pound would like to preserve.

The concept [construct] *jen* which balances *li* in that it prevents society from being wholly tied to the past is, according to Chinese scholars, difficult to translate but might be rendered, "the proper way in which a true man would act, in relation to any other man" (Burt, 1957, 164). Thus as new circumstances arise in the world for which there is no precedent in tradition, a man or woman would act so that he or she would be in proper relation to other men and women. This leads immediately into the principle of *shu* or *reciprocity* which is usually seen by members of western cultures as a negative statement of the Golden Rule: "Do not do unto others what you do not want others to do to you." Pound uses *jen* and *shu* in the *Cantos* in relation to international politics and economics. For instance he condemns Churchill for returning to the gold standard and thereby inflicting economic disaster on the peasants of India (cantos 74 and 76); this is an example of how man should *not* act in relation to other men.

One of the concepts [constructs] of Confu-

cianism which forms a close link with The Pagan Mystery Religions, or at least with Pound's conception [construction] of them, is that of the forces of *Yin* and *Yang* which operate in the universe. The most complete explication in Chinese literature of these forces seems to be in the *I Ching: The Book of Changes* (Wilhelm & Baines, 1967 [1950]), which Pound may or may not have known. At any rate, the ideas are general enough in Confucian literature so that Pound would have been acquainted with them. *Yang* is the male force; *Yin* the female. "Man is by nature strong, dynamic, active, and firm, and woman weak, static, inactive and tender" (Hsu, 1932, 70). When woman dominates, home, family, and society suffer. Although Pound does not indulge in a war of the sexes, he evidently does see male and female forces throughout history. These forces when in accord with the natural order, as Pound sees it, are beneficial to society as in the love of Sigismundo for his wife which resulted in his building the Tempio in her honor. They may also be destructive as in the case of Helen who dominated through her beauty and destroyed Troy. [Not everyone will construe this situation in this way, but evidently Pound did.] Pound's seeming identification of Venus in various forms with Helen and Eleanor of Aquitaine may be an adaptation (conscious or unconscious) of the *Yin* which he sees in various recurrent manifestations throughout time. The link with the Pagan Mystery Religions would be that Demeter, Persephone, and the Priestesses of Eleusis were manifestations of the *Yin*.

The doctrine of *the rectification of names* or *correcting names* has both artistic and didactic meaning. The doctrine arises from Confucius' answer to a student's question about what Confucius would do if he came into political power. Confucius replied, "What is necessary is to rectify names. If names be not correct, language will not be in accordance with the truth of things." Leonard Hsu using the *Li Chi* and *Hsien Tzu* analyzes the problem well:

"If names be not correct, languages will not be in accordance with the truth of things." The use of language or words is two-fold – to describe a certain fact and to bring out human thoughts. Each fact and each idea should have a distinct proper name. If the name is confusing, the fact and the idea will also be confused. Then the lan-

guage loses its original utility. If the truth of facts and thoughts are confused, there will be confusion of right and wrong. White appears as black and black as white. Thus, in an ill-governed state moral integrity is destroyed, and laws are wrongfully applied. The right appears as wrong, and wrong seems to be right. The public does not learn the truth, and so permits itself to be influenced by false propaganda. The people do not know what to do in private and public affairs. Even law-abiding officers and learned scholars are unable to escape from the pressure of falsehood. There is a state of indecision, and the people grope in the darkness. In other words, there is a hopeless psychological and political anarchy (Hsu, 1932, 47).

Pound makes mention of this doctrine from time to time in the *Cantos*; for instance in canto 76, “the word is made perfect ... better gift can no man make to a nation / than the sense of Kung fu Tseu.” More often Pound implies this doctrine of rectification by its use, as when he differentiates between “moderate and legitimate interest,” “usury,” and “Supernescheck” (canto 42).

Confucian education and methods of teaching are not directly discussed in the *Cantos*, but Pound seems very aware of the Confucian values and appears to practice them. Confucius said, “Education begins with poetry, is strengthened through proper conduct *li* and is consummated through music” (Burtt, 1957, 169). According to Edwin A. Burtt, “The role of poetry is to instill an inward taste for discrimination in thought and refinement in conduct; the central lesson of *The Book of Poetry*, according to Confucius, is that one should ‘... keep his heart right.’ To master this lesson is to acquire a stable foundation of moral behavior” (Burtt, 1957, 169). Thus, again, we have a statement of the moral purpose in poetry. Confucius’ method of teaching is indirect. He will not harangue, but will attempt to bring forth from his students their own perceptions [constructs] which result from their confronting the material he has provided them. He must attempt to impart his wisdom to others, but he cannot be sure that they will accept it. Perhaps Pound is using Confucius’ method when he gives us those fragments from letters of Jefferson and Adams and chronicles concerning Sigismundo. We possibly would not know of them if he did not give them to us in the proper

context, but we must draw our own conclusions; he will not tell us what to think [how to construe them].

One may find Pound’s approval of the individual Confucian concepts [constructs] throughout the *Cantos*. However, perhaps the whole is greater than the sum of its parts and it is the total quality of the affect (feeling or emotion) stated intellectually – Pound would probably call it the Paideuma of Confucius – that attracts him. “Nothing matters but the quality of the affections,” he says in canto 77.

While the Paideuma of Confucianism is attractive to Pound, the Paideuma of Taoism is repulsive. He never tells us why in so many words in the *Cantos*, although we see clearly that he dislikes the “taozers,” “eunuchs,” and “bhuddists” (canto 52). Since we know what attracts him in Confucianism we can infer the reasons for his dislike for the alternatives. It is perhaps not the true philosophy of Taoism which Pound knows and rejects. Edwin A. Burtt points out that Taoism, like every great religion, has become corrupted:

... and it is necessary to distinguish between the insights of the pioneers who founded it and the popular superstitions which arise through mingling their teachings with persistent primitive notions or through interpreting their basic ideas so as to satisfy childish demands on the part of their followers. This distinction is especially sharp in the case of Taoism. As a philosophical religion, centered in the deep wisdom of Lao Tse and Chuan Tse and preserved in the beautiful Taoist monasteries by their philosophically minded followers through the centuries, Taoism is one of the most provocative and profoundly instructive among the civilized religions of the world ... As a popular religion, practiced by the priests, many of whom cater without scruple to the perennial weakness and foibles of the masses, it has degenerated into a system of magic, preserved through the generations because of man’s incorrigible belief that there must be some simple way of gaining prosperity and immortality by applying the right techniques (Burtt, 1957, 185).

Even in the pure form of Taoism, however, Pound would find ideas to disapprove of. One of these would be, “The name that can be named is

not the real name" (Burt, 1957, 189). That the 'truth' expressed in words will always elude him certainly would be an unwelcome thought to any poet, and the conflict with the Confucian doctrine of *rectification* is obvious. Another concept [construct] even more antithetical to Pound would be the renunciation of the world and of union with it through the body and senses. Lao Tze says, "Often times, one strips oneself of passion / In order to see the secret of life," and "Curtail thy desire," and "Therefore the sage puts himself last, / and finds himself in the foremost place, / Regards his body as accidental" (Burt, 1957, 189). To Pound, the body is not accidental but rather mind, intellect, soul – or whatever one calls it – is one with the body. This idea is seen most clearly in that recurring phrase of Pound, "Sacrum, sacrum, inluminatio coitu," already quoted. For Pound, then, not renunciation of the body, the senses, the passion, but the natural use of them, will lead to the greatest good.

The Taoist principle of non-action would certainly, also, not appeal to Pound for where, then, would be those factive personalities like Sigismundo Malatesta, John Adams, Thomas Jefferson, and, in fact, Pound himself? – where would be those people who act even when it is impossible for them to do so? Confucius prized highly the description of himself as the man who 不可行爲 (is not able and yet acts) (*Analects*, 14.41).

As, on an essentially intellectual level, Pound accepts Confucianism and rejects Taoism, so, on an essentially emotional level he accepts the Pagan Mystery Religions and Eleusis and rejects the Cult of Atya and asceticism. That he does reject the latter is evident from his statement from "Terra Italica" quoted by Noel Stock in *Poet in Exile*: "And this force 'some non-Christian and inextinguishable source of beauty' – the force of the Eleusinian Mysteries, in other words was the strongest counter force to the cult of Atya and asceticism" (Stock, 1964, 23).

Frazer's description of the ancient ceremony at Eleusis indicates some of the elements which would appeal to Pound:

In the great mysteries solemnised at Eleusis ... Demeter appears to have been represented by the union of the hierophant with the priestess of

Demeter, who acted the parts of god and goddess. But their intercourse was only dramatic or symbolical, for the hierophant had temporarily deprived himself of his virility by an application of hemlock. The torches having been extinguished, the pair descended into a murky place, while the throng of worshippers awaited in anxious suspense the result of the mystic congress. ... After a time the hierophant reappeared and in a blaze of light silently exhibited to the assembly a reaped ear of corn, the fruit of the divine marriage (Frazer, 1967, 165).

Here are the symbolism, mystery, dark and light, fertility, and union with nature. The priestess and hierophant, whether their intercourse was symbolical or actual, were life-giving figures seen by their worshippers as capable of coition and reproduction. In contrast, the priests of Attis mutilated themselves, thus rendering themselves incapable of intercourse and fertility. Frazer states that there are two legends about Attis: one that he was killed by a boar as Adonis was, and another that he died from self-mutilation. This latter version, Frazer believes, was intended to explain the practice of self-mutilation by the priests. However, another version of the myth exists which states that Cybele caused Attis to fall into a jealous rage and that in his madness he castrated himself and died. There are several significances in the legend of Attis: one is that the relation between Attis and Cybele was basically evil, based on jealousy rather than on productive love, and that Cybele was the dominant one in the relationship. When we remember that Confucius said that when the female force *Yin* dominates, individuals and society will suffer, we see another link between Confucianism and the Pagan Mystery Religions. The cult of Attis, then, is life-defeating and life-rejecting, as is asceticism, whether it appears in Buddhism, Taoism, Judaism, or Christianity. At its best, its virtue is negative while the virtue of Confucianism and the Pagan Mystery Religions is affirmative. That Pound constructs for himself a connection between Confucianism and western mystery religions and their secret societies is clear from his complex and obscure references to Yggdrasil, "the room in Poitiers," Jacques de Molay, and the Chinese secret society called the San Ku in canto 90, but to me the importance of this unifying theme is best demonstrated in the expression

of his instinctive need for a philosophy that could include both body and mind/soul. Since Descartes established the mind-body dichotomy, western society has been seeking to reunify the elements into one whole person. The dichotomy never arose in Confucianism, although we have seen that it was present in Taoism. Only in the latter years of the present century has the philosophy of holism become popular among such psychologists and personality theorists as Goldstein, Murray, Murphy, and Rogers [and especially in Kelly]. I am unwilling to theorize that Pound influenced these theorists, although he may have; rather I think it was something in the air – a wish for wholeness – and an idea whose time had finally arrived (again) in the twentieth century.

Since Pound is a poet and not a systematic philosopher, one expects to find flaws and contradictions in his ideas. One of the most glaring is the contradiction between the doctrine of *rectification* or *correcting names* and Pound's devotion to the Chinese ideogram. In *rectification* one assumes there is a denotative one-to-one relationship between thing or concept [construct] and its name. However, in the ideogram (according to Pound) there is a fusing of names and identities in order to convey a connotative, intuitive meaning rather than a denotative intellectual one. Pound might, perhaps, find a way to reconcile the contradiction, or he might prefer to quote Walt Whitman, "I contradict myself? / Very well then ... I contradict myself; / I am large ... I contain multitudes ("Song of Myself")."

A more serious contradiction, or at least it seems to me a contradiction, is the pejorative use of the word *pity* in canto 30. It is difficult to understand how one can accept the lenient and kindly concepts [constructs] of Confucian justice, can condemn prison practices as Pound does in the *Pisan Cantos* and elsewhere, and still argue against *pity*. It is possible to construct some sort of rationalization – modern science keeps alive those who would normally die, prolonging their suffering and perhaps allowing them to reproduce defective offspring – but the moral question is deep, and Pound, according to his method (some may say according to his madness), does not answer it to our satisfaction.

This survey of themes, meaning, and purpose in the *Cantos* is at best a preliminary step to understanding them. Before I finish – if I ever do –

my study of them, I may alter my perceptions [constructions], but at present my conclusion that Pound is offering his readers a value system in which the primary dimensions [constructs] are *good vs. evil* and *nature/art vs. exploitation/the perversion of nature* is a framework for study and a place to stand while I examine them more closely and read others' critical hypotheses concerning the *Cantos*.

EPILOGUE

To the often posed question of a formal structure in the *Cantos*, I can only say that, even after years of reading them, I can see no sign that Pound had an artistic structure in the traditional sense in mind for the *Cantos* when he wrote the first 30. I can only say that we usually think a person is an artist if he or she produces that which we classify as art. However, Pound's *Cantos* might suggest a feeling in him, perhaps not well thought out, that if a person is an artist, that which he or she produces will be art. Then the structure of the work becomes the reflection of the bent of the artist's mind [the reflection of the structure of his or her construct system].

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