

The Truth behind the Revealed Truth

— Modernity and Truth in the Apocalyptic Visions of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound —

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The European mind has long imagined its own ending, as if it were indispensable to it. Apocalypse is one of the privileged frames of reference for this, because it can provide a 'still point' where all events converge and their absolute meaning as God's Truth is revealed. Many writers have used the idea of apocalypse as a literary source, and have spoken in an imminent 'apocalyptic tone,' in their works. However, in modernist poetry, there exists a complicated problem in telling 'the Truth.' That is, modernist poets could not simply and naively depend upon the Revelation of Truth as a frame of reference. For example, Yeats, though he wrote *The Second Coming* (1919), one of the most explicitly apocalyptic modernist poems, and calculated an ending for history in 1927, declared himself that he did not accept it 'literally.'⁽⁹⁾ It seems to be a characteristic attitude toward apocalypse in the modern age.

This attitude seems to correspond with the traditional concept of 'irony'; that is, saying something without accepting it literally. Northrop Frye once suggested that the art of modernist poetry suited the general pattern of the mode of irony. According to Frye, in modernist poetry, "the ironic method of saying one thing and meaning something rather different is incorporated in Mallarmé's doctrine of the avoidance of direct statement."⁽¹⁰⁾ This kind of ironic method is, in a sense, the poet's attempt to keep an ironic distance from his own statement in his poetry. However, the imminent 'apocalyptic tone' in modernist poetry seems to require special attention. This apocalyptic tone does not only mean that what the speaker is describing is an apocalyptic vision, but also implicitly insists that what the speaker is telling us is, at a deeply serious level, 'the

absolute Truth.'⁽¹¹⁾ In this sense, it is the characteristic rhetoric of a 'discourse of truth,' such as prophecy, which ought to be followed by its 'realization.' We might ask if it is really possible to keep being detached from one's own statements, when one speaks in an apocalyptic tone. However, this incompatibility of irony and apocalyptic tone seems to be what modernist poets have had to confront, and such a situation of double-bind seems to have forced them to solve this problem by their 'actions,' as if the poets themselves had performed as the protagonists of a fictional discourse of the apocalypse they had spoken. In a way, the apocalyptic tone of their poems has become 'performative' as a speech-act.

We can see this, for example, in the works of T.S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, and it is their work I want to go on to discuss. These two poets both followed an individual process of commitment during the 1930s and 1940s, but their 'notorious' commitments have been much discussed. My concern here is rather to understand the 'context' they were involved in. To deal with this, I intend to examine two points: T.S. Eliot's tendency to purgation "from fire by fire" as described in *Little Gidding* (1942), and Ezra Pound's vehement attack against usury as described in *Canto XLV: with usura* (1937). The voices speaking in these poems seem to take the 'apocalyptic tone'; that is, they seem to be trying to tell the 'Truth,' without any ironic consciousness.

Eliot, for example, seems to be telling the truth symbolically in these lines from *Little Gidding* which amplify the words of Julian of Norwich:

And all shall be well and

All manners of things shall be well
 By the purification of motive
 In the ground of our beseeching. (II. ll. 47–50)⁶⁰

On the other hand, Pound almost blindly repeats only one economic 'truth' that "usura" should be purged away because it is a "sin against nature," with an imminent 'apocalyptic tone':

With usura, sin against nature,
 is thy bread ever more of stale rags
 is thy bread dry as paper
 with no mountain wheat, no strong flour
 (II. 13–16)⁶¹

There is a remarkable difference between the attitude toward 'truth' in these two poets; one tried to tell the Truth as far as possible directly, and the other negatively told the truth by attacking any 'deviation from truth.' Both of them depended upon different kinds of 'truth'; in one case religious and in the other economic. In a sense, Eliot tends to an idea of the total presence of Truth in purgatorial fire, while Pound attempts to avoid the critical point of 'panic' such as hyper-inflation. In this paper, I want to look first at the process these poets followed in arriving at the 'truth' they had conceived in the apocalyptic visions.

If we turn first to Eliot, it seems possible to say that the early Eliot preceding the famous self-definition in 1928, and the redirection of *Ash Wednesday* (1930), was seriously occupied with his own ironic consciousness. It is often pointed out that his early poems are ironic, but what is most ironic seems to be the 'form' of these poems. In this sense, it is suggestive that his first volume of poems was entitled *Prufrock and Other Observations*. That is to say, the poet started his career as an 'observer.' According to Northrop Frye, this attitude corresponds to 'irony' in its etymological sense. "The ironic fiction-writer, then, deprecates himself and, like Socrates, pretends to know nothing, even he is ironic. Complete objectivity and suppression of all explicit moral judgements are essential to his method. ...the ironist fables without moralizing, and has no object but his subject."⁶² The poet who pretends to be

an observer is necessarily an ironist. Eliot himself argued such an attitude in a famous passage in *Tradition and the Individual Talent* (1919), without using the word 'irony':

Poetry is not the turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. But, of course, only those who have personality and emotions know what it means to want to escape from these things.⁶³

The poet 'deprecates himself' here by reducing poets ironically to the status of mere observers, who escape from emotion and personality. However, at the same time, by the deliberate act of deprecating himself, he maintains his personality on another higher level, or precisely, his 'subjectivity' which *can* even deliberately deprecate itself. This is irony in Frye's sense. Irony here makes it possible to maintain a kind of 'transcendental' subjectivity which can operate irony itself.

And it is also suggestive that what the poet 'observed' was a self without subjectivity, that is, Prufrock, who cannot make any subjective decision, who has:

...time yet for a hundred indecisions,
 And for a hundred visions and revisions,
 Before the taking of a toast and tea. (II. 31–33)

The poet has maintained his own subjectivity by keeping an 'ironic distance' from the self without subjectivity, in the act of 'writing' the poem. The ironic and relentless objectification of the lack of subjectivity in his poem seems to be a strategy to keep his own subjectivity as a 'writing subject.' However, as such an ironic stance became consolidated, the despondency of the figure Eliot 'objectified' in his poems became increasingly serious. In *Gerontion* (1920), the protagonist is an old man with "a dull head among windy spaces" who suffers not only from lack of subjectivity, but also from physical paralysis and impotence in communication: "I have lost my sight, smell, hearing, taste and touch/ How should I use it for

your closer contact?"(ll.58 – 59) It is as if the poet had lost control of his own ironic consciousness, and the 'object' of his observation has been thrown into an extremely wretched condition. That is, the distance of irony which the poet tried to maintain had started to extend itself with unsettling speed, without the poet's control.

However, *The Waste Land* (1922) shows a remarkable change in the position of the poet's subjectivity; that is, there appears a 'self-commentary' between the poem and the poet, one in which Tiresias has a privileged position. The note says:

Tiresias, although a mere spectator and not indeed a 'character', is yet the most important personage in the poem, uniting all the rest. ...all the women are one woman, and the two sexes meet in Tiresias. What Tiresias sees, in fact, is the substance of the poem.⁽⁶⁾

All the impotence of the old man in *Gerontion* is inverted here to become the omnipotence of the blind prophet. At the same time, a structural change in the poet's position is reflected in this. First of all, the position of the poet who adds comments on his own poem seems to resemble that of a prophet. In general, any comments or notes, that is to say, purport to be a 'truth' about the text which they belong to. From this viewpoint, what characterizes 'self-commentary' is that what it tells has the complexion of absolute truth about the poet's own statements. By adding notes to his own poem, the poet seems to insist that he is 'the holder of truth' about his own poem, as all prophets are the holders of the words of truth. And we can find that what composes 'truth' about this poem is what Eliot called 'Tradition,' as "an ideal order" composed of "the existing monuments," from *Upanishad* to Nerval's sonnet. It is important that Tiresias is defined as the personage who "unites all the rest," and what this blind prophet "sees" is considered as "the substance of the poem." And, at the same time, he is "a mere spectator and not indeed a character." These definitions seem to, in fact, refer to the poet himself, because it is the poet himself who unites the existing monuments, from the transcendental 'third place' of commentary.

Now we can summarize the process the poet had followed so far. At first, he tried to keep 'the distance of irony' between his self and his statements, and it resulted in the observations in his early poems. The poet pretended to be 'a mere spectator,' and by this ironic act, he paradoxically maintained his subjectivity as a poet. However, as Paul de Man said in his essay on irony, "irony possesses an inherent tendency to gain momentum and not to stop until it has run its full course."⁽⁷⁾ As his irony does gain momentum, the distance Eliot tried to maintain started to extend itself ceaselessly. Then, the poet located the position of 'truth' in the 'third place' between his self and his statement, in the self-commentary of *The Waste Land*. It seems possible to find a shift, from the poet as an observer to the poet as a prophet (the holder of the words of truth). It is also a shift from irony which separates the speaker from his own statement, to prophecy which is necessarily followed by the realization of the statement. Eliot replaced the distance of irony with a temporal distance between the prophecy and its realization; he then started to try to 'redeem' the distance. In *Ash Wednesday* the poet wrote: "Redeem/ The time. Redeem/ The unread vision in the higher dream".(IV. ll.18 – 20) The apocalyptic tone in these lines is imperative. It is easy to point to his conversion to Catholicism as an absolute truth behind this imperative. However, what the poet actually tried to redeem was, in fact, the distance of irony which had separated him from any direct 'presence.' The apocalyptic tone has, as it were, consumed the irony.

In 1924, the poet had warned against the obliteration of the distinction between literature and religion, and said that it was most dangerous to confuse them. However, a decade later, in the lectures included in *After Strange Gods* (1933), he announced that he "did not wish to preach only to the converted, but primarily to those who, never having applied moral principle to literature quite explicitly are possibly convertible."⁽⁸⁾ Any distinctions and distances are dissolved in Truth. And the fire of purgation, which the poet had quoted from Dante's *Purgatorio* in *The Waste Land* appeared as the symbol of the Revelation of God's Truth, in the poet's apocalyptic tone.⁽⁹⁾ In *The Idea of*

Christian Society (1939), the poet speaks obviously in an 'apocalyptic tone':

the only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilization, is to become Christian. That prospect involves, at least, discipline, inconvenience and discomfort: but here as hereafter the alternative to hell is purgatory.⁽¹²⁾

This purgatorial fire also consumes the temporal distance from the realization of Christian society which Eliot predicted as a 'prophet' in this book. It is this purgatorial fire which redeems the whole distance which separates us from the Revelation of Truth, as "the still point of the turning world."

In *Little Gidding*, at last, the poet found the right location for such a purgatorial fire; that is, "Now and in England." The poet wrote:

If you came this way,
Taking any route, starting from anywhere,
At any time or at any season,
It would always be the same. (I. ll. 41-44)

These lines tell us of the absolute abandonment of the whole *substantial* distance to Revelation of Truth through purgatorial fire. If the total presence of Truth is attained, any distances which separated the present from Truth would be nothing but arbitrary; "It would always be the same." Thus, proper names become meaningless, because any singularity is merely arbitrary in comparison with 'absolute' Truth, as in Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit* which argues about 'absolute knowledge,' and includes no proper names. The "familiar compound ghost" who has the "look of some dead master" in this poem has no proper name, though we can identify him with Yeats or Dante. And the apocalyptic vision of the purgatorial fire in section IV includes neither proper names nor specific dates:

The dove descending breaks the air
With flame of incandescent terror
Of which the tongues declare

The one discharge from sin and error.

The only hope, or else despair

Lies in the choice of pyre or pyre—

To be redeemed from fire by fire. (IV. ll. 1-7)

In fact, this apocalyptic vision originally had a specific date and proper name; that is, the air attacks on London in May, 1941. However, all the proper names and specific dates, which indicate irreplaceable singularity, seem to be dissolved in the fire of purgation. Only one privileged proper name remains: "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment/ Is England and nowhere. Never and always." (I. ll. 54-55) What this privileging tells us is that the poet has succeeded in abandoning the whole distance between Revelation of Truth and "Now and in England". Instead of locating the purgatorial fire in any particular place, he has at last abandoned the distance itself, which separated Apocalypse from anytime/anywhere.

While Eliot replaced his ironic consciousness with an apocalyptic tone, Ezra Pound on the other hand followed a different process. He was, as Octavio Paz said, not a 'conservative' like Eliot but a 'reactionary.' That is, he had nothing to conserve but only 'reacted' against what corresponds to 'irony' in Eliot. He could neither nullify it nor dissolve it in the absolute Truth of God, but tried to 'exclude' it. And if we turn to Pound's economic vision, which resulted in a vehement and persistent attack on usury, we can find that he was describing here a kind of apocalyptic vision; that is to say, an economic apocalypse. Interestingly enough, though his frame of reference was not Catholicism but economics, he was attacking usury in the name of a kind of 'God' and was insisting on the 'redemption of time.' But it was not the God of Christianity, it was the God who had an 'invisible hand' in the market. In the poet's economics, this God was put together in a class with 'nature', which was opposed to 'artificial' money. We see this if we examine the premises of Pound's economics.

The classical school of economics had, in a sense, a theological nature; it was based on the idea of God's invisible hand. Economists assumed the essential correspondence of supply and demand. The economist

Jean Baptiste Say, an admirer of Adam Smith, founded the doctrine of "Say's law": which says "products are paid for by products, and supply creates its own demand. ...production increases not only the supply of goods but, by virtue of the requisite cost payments to the factors of production, also creates the demand to purchase these goods." That is, he implies that the capitalist system will always be able to absorb increases in productivity, and this natural and necessary process of equilibrating the market by absorbing productivity and creating demand may be seen as "the invisible hand of God." This is the 'theology' in the classical school.

However, this God of economics exists only in a system of exchange and barter. In such a system, if one receives the other's product, he has to give his product to the other at the same time; there is no 'temporal delay' in this exchange. And this simultaneity makes it possible for the invisible hand to function rightly. However, if money is introduced into the system, this simultaneity collapses; one does not have to sell his product immediately. If one does not spend the money he got by selling his product, and saves it, the demand will decrease as much as the money he saves, and the essential correspondence of supply and demand will inevitably collapse. Under such conditions, nothing prevents the occurrence of a situation in which everyone prefers saving money to spending it; that is, the possibility of a 'panic' such as hyper-inflation is inevitably latent in this condition. This is the main problem all economists in modern age have had to confront as the starting point of their thought, and Pound also tried to face it.⁽¹³⁾

In a sense, it is nothing but this disequilibrium caused by money as the introduction of temporal delay that Pound detested, and wanted to 'redeem' in his economics. The poet detested money as the 'representation' of goods, as he disliked 'abstraction' in the discourse of philosophy.⁽¹⁴⁾ However, money is not only the representation of goods, but has another nature of multiplying itself as 'interest.' And this is symbolized in the 'usury' which the poet vehemently attacked.

Usury had long been blamed for 'making money beget itself.' Aristotle showed hostility to usurers

because they profit from money itself. And in *The Merchant of Venice*, Antonio says: "I neither lend nor borrow/ By taking nor by giving of excess," "for when did friendship take/ A breed for barren metal of his friend?" And usury was traditionally considered as the 'robbery of time' because what the usurers 'sold' was the time between the moment of falling into debt and that of paying it with interest. 'Interest' is in fact the price paid for 'time.' In this sense, usurers, who profit from 'selling' time which is God's property, ceaselessly extend the temporal delay between supply and demand which once formed a correspondence. Usury multiplies time 'against nature.'⁽¹⁵⁾

What Pound enthusiastically wanted to retrieve in his economics was the 'natural' correspondence; the total supply should correspond with total demand, and the opposite should also be true. He thought if 'artificial' money was done away with, or at least was reduced to a precise representation of products, that 'natural' correspondence would be retrieved. From this viewpoint, Pound endeavoured to found his own economics under the influence of the economist, C.H. Douglas.

Douglas's central claim dealt with the artificial 'deviation' from this natural correspondence; he claimed that "total cost exceeds total purchasing power" because "the price includes non-existent value."⁽¹⁶⁾ Pound praised his claim, and wrote in *Canto XXXVIII* (1933):

and there is and must be therefore a clog
and the power to purchase can never
(under the present system) catch up with
prices at large, (ll.122-125)

Pound seemed to think that, if non-existent value as a 'clog' should be done away with, the natural correspondence of total cost and purchasing power would be retrieved. And this clog was, according to Douglas, 'artificial' financial credit, which was opposed to 'real credit' which is "the rate at which a community can deliver goods and services as demanded."⁽¹⁷⁾ That is, real credit is the natural 'expression' or 'representation' of demand, without any artificial deviation. In *Canto*

XLIII Pound describes it thus: "there first was the fruit of nature/ there was the whole will of the people." (ll.124 - 125) While financial credit is an artificial creation of the manipulators of money, such as bankers as 'modern usurers,' real credit naturally represents "the whole will of the people." From this viewpoint, in order to keep money as an 'adequate representation' of demand, Pound supported Douglas's idea of reviving the medieval notion of the "just price": the notion that the price of each item should be fixed.⁽¹⁸⁾ Moreover, arguing the possibility of panic as inflation, Pound believed that it was "perfectly easy to increase the volume of money in circulation without debasing its value" as long as the flow of money was an adequate representation of desired goods and service available.⁽¹⁹⁾ The poet suggested: "When prices are fixed by government the value of unit of money does not decline until you print it against more goods than people want or more services than they want."⁽²⁰⁾ Thus, one characteristic of his economics seems to be the reduction of money to a kind of 'objective correlative' of demand. Reacting against the self-multiplication of money by the bankers or usurers, which would result in economic panic as inflation, the poet tried to keep money as temporal delay between supply and demand absolutely fixed. However, as Pound said in *Canto XLV*:

with usura is no clear demarcation
and no man can find site for his dwelling.

(ll.18-19)

because 'usura' is a self-multiplying deviation from the fixed order. And, on the other hand, nature as a fixed order of things seems to be out of the order of 'time' (as 'entropy'), which decreases productivity and causes everything to deteriorate. However, once usura is introduced:

with usura, sin against nature,
is thy bread ever more of stale rags
is thy bread dry as paper,
with no mountain wheat, no strong flour (ll.13-16)

The apocalyptic vision at last appears. It seems to be, in fact, a reaction against what causes collapse in the poet's imaginary ideal order, but this ideal order would be made possible only by the 'repression' of money and usura as the reifications of time, things which endlessly deviate from a fixed order and lead to a 'panic' like inflation. However, it seems important to find the same kind of 'ideal order' in other writings of the poet. In *A Retrospect* (1918), Pound described the principles of Imagism as follows:

1. Direct treatment of the 'thing' whether subjective or objective.
2. To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.⁽²¹⁾

We cannot help associating the poet's economics in which he tried to minimize what mediates the exchange of 'the things' with "direct treatment of the thing." And if we slightly change the words in the second principle — 'word' into 'money,' 'presentation' into 'representation of demand' — it would also adequately represent the principles of the poet's economics. From this viewpoint, it seems difficult not to associate the idea of 'le mot juste,' or the poet's persistent insistence on correct terminology and precise definition of word ('正名') with 'just price' (fixed price) in Pound's economics. And it seems also possible to connect the ideal order in his economics with his idea of 'locality of culture,' which resulted in the extremely radical insistence on 'defence of culture' in the poet's notorious wartime broadcasts from Rome.⁽²²⁾ Thus, the essential idea which the poet's economic thought was based on seems to penetrate almost all his thought. The strictly fixed order in his economics seems to be not only his 'ideal,' but also his 'obsession.'

The poet's vehement attack against usury seems to be a reaction against inflation as 'panic,' because now we know a kind of 'inflation' occurred in the poet's mind. It may be an inflation caused not by the collapse of the correspondence between supply and demand, but by the collapse of correspondence between another polarity; 'action and thought.'⁽²³⁾ It occurred in the poet's hero-worship of Mussolini. The poet praised Mussolini

because he corresponded to his ideal of the hero as the personification of 'unity of action and thought.'⁽²⁴⁾ However, though at first the poet simply praised this unity (or correspondence), he gradually gave priority to 'action' over 'thought.' For example: "Not only is the truth of a given idea measured by the degree and celerity wherewith it goes into action, but a very distinct component of truth remains ungrasped by the non-participant in the action."⁽²⁵⁾ At last, an 'inflation' occurred, and the correspondence completely collapsed; he wrote "Ideas are true as they go into action."⁽²⁶⁾ And he then started to devote himself to the 'action' of propaganda of the 'ideas' of fascism. In fact, this is exactly what the poet had once tried to avoid; 'panic' caused by the collapse of 'correspondence.' The tendency to demand an imaginary correspondence in the economic order seems to be, in fact, a 'reaction' against a radical disequilibrium in the poet's own mind.

In conclusion, we can find two types of truth in these poets. Eliot depended upon a truth which could completely nullify the consciousness of distance. It functions as 'the still point of the turning world,' where absolute correspondence would be attained. And it urged the poet to follow a *diachronic process of abandoning 'distance from truth,'* by the act of predicting the forthcoming 'Christian society' through purgatorial fire. That is, 'Truth' for Eliot was a point of 'zero degree' where any distance and difference are nullified at last. The total presence of Truth was, at the same time, the complete disappearance of proper names and specific dates. In this sense, he resembled Hegel, who 'completed' the metaphysics of presence. On the other hand, Pound depended upon truth as a strictly ordered system outside the temporal order. As we saw before, it reified as *synchronic expressions of one truth* in the poet's writings in general. And in *Canto XLV* we can find 'juxtaposition' of one truth, 'usura should be excluded,' in various forms. The poet is telling only one truth in various 'expressions' in this poem. In this sense, he resembled Leibniz, who thought each multiple monad 'expresses' one substance.⁽²⁷⁾ However, these classifications of the two poet's 'truth' are superficial, because there is another truth behind them, as we saw, that is, Eliot's process of struggle with his own ironic

consciousness, and Pound's desperate repression of 'panic' as the irresistible tendency to ceaseless deviation from the strict order.⁽²⁸⁾ In this sense, what 'apocalypse' reveals seems to be indeed the truth of the poets. 'Truth' for these poets was, in a way, *the result* of their repression of their own 'truth.' As 'modernist' poets, they could no longer tell Truth naively, and their complicated relationship with Truth is, in fact, what characterized them as truly 'modern.' In apocalyptic visions as the critical point of the poets' 'modernity,' there inevitably exists the truth of a voice who tells Truth, the poet's truth behind the revealed Truth.

Notes

This is a revised version of a paper read at The British Council English Literature Seminar for Postgraduate Students, September 1992.

- (1) See Frank Kermode, *The Sense of an Ending: Studies in the Theory of Fiction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p.98.
- (2) Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism: Four Essays* (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1957) p.61.
- (3) On the specific use of the words "apocalyptic tone" in the context of this paper, see Jacques Derrida, *D'un ton apocalyptique adopté naguère en philosophie* (Of an Apocalyptic Tone Recently Adopted in Philosophy) (Paris: Editions Galilée, 1983), pp.69-71.
- (4) T. S. Eliot, *Collected Poems 1909 - 1962* (London: Faber and Faber, 1963), p.220. All references to Eliot's poems are to this edition.
- (5) Ezra Pound, *The Cantos of Ezra Pound* (New York: New Directions, 1970), p.229. All references to Pound's *Cantos* are to this edition.
- (6) Frye, op. cit., pp.40-41.
- (7) Eliot, "Tradition and the Individual Talent" (1919), rpt. in *Selected Essays* (London: Faber and Faber, 1932) p.21.
- (8) Eliot, *Collected Poems*, p.82.
- (9) Paul de Man, "The Rhetoric of Temporality," *Blindness and Insight: Essays in the Rhetoric of*

Contemporary Criticism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1983) p.215.

- (10) Eliot, "After Strange Gods" (1933), qtd. in William M. Chace, *The Political Identities of Ezra Pound and T. S. Eliot* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1973), p.159.
- (11) From our point of view, the general trend among intellectuals in this period is suggestive. For example, it seems possible to find a curious correspondence in the positions of Eliot and Martin Heidegger in the year 1933. In 1933, while Eliot gave the lectures ("After Strange Gods") at The University of Virginia, Heidegger gave the famous "Rectorship Address" at Freiburg University. In *Being and Time* (1927), the philosopher had warned that the word *spirit* (Geist) should be avoided, and thereafter he had not failed to enclose this word with quotation marks («Geist» / "spirit"). However, in the address in 1933, Geist 'presented itself' without quotation marks; that is, he started to praise *spirit* directly. Geist has, as it were, consumed quotation marks — and the philosopher started to explicitly connect *spirit* to flame which inflames 'by itself.' And it was in the same year when he obliterated the distinction between metaphysics and politics, and started to commit himself definitively in politics. Of course this resemblance is merely superficial; for example, while Eliot's flame was originally derived from Dante, Heidegger's flame was from Trakl. And while Eliot's position was religious (as a Christian), Heidegger's position was (considered as) 'purely metaphysical.' However, considering the close connection between spirit and flame in Eliot's poetry, this 'superficial' resemblance seems not to be negligible, for both of them seemed to achieve one of the possible destinations of the 'Western' metaphysics in their thought. Anyway, at least, it should be noted that one of the critical point of modernity presented itself as "Zeitgeist" — literally! — in the year 1933. (And in the same year, Paul Valéry held the international conference on "the

future of *l'esprit d'Europe*." See Jacques Derrida, *Of Spirit: Heidegger and the Question*, trans. Geoffrey Bennington and Rachel Bowlby (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1989) pp.31 – 46 and pp.83 – 98, and Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe, *Heidegger, Art and Politics: The Fiction of the Political*, trans. Chris Turner (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990), pp.17 – 25.

- (12) Eliot, *The Idea of Christian Society* (London: Faber and Faber 1939), p.24.
- (13) Cf. Katsuhito Iwai, *Disequilibrium Dynamics: A Theoretical Analysis of Inflation and Unemployment* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1981). It should be noted that, among these economists, J. M. Keynes seems to be eminent above the rest. He thought: "In particular, it is an outstanding characteristic of the economic system in which we live that, whilst it is subject to severe fluctuations in respect of output and employment, it is *not* violently unstable. ...Fluctuations may start briskly but seem to wear themselves out before they have proceeded to great extremes, and an immediate situation which is neither desperate nor satisfactory is our normal lot." (Keynes, *The General Theory of Employment Interest and Money*, London: Macmillan, 1936, pp.249 – 250; emphasis mine) That is, he understood that, though the possibility of panic as an 'apocalyptic ending' is inevitable, it is *impossible* in "the economic system in which we live." In other words, he found an extreme paradox in our economic system: panic is impossible when it is *theoretically* inevitable. For him, in a sense, this radical impossibility of 'an ending' was the 'death of God' in the market. (It seems important that this study was written *after* the Great Depression.) While Pound endeavoured to organize his economics in reaction to the deviation which would lead to panic as an apocalyptic ending, and similarly, George Bataille tried to regularize panic as 'the accursed share,' Keynes started his economic thought from this strange paradox that panic as 'an

ending' is inevitable *and* impossible, and it is "our normal lot"; and then, he established the rules of the 'endgame' of economics after the collapse of the economic-theology. In this sense, his economics reminds us of Samuel Beckett's plays, in which the characters play an endless endgame before an impossible ending, in the suspended situation which is "neither desperate nor satisfactory."

- (14) See, for example, Pound, *ABC of Reading* (London: George Routledge and Sons, 1934) p.4.
- (15) Cf. Jacques Le Goff, *Your Money or Your Life: Economy and Religion in the Middle Ages*, trans. Patricia Renum (New York: Zone Books, 1988) pp.17 – 45. This study, by the historian from Annale school, provides us with a new perspective on the history of usury, including several references to the works of Dante and Pound. According to Le Goff, the traditional antagonism to usury was closely connected to the birth of the idea of Purgatory. In the 12th century, though the hostility and prejudice against usurers was still persistent, the development of commerce and the economic system had already made usurers indispensable to society. On the other hand, gradually it became an important issue for theologians to find the right location for the fire of 'purgation,' because, though there was the 'idea' of purgation (for 'imperfectly' good/bad men) by fire in Christianity, there was no 'place' for the purgatorial fire in the Manichaeian rigid dual structure of heaven and hell. At last, these two tendencies were connected; the *third* place of purgatorial fire was invented for usurers as an 'indispensable' deviation from the value system of Christianity. This brought about the birth of Purgatory in the 12th century, and a structural change in Christianity, from the Manichaeian dichotomy to a stable structure of three classes. It is also important that this new totality of Christianity was completed by a poet; that is, by Dante in his *Divina Commedia* (1304 – 21).

From this viewpoint, it is curious to find the return of purgatorial fire and attack against usury in the poetry of Eliot and Pound, both of whom were obviously influenced by Dante. See also Le Goff, *The Birth of Purgatory*, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984), pp.1 – 14, pp.334 – 355.

- (16) Hugh Kenner, *The Pound Era* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1971), p.307.
- (17) See Chace, pp.24 – 25.
- (18) Tim Redman, *Ezra Pound and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), p.65.
- (19) Pound, "ABC of Economics" (1933), rpt. in *Selected Prose 1909 – 1965*, ed. William Cookson, (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), p.233.
- (20) Pound, "Social Credit" (1935), qtd. in Redman, p.151.
- (21) Pound, "A Retrospect" (1918), rpt. in *Literary Essays of Ezra Pound*, ed. T. S. Eliot, (London: Faber and Faber, 1954), p.3.
- (22) Pound's idea of the 'locality of culture' seems to be related to so-called 'cultural relativism,' from Tacitus and Montaigne to Lévi-Strauss. The poet denied the transcendental authority of one particular culture, which can "coerce others into uniformity." (See, for example, Pound, "Provincialism the Enemy" (1917), rpt. in *Selected Prose*, p.159.) However, at the same time, it seems also possible to say that he tried to *fix* the 'correspondence' of one region to one culture arbitrarily. Especially in his wartime broadcasts, he vehemently attacked any idea of a 'melting pot' of people, and intermingling of cultures. That is, though he admitted the coexistence of plural cultures, this coexistence should be nothing but the 'juxtaposition' of distinct cultures, and he did not admit intermingling of cultures. From this viewpoint this idea of juxtaposition of distinct and fixed cultures easily reminds us of the ideal order in his economics, in which each item has one fixed

price, and that of his poetics, in which each word has one fixed meaning. However, on the other hand, it should also be noted that the poet endeavoured to translate other cultures into English. In this sense, what we should examine next seems to be the dynamics of the dialectical tension in the 'juxtaposition' of these incompatible tendencies in the poet's mind.

- (23) In the poet's system of correspondence, it seems possible to find a kind of 'formula'; that is, "one always *expresses* the other." In other words, the elements which constitute 'correspondence' are connected by the relation of 'expression.' For example, a word *expresses* its meaning; an item *expresses* its price; a region *expresses* its own culture. From this point of view, the dichotomy of 'action and thought' seems to be considered as one of the examples of 'Poundian correspondence.' ('an action *expresses* the thought') In a sense, this notion of correspondence seems to explain Pound's sympathy for Fenollosa's study of the 'Chinese written character.' Fenollosa says: "All truth has to be expressed in sentences because all truth is the *transference of power*." And, "In this Chinese shows its advantage. Its etymology is constantly visible. It retains the creative impulse and process, visible and at work." (Ernest Fenollosa, *The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry* (1936), rpt. Tokyo: Tokyo Bijutsu, 1982, p.16. and p.29.) It seems obvious that Fenollosa praises Chinese written characters because of their ability to *express* the "transference of power" such as "the creative impulse and process." And, at the same time, we can find an obviously Leibnizean idea in this. Fenollosa appreciates Chinese characters because they can express not only stable things, but also "actions or processes" (i.e., transference of power). In the structure of English syntax, they are, as the predicate, divided from the subject. However, Leibniz thought that all predicates are immanent in the subject. That is, actions and processes (as the predicate) are the

'attributes' of each monad (as the subject); in other words, the actions are the 'expression' of the immanent attributes of the monad. It is the central idea of Leibniz, which was criticized by Bertrand Russell, in *A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz* (1900). See also note 27.

- (24) Contrary to the poet's praise, Hannah Arendt describes the 'truth' of Mussolini's 'unity of action and thought' ironically: "[Mussolini] described himself as at the same time 'aristocrat and democrat, revolutionary and reactionary, proletarian and anti-proletarian, pacifist and anti-pacifist.' The ruthless individualism of romanticism never meant anything more serious than that 'everybody is free to create for himself his own ideology.' What was new in Mussolini's experiment was '*the attempt to carry it out with all possible energy*.'" (Hannah Arendt, *Imperialism: Part Two of The Origin of Totalitarianism*, San Diego: A Harvest/ HBJ Book, 1968, p.48, emphasis mine)
- (25) Pound, *Guide to Kulchur* (London: Peter Owen, 1952), p.182.
- (26) Ibid. p.188.
- (27) In *Monadology*, Leibniz says: "Just as the same city regarded from different sides offers quite different aspects, and thus appears multiplied by the perspective, so it also happens that the infinite multitude of simple substances creates the appearance of as many different universes. Yet they are but perspectives of a single universe, varied according to the points of view, which differ in each monad." (G. W. Leibniz, *Monadology*, qtd. in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1990, p.52.)
- (28) In a sense, the process Pound followed may be called a 'reaction-formation' (according to psychoanalytic terminology) to the tendency which would lead to 'panic' in the poet's own mind. And it seems possible to associate this with the poet's ideological position. For example, a contemporary Lacanian analysis of

ideology shows a similar example of 'reaction-formation' in anti-Semitism: "in the anti-Semitic vision, the Jew is experienced as the embodiment of negativity, as the force disrupting stable social identity — but the 'truth' of anti-Semitism is, of course, that the very identity of our position is structured through a negative relationship to this traumatic figure of the Jew. Without the reference to the Jew who is corroding the social fabric, the social fabric itself would be dissolved. In other words, all my positive consistency is a kind of 'reaction-formation' to a certain traumatic, antagonistic kernel: if I lose this 'impossible' point of reference, my very identity dissolves." (Slavoj Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, London, New York: Verso, 1989, p.176.) This "antagonistic kernel" is the imaginary objectification of what Jacques Lacan calls "the Real," and it is what we saw as 'a radical disequilibrium' in the poet's mind. It is obvious that the traditional antagonism to usurers (whom Pound thought of as a "clog") is closely connected to anti-Semitism, and it is this 'context' I have tried to understand. In other words, my concern here is to examine what Hannah Arendt called the 'banality of evil' in the twentieth century.