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MEANING AND METHOD: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EDMUND HUSSERL AND EZRA POUND

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In his essay entitled "Phenomenology of Reading" Georges Poulet explains how a "reading experience" is possible:

> The universe of fiction is infinitely more elastic than the world of objective reality. It lends itself to any use; it yields with little resistance to the importunities of the mind. Moreover - and of all the benefits I find this the most appealing - this interior universe constituted by language does not seem radically opposed to the me who thinks it....In short, since everything has become part of my mind, thanks to the intervention of language, the opposition between the subject and its objects has been considerably attenuated. And thus the greatest advantage of literature is that I am freed from my usual sense of incompatibility between my consciousness and its objects.[1]

The dissolution of this subject-object dualism is not the only factor involved. Poulet shows that reading is "a way of giving way not only to a host of alien words, images, ideas, but also to the very alien principle which utters them and shelters them."

> When I read as I ought, i.e., without mental reservation, without any desire to preserve my independence of judgment, and with the total committment required of any reader, my comprehension becomes intuitive and any feeling proposed to me

> is immediately assumed by me...Reading, then, is the act in which the subjective principle which I call I is modified in such a way that I no longer have the right, strictly speaking, to consider it as my I. I am on loan to another, and this other thinks, feels, suffers, and acts within me.[2]

The phenomenological nature of Poulet's essay is seen in his description of the reader's transcendence of subject-object and self-other dualisms. Only through such transcendence is understanding and communication possible.

The purpose of my paper is to show how this idea of transcendence unites two seemingly dissimilar modes of thought - the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) and the poetics of Ezra Pound (1885-1972). Indeed, it is my thesis that Pound's critical thought reveals a basic correspondence with the phenomenological method developed by Husserl. Stated simply, both men follow a process in which the individual (poet or philosopher) sets aside all non-essential aspects of a given experience in order to arrive at an intuitive understanding of that experience. Since, for Husserl, this understanding is an end in itself, he studied the act of comprehension and produced an "empty" (general) method for the study of experience. As a poet, however, Pound must communicate this intuition. Therefore, he concentrated upon the act of expression and his ideas exist in the form of critical observations and poems. It

must be stated that there is no evidence to show that either man had ever heard of the other. Therefore, all conclusions regarding their similarities arise from my interpretations of common meanings and intentions.

Specifically, I will begin my comparisons with a look at their attitudes toward tradition and the individual's role in it. Next, I will introduce Husserl's work, from which I will extract a terminology to be applied to Pound. For example, Husserl's reduction (the aforementioned "setting aside" of non-essentials) is reflected in Pound's own elimination of irrelevant commentary and excessive description. Similarly, Husserl's unique understanding of logic brings to mind Pound's enthusiasm for Ernest Fenollosa's theory of language. I will extend this comparison until I show the point at which phenomenology is no longer adequate to explain the method of poetry.

Both men sought to establish the foundations of their medium and in so doing redefined their respective traditions in a similar manner. That is, both equated tradition with the constant renewal of insight in which the individual arrives at each certainty for himself and in his own manner. Husserl writes: "Wisdom...is the philosopher's quite personal affair. It must arise as his wisdom, as his self-acquired knowledge tending toward universality, a knowledge for which he can answer from the beginning and at each step,

by virtue of his own absolute insights...." In these terms he defines his view of philosophical tradition: "In recent times the longing for a truly alive philosophy has led to many a renaissance. Must not the only fruitful renaissance be the one that reawakens the impulse of the Cartesian Meditations: not to adopt their content but, in not doing so, to renew with greater intensity the radicalness of their spirit, the radicalness of self-responsibility, to make that radicalness true for the first time by enhancing it to the last degree...?"[3]

For his part, Pound writes: "My pawing over the ancients and semi-ancients has been one struggle to find out what has been done, once and for all, better than it can ever be done again, and to find out what remains for us to do, and plenty does remain, for if we still feel the same emotions as those which launched the thousand ships, it is quite certain that we come on these feelings differently, through different nuances, by different intellectual gradations. No good poetry is written in a manner twenty years old, for to write in such a manner shows conclusively that the writer thinks from books, convention, and cliché, and not from life...."[4] Pound developed a critical procedure which he called "Excernment." This term, first used in The Spirit of Romance, refers to "the general ordering and weeding out of what has already been performed. The elimination

of repetitions. The work analogous to that which a good hanging committee or curator would perform in a National Gallery or biological museum." He draws a clear distinction between diluters and inventors. Diluters are "symptomatic" authors who made no real contribution to the art ("the men who did more or less good work in the more or less good style of a period"), but inventors are those "donative" authors who seemed to "draw down into the art something which was not in the art of [their] predecessors."

For Husserl, then, tradition means a certain freshness of comprehension; for Pound it is a freshness of expression. Both, however, focus upon the same general object. Pound writes: "...the essential thing is that the poet build us his world"[5] and Husserl states that "the world [that phenomenology is to study] is not the objective world of nature but the 'environing world' (Umwelt) of the spiritual subject."[6] The idea of an "environing world" brings to mind Pound's phantastikon, the poetic (image-making) faculty involved in such world-building. Pound explains: [The] consciousness of some seems to rest...in what the Greek psychologists called the phantastikon. Their minds are, that is, circumvolved about them like soap-bubbles reflecting sundry patches of the macrocosmos."[7] In an original (1917) version of Canto I he uses the term to describe his own difficulties:

> And shall I claim,
> Confuse my own phantastikon
> Or say the filmy shell that circumscribes me
> Contains the actual sun;
> confuse the thing I see
> With actual gods behind me?
> Are they gods behind me?
> How many worlds we have![8]

As a poet Pound must distinguish between those levels of expression which are derived from "books, convention, and cliche" and those which refer directly to the environing world of the artist and, therefore, define his particular virtú. In an essay entitled "On Virtue" he explains the term:

> The soul of each man is compounded of all the elements of the cosmos of souls, but in each one there is some one element which predominates, which is in some way the quality or virtú of the individual; in no two souls is this the same. It is by reason of this virtú that we have one Catullus, one Villon; by reason of it that no amount of technical cleverness can produce a work having the charm of the original...[9]

Virtu is the essence of the artist in the expression. It is the artist as a mode of presentation.

Since the understanding of essence as a mode of presentation is a fundamental feature of Husserlian phenomenology, a full introduction to the procedure whereby Husserl arrives at his own intuitions is appropriate. Phenomenology is a philosophical method which consists of describing phenomena - the objects of experience which are immediately given to consciousness. To do this one must first engage in a

process of phenomenological reduction in which all superficial, irrelevant, or ascribed values of both the subject and its object are "bracketed," or set aside. For this reason phenomenology may be set apart from the prevailing empirical and Kantian thought of the time. Husserl writes: "A theory of cognition that is to study the relation between being and consciousness must concern itself with that being which corresponds to consciousness (ideal being) rather than with a consciousness that would correspond with existential being."[10] Phenomenology is not an investigation of internal or external facts. Any ideas regarding the "existential" reality, "particularity," etc. of an object are necessarily products of the intellect and, therefore, irrelevant to phenomenological concerns. This is especially true of the Kantian "thing-in-itself." The proper object of phenomenological attention is essence - the "ideal intelligible content" of the object - seized immediately in an act of intuition. Husserl states:

> The physical identity of an object is intelligible only through the acts in which the object is present to consciousness, since it is precisely the relation to consciousness (in these acts) that makes it an object. Essences, then, that belong to the ideal sphere can be grasped as immediately in intuition as physical reality is in perception - and only thus can they be grasped at all. Thus phenomenology is a study of essences only, whereby it escapes the objections against introspection, which is an observation of factual psychological processes and not ideal objectivities.[11]

Husserl feels that a psychological theory of essence would be relative, subjectivist and, therefore, unable to establish an absolute foundation of knowledge.

In order to delineate phenomenology's specific concerns, Husserl developed the idea of intentionality. (He is indebted to his teacher, Franz Brentano, for the term and the basic concept). Briefly, it means this: All consciousness is consciousness of something. As I.M. Bochenski explains it: "It is the essential quality of certain experiences to be experiences of an object; these experiences are intentionally related to the object....Consciousness is seen as a pure reference point for intentionality to which the intentional object is presented and one sees the object as intentionally given to the subject."[12] Maurice Natanson carries it further: "Perception is not a state but a mobile activity. In its essential dynamic, perception (which we are taking in the widest possible sense) projects itself towards its intended object, but that object is not to be understood as a 'thing' but rather as the correlate of its accompanying act or acts.... What remains is the object as meant, regarded purely in terms of its givenness to the precise extent that it is given and solely in the manner in which it is given."[13]

Husserl introduces the words noesis and noema to stand for the intending act and the intentional object. As stated

earlier, there is a process of reduction for each. But, as Natanson states, "noesis must be understood in its active relationship to noema. The separation between them is legitimate, necessary, yet artificial - a matter of distinguishing rather than separating. Noesis and noema imply and demand each other."[14] This understanding affirms phenomenology's status as a theory of meaning rather than one of being. It also underscores the character of the "object as meant" - that is, the object as an immediate mode of presentation to consciousness. Essence is seen in its intentional fullness.

One important obstacle to the realization of essence is our ordinary sense of time. Time as we know it in our natural attitude is termed "cosmic time" - the time of science and public reference. We are aware of it as an intellectual product. "Phenomenological time," however, refers strictly to individual experience as given. Husserl writes:

> Through the phenomenological reduction consciousness has forfeited not only its apperceptive "attachment" (in truth only an image) to material reality and its relations in space, merely secondary though these be, but also its setting in cosmical time. The same time, which belongs essentially to experience as such with the modes in which its intrinsic content is presented - and derived from these the modally determined now, before and after, simultaneity, succession and so forth - is not to be measured by any state of the sun, by any clock, by any physical means, and generally cannot be measured at all.[15]

The immediate phenomenological time sense does not depend upon a concept of causality to sustain it. Again Husserl

explains:

> The essential property which the term "temporality" expresses in relation to experiences generally indicates not only something which belongs in a general way to every single experience, but a necessary form binding experiences with experiences. Every real experience (we ratify this as self-evident on the ground of the clear intuition of an experiential reality) is necessarily one that endures; and with this duration it takes its place within an endless continuum of durations - a concretely filled continuum. It necessarily has a temporal purview concretely filled, and stretching away on all sides. And that at once tells us that it belongs to one endless "stream of experience." Every single experience can begin and end and therewith bring its duration to an end...But the stream of experience cannot begin and end.[16]

By eliminating "beginnings" and "endings" we are able to establish a still point in which the structural certainties of experience may be seen. Natanson writes:

> With causation bracketed [i.e., set aside] in the reduced sphere, the phenomenological notion of origin is free of sequential ordering. Instead, attention is turned to the flow of intentionality as consciousness reveals itself in a multitude of perceptions, judgments, rememberings, and anticipatings. To get at the origins of such a flow is to elucidate the mesh of acts and syntheses which constitute the experiential world.[17]

Experience is thus regarded in "its mode of declaring itself: ...the modus of the actual 'Now'" and, as Husserl states, the "actual <u>now</u> is necessarily something punctual and remains so, a form that persists through continuous change of content."[18]

Husserl's "actual now" provides the structure of the experience of time. Pound, too, focuses upon time's mode of presentation in order to realize a critical standard for literature. He writes:

> All ages are contemporaneous. It is B.C., let us say, in Morocco. The Middle Ages are in Russia. The future stirs already in the minds of the few. This is especially true of literature, where the real time is independent of the apparent, and where many dead men are our grandchildren's contemporaries, while many of our contemporaries have been already gathered into Abraham's bosom or some more fitting receptacle.[19]

It may be stated that, whereas Husserl's "now" is found strictly "within time", Pound's statements refer to the "now" of the "everpresent," which is "outside" of time. It is my opinion, however, that the importance of both is due to their "rootedness" in the experiential world. Pound's view of time recalls Husserl's "temporal purview concretely filled, and stretching away on all sides": "We do NOT know the past in chronological sequence. It may be convenient to lay it out anaesthetized on the table with dates pasted on here and there, but what we know we know by ripples and spirals eddying out from us and from our own time."[20]

A more specific reference to "what we know" and in what form we know it is found in an essay by Pound entitled "Axiomata"(1921). At the end of a short section on "the intimate essence of the universe" and the limits of con-

sciousness, he states, with characteristic certainty, "God, therefore, exists." He gives as his reason the idea that, given man's inability to know for sure, there is no reason not to say so. He prefers, however, to call this divine presence Theos and makes it clear that we have no way of knowing whether this Theos "is one, or is many, or is divisible or indivisible, or is an ordered hierarchy culminating, or not culminating, in a unity...." Moreover, the Theos may or may not affect the consciousness which, in turn, may or may not know why, or even if, it has been affected. For this reason Pound, too, restricts his attention to the immediately given:

> If the consciousness receives or has received such effects from the theos [sic], or from something which consciousness has been incapable of understanding or classifying as either theos or a-theos, it is incapable of reducing these sensations to coherent sequence of cause and effect. The effects remain, so far as the consciousness is concerned, in the domain of experience, not differing intellectually from the taste of a lemon or the fragrance of violets or the aroma of dunghills, or the feel of a stone or of tree-bark, or any other direct perception....[21]

Pound's statements are not to be taken as an empirical or psychological theory any more than Husserl's reference to experience as "a concretely filled continuum." As George Dekker states, "To the Poundian view of reality, Descartes' (or any Sceptic's) introspective method of positing the uni-

verse on the basis of his own mental activity is sacrilegious as well as perverse."[22] Similarly, Husserl's willingness to accept the spirit, but not the content, of Descartes' Meditations is a way of expressing agreement with the Cartesian method of seeking out and establishing that which is a certainty, but lamenting the fact that Descartes could not develop his own idea beyond a certain psychological point.

Dekker sees Pound's view as a form of "the medieval 'Doctrine of Signatures,' which holds that all created things contain the 'signatures' of divine forms and, as such, should be respected." He also recognizes the Platonic quality of Pound's thought, but points out that "in its arrangement of values it differs radically from Platonism proper and from many forms of Neoplatonism (Christian or pagan) which stress the inferiority of 'created things' and the desirability of turning away from them toward the Prime Mover. For Pound it is always this world that matters...."[23] In other words, for Pound (as for Husserl), it is only by viewing the given object as a mode of presentation that one may understand the universal nature of experience.

Closely related to this idea is that stated by Matanson: "Phenomenological reduction is concerned with the intersubjective impulse hidden in the apparent privacy of perception."[24] That is, an individual act is seen as a variation of some

universal intentional structure. As such, it may be "reduced" to that structure and communicated. This is the origin of Myth. As Denis de Rougemont states: "Speaking generally, a myth is a story - a symbolical fable as simple as it is striking - which sums up an infinite number of more or less analogous situations. A myth makes it possible to become aware at a glance of certain types of constant relations and to disengage these from the welter of everyday appearances."[25] This reference to myth as a summation of "an infinte number" of analogous situations introduces the idea of "expression as equation," an idea which Pound will pursue and develop. He states:

> The first myths arose when a man walked sheer into 'nonsense,' that is to say, when some very vivid and undeniable adventure befell him; and he told someone else who called him a liar. Thereupon, after bitter experience, perceiving that no one could understand what he meant when he said he 'turned into a tree' he made a myth - a work of art that is - an impersonal or objective story woven out of his own emotion, as the nearest equation that he was capable of putting into words.[26]

Pound's allusions to mathematics ("equations" for human moods, poetry as "inspired mathematics") are well known, but Husserl also considers his goal to be the location within experience of "the kind of necessity which mathematics has, but a necessity which is a function of our life in the world rather than the postulations and definitions of an axiomatic method."[27] In order to achieve this he must re-examine the nature of logic itself.

In 1900-1901 Husserl wrote his first significant work, Logical Investigations. As the title suggests, it was an original study of the foundations of logic and contained a devastating criticism of the nominalist position which had dominated the nineteenth century. Stated simply, nominalism is that doctrine which holds that only particular things are real. Universals are no more than names with which we formulate general ideas. The nominalist would remark that, although science is about things, logic is not. The task of logic is this general formulation and, therefore, has no foundation of its own. It is only the application of a method and, as such, is dependent upon other sources for its validity.

Husserl upsets this view by showing that, if such ideas were true, logic would be nothing more than a system of inductive generalizations - in short, mere rules. But, citing Brentano's "All consciousness is consciousness of something," he reveals that, in fact, logical "laws" do not refer to "what should be" but to "what is." For example, the logical Law of Contradiction does not state that "two contradictory statements are not expressible" or that one must only surmise that one of two contradictory statements is true and the other one false. Similarly, when two propositions of the form "All A's are B's" and "All B's are C's" are true, it is not to be only surmised that a corresponding proposi-

tion of the form "All A's are C's" is true. Such an attitude involves the idea of the "possibility that such a surmise would fail to be confirmed by an extension of our ever-limited horizon of experience." This notion that a valid syllogism with true premises may be false runs counter to the very nature of logic itself. Husserl's reevaluation of its nature shows that the laws of logic have nothing at all to do with thought and judgment; they are specified by something objective. Their object is not the judgment, but the content of this judgment. Bochenski states:

> Whenever we understand a name or a statement, the significance of neither one nor the other of these expressions can be treated as though it were in any way a part of the corresponding act of understanding; it is, much more truly, its meaning. What is meant by such expressions in relation to the manifold of individual experience is an identity in the strongest sense of the term.[28]

Even the idea of a universal has nothing to do with a generalized image. For example, it does not matter what one imagines when one thinks of a mathematical proposition because the universal is an ideal intelligible content. It is not subject to psychological or accidental influences. It is an immediately given structural certainty.

Husserl, then, founds the nature (and, therefore, the language) of logic upon its object, the world as intended. Pound, too, derives a logic of language from the same found-

ation. Ernest Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" may be taken as a primer for understanding Pound's thought on this theme. According to Fenollosa, Western thought is dominated by a medieval European logic - the "logic of classification" - which derives from a weakened language, that is a language based upon the universal copula "is" (or, as the case may be, "is not"). By its very nature, such a language is unable to deal with any kind of interaction or multiplicity of function. "According to it," he states, "the function of my muscles is as isolated from the function of my nerves as from an earthquake in the moon."[29] This form of expression, then, does not accurately reflect the nature of its object.

In opposition to this system Fenollosa presents the Chinese written character as an expression of an authentic and, more to the point, fundamentally transitive form. He states: "The true formula for thought is: The cherry tree is all that it does. Its correlated verbs compose it."[30] A true noun, he says, does not exist in nature. A thing is only a meeting point of actions, a coherence of functions. But a pure verb, an abstract motion, is equally impossible. "The eye sees noun and verb as one: things in motion, motion in things..."[31]

Language, according to Fenollosa, derives its funda-

mental structure from that of nature. Instead of the weak copula, the transitive verbs are the proper bases of language. They most accurately reflect the dynamic nature of reality. For example, the static form "The tree is green" would be rendered in the Chinese style as "The tree greens (itself)." Furthermore, the sentence form is seen as a reflection of the temporal order in causation: "All truth has to be expressed in sentences because all truth is the transference of power." This transference of power ("Farmer pounds rice") is the distribution of force between things ("things in motion, motion in things"). Indeed, the things are thereby defined. They exist as synthetic unities of force. To reflect this synthetic unity, the Chinese written character consists of a juxtaposition of two or more concrete units. The "meaning" of a character is construed from the pattern of these units (man + fire = messmate). Fenollosa traces even abstract terms back to their roots imbedded in concrete interaction (i.e., "The sun sign tangled in the branches of the tree sign = east,""The sun underlying the bursting forth of plants = spring"). He states, "The greater part of natural truth is hidden in processes too minute for vision and in harmonies too large, in vibrations, cohesions and affinities." These hidden understandings must also be expressed and language does this through <u>metaphor</u>, "the use of material images to suggest immaterial relations." Fenollosa holds that

such a use is valid because of its origin: "The whole delicate substance of speech is built upon substrata of metaphor... But the primitive metaphors do not spring from arbitrary subjective processes. They are possible only because they follow objective lines of relation in nature herself."[32]

We have seen that the object, existing in an intentional relationship with the subject, is intelligible only through the acts in which it becomes present to consciousness. On the other hand, Husserl's ideas on logic and Fenollosa's language theory (which Pound accepted and used to justify his poetic constructions) ground these acts upon the nature of the object itself. There is, then, an essential correspondence between the act of comprehension (or expression) and the object comprehended (or expressed). Husserl writes:

> ...the expressing stratum, from the side of its thetic character, is completely one in essence with that which finds expression, and in the covering process absorbs its essence so completely that we call the expressive presenting just presenting;...The expressing stratum cannot have a thesis, positional or neutral, that is otherwise qualified than the stratum that suffers expression, and when the two cover each other we find not two theses to be kept separate, but one thesis only.[33]

This passage does more than state the essential correspondence between expression and expressed; it also describes a quality of great poetry. T.S. Eliot, in his introduction to Pound's Selected Poems (1928), writes:

> People may think they like the form because they like the content, or think they like the content because they like the form. In the perfect poet they fit and are the same thing; and in another sense they always are the same thing. So it is always true to say that form and content are the same thing, and always true to say that they are different things.[34]

In order to maintain this correspondence (in either Husserlian or Poundian terms) we must pay strict attention to the problems of expression itself. In 1912 Pound writes:

> An art is vital only so long as it is interpretative, so long that is, as it manifests something which the artist perceives at greater intensity, and more intimately, than his public....The interpretative function is the highest honor of the arts, and because it is so we find that a sort of hyper-scientific precision is the touchstone and assay of the artist's power, of his honor, his authenticity.[35]

Husserl, too, acknowledges the "evidence of the expression" as "a determining part of the idea of scientific truth." In fact, he includes it in the formulation of his first methodological principle:

> ...Because the sciences aim at predications that express completely and with evident fitness what is beheld pre-predicatively, it is obvious that I must be careful also about this aspect of scientific evidence. Owing to the instability and ambiguity of common language and its much too great complacency about completeness of expression, we require, even where we use its means of expression, a new legitimation of significations by orienting them to accrued insights, and fixing of words as expressing the significations thus legitimated. That too we account as part of our normative principle of evidence, which we shall apply consistently from now on.[36]

Pound's critical works (excluding those which veer into the social sciences) deal primarily with the legitimation of the expression. In an early essay he writes: "The artist's inheritance from other artists can be little more than certain enthusiasms, which usually spoil his first work; and a definite knowledge of the modes of expression, which knowledge contributes to perfecting his more mature performance. This is a matter of technique."[37] In "A Retrospect" (1918) he includes technique in his Credo: "I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity, in law when it is ascertainable; in the trampling down of every convention that impedes or obscures the determination of the law, or the precise rendering of the impulse."[38]

Pound's view of technique as an active encounter with experience reflects Husserl's understanding of intentionality. Pound writes: "There are two opposed ways of thinking of a man: firstly you may think of him as that toward which perception moves, as the toy of circumstance, as the plastic substance receiving impressions; secondly you may think of him as directing a certain fluid force against circumstance, as conceiving instead of merely reflecting and observing."[39]

Husserl, too, understands two modes of experience, which he calls active and passive genesis:

> In active genesis the Ego functions as productively constitutive, by means of subjective processes that are specifically acts of the Ego....The characteristic feature...is that Ego-acts...become combined in a manifold, specifically active synthesis and, on the basis of objects already given (in modes of consciousness that give beforehand), constitute new objects originally... [But] anything built by activity necessarily presupposes, as the lowest level, a passivity that gives something beforehand; and, when we trace anything built actively, we run into constitution by passive generation.[40]

Active genesis, according to Husserl, is the source of all "spiritual" or "cultural" characteristics of an object or experience, all meaning.

Pound, of course, prefers the active conception of poetry over the passive reception of an impression. In Poetry Review (March, 1912) he writes: "...no impression, however carefully articulated, can, recorded, convey that feeling of sudden light which the works of art should and must convey."[41] In this manner Pound distinguishes between Impressionism and Vorticism. Impressionism, he says, "sought its theoretic defense in, if it did not arise from, Berkeley's theory of the minimum visible, i.e., of the points of light and colour on the retina." The Impressionist derives his pleasure "from the stroking and pushing of the retina by light waves of various colours."[42] The Vorticist, on the other hand, takes a more active stance. Pound writes: "Forma to the great minds of at least one great epoch meant

more than dead pattern or fixed opinion. The light of the DOER, as it were a form cleaving to it meant an ACTIVE pattern, a pattern that sets things in motion."[43]

In order to transcend dead pattern and fixed opinion, the poet must engage in the literary equivalent of phenomenological reduction. That is, he must strip away the non-essential aspects of the expression. As stated earlier, there is a corresponding reduction for the intending act (the subject) and its intended object. Husserl uses the term "phenomenological reduction" in reference to the former and "eidetic" (essential) reduction for the latter. Phenomenological reduction of the subject, expressed another way, is the process whereby the transcendental state of Epochē is assumed. Epochē is, in Natanson's words, "a restraint or suspension on the part of the philosopher with regard to his participation or complicity in experience."[44] Husserl is quick to point out that nothing is "lost" to consciousness during this state of restraint. On the contrary, Epochē is a device whereby complete objectivity is achieved. He explains:

> [In everyday life]...we assert: 'I see a house there' or 'I remember having heard this melody.' In transcendental-phenomenological reflection we deliver ourselves from this footing, by universal epoche with respect to the being and non-being of the world. The experience as thus modified, the transcendental experience, consists, then, we can say, in our looking at and describing the particular transcendentally reduced cogito, but without

> participating, as reflective subjects, in the natural existence-positing that the original straight-forward perception (or other cogito) contains or that the Ego, as immersing himself straightforwardly in the world, actually executed...[45]

Husserl describes this detachment as a "splitting of the Ego" into a transcendental "disinterested onlooker" above the "naively interested Ego."

Pound's own poetic method involves a similar form of impersonality. It is what Mallarmé called "the elocutionary disappearance of the poet, who yields place to the words." Pound writes: "In the 'search for oneself,' in the search for 'sincere self-expression,' one gropes, one finds some seeming verity. One says, 'I am' this, that, or the other, and with the words scarcely uttered one ceases to be that thing. I began this search for the real in a book called Personae, casting off, as it were, complete masks of the self in each poem."[46] Pound is taking note of the fact that, as one writes "I am" in a poem, a splitting of the Ego occurs between the Ego as expressed (the objective ego) and the transcendental (subjective) ego.

Although Pound states that he began his "search for the real" with Personae, an even earlier essay reveals that he was aware of the general procedure. He writes in his introduction to A Lume Spento (1908):

> When the soul is exhausted in fire, then doth the spirit return unto its primal nature....Mr. Yeats has treated of such, and I because in such a mood; feeling myself divided between myself corporeal and a self aetherial,...eternal because simple in elements....Being freed of the weight of the soul 'capable of salvation or damnation,' a grievous, striving thing that after much straining was taken from me; as had one passed saying as one in the Book of the Dead, 'I, lo I, am the assembler of souls,' and had taken it with him, leaving me thus simplex naturae, even so at peace and transsentient as a wood-pool I made it.[47]

Pound is describing in other-worldly terms that very state of Epochē in which the Ego disengages itself from its "naively interested" form. In such a manner the transcendental Ego (whose "sole remaining interest [is] to see and describe adequately what he sees") may discern the essential features of an experience. Hugh Kenner writes of what he calls Pound's "intaglio method:"

> Pound's impersonality is Flaubertian: an effacement of the personal accidents of the perceiving medium in the interests of accurate registration of moeurs contemporaines. As we have said, the adoption of various personae is for such an artist merely a means to ultimate depersonalization, ancillary and not substantial to his major work.[48]

In comparing Pound's technique to that of other poets, Hugh Witemeyer notes that "Pound's personae combine his concern for revitalizing history with his concern for portraying dramatic ecstasy;...in other words, they stand somewhere between Browning's dramatic monologues and Yeats' masks."

Put simply, Browning represents that type of poetry which seeks to establish the essence of a specific figure as defined within the framework of a specific place and time. Yeats, on the other hand, lifts his persona above local reference in order to elucidate its universal nature. Pound develops a method which utilizes both techniques. In a letter to William Carlos Williams in 1908 he writes: "I catch the character I happen to be interested in at the moment he interests me, usually a moment of song, self-analysis, or sudden understanding or revelation...."[50]

Browning's dramatic monologues (for which Pound expressed great admiration) depend upon a particular relationship between the poet and his object. In his Essay on Shelley (1852) Browning explains by drawing a distinction between the "subjective poet" and the "objective poet." The subjective poet, he says, presents primarily his own vision of things - that is, the outside world only insofar as it relates to his own vision. The objective poet, on the other hand, presents the outside world as it is, before it has been distorted, as it were, through a particular vision. It is this kind of poet which produces the dramatic monologue. He effaces himself in favor of his object and the resultant work is "substantive, projected from himself, and distinct...The result...in its pure form, when even description, as suggesting a describer, is dispensed with,

is what we call dramatic poetry."[51] When "description, as suggesting a describer" is present in a work, there has been a breakdown in the suspension of the subjective ("disinterested") Ego. The task of the poet is to get at the things themselves and to present them. Browning states:

> ...the objective, in the strictest sense, must still retain its original value. For it is with this world, as starting-point and basis alike, that we shall always have to concern ourselves: the world is not to be learned and thrown aside, but reverted to and relearned. The spiritual comprehension may be infinitely subtilized, but the raw material it operates on must remain. There may be no end of the poets who communicate to us what they see in an object with reference to their own individuality; what it was before they saw it, in reference to the aggregate human mind, will be as desirable to know as ever.[52]

Browning, with his emphasis upon the original value of the objective, displays a strong Husserlian attitude regarding the ultimate reference of consciousness. Whether the object is a subjective or objective entity, the poet must describe it as accurately as possible. In speaking of the art of Arnaut Daniel and Cavalcanti, Pound echoes Browning in praising "that explicit rendering, be it of external nature, or of emotion. Their testimony is that of the eye-witness, their symptoms are first-hand."[53] In tracing the essential features of the given experience the poet will present not only the object but his own virtú as well, the "self aetherial" described in A Lume Spento, which is realized when the

"grievous, striving" soul (in Husserlian terms, the "interested" Ego) is set aside.

Yeats, too, must deal with the various forms of "interested" Egos. He writes:

> Every now and then, when something has stirred my imagination, I begin talking to myself. I speak in my own person and dramatize myself, very much as I have seen a mad old woman do upon the Dublin quays, and sometimes detect myself speaking and moving as if I were still young, or walking perhaps like an old man with fumbling steps.

From his consciously detached perspective Yeats is able to bring into relief the particularities of the chosen Ego. He writes: "If we cannot imagine ourselves as different from what we are and assume that second self, we cannot impose a discipline upon ourselves, though we may accept one from others. Active virtue as distinguished from passive acceptance of a current code is therefore theatrical, consciously dramatic, the wearing of a mask. It is the condition of arduous, full life."[55]

"Active virtue" is the quality whereby the poet exercises his self-responsibility and renews his insight by arriving at each certainty (in this case, an alter-ego) for himself and in his own manner.

Throughout Pound's work we find examples of both Browningesque and Yeatsian influence. Browning is certainly evident in the early poem entitled "Cino." It is the lament of

a singer past his prime and, through Pound's skillful handling of several levels of speech, the reader is transported into the "Italian Campagna 1309, the open road" (as the poem is subtitled):

> Once, twice, a year -
> Vaguely thus word they:
>
> "Cino?" "Oh, eh, Cino Polnesi
> The singer is't you mean?"
> "Ah yes, passed once our way,
> A saucy fellow, but...
> (Oh they are all one these vagabonds),
> Peste! 'tis his own songs?
> Or some other's that he sings?
> But <u>you</u>, My Lord, how with your city?"
>
> But you "My Lord," God's pity!
> And all I knew were out, My Lord, you
> Were Lack-land Cino, e'en as I am,
> O Sinistro.
>
> I have sung women in three cities.
> But it is all one.
> I will sing of the sun.
> ...oh?...they mostly had grey eyes,
> But it is all one, I will sing of the sun.[56]

Although the dramatic monologue is the obvious model, only the subtitle actually places the event within a specific time and place. The voice is disembodied and timeless. Thus Pound achieves his goal of presenting the character in a moment of "song, self-analysis, or sudden understanding or revelation."

Similarly, in "Villanelle: The Psychological Hour," the poet's tone is cool and abstract:

I had over-prepared the event,
that much was ominous.
With middle-ageing care
I had laid out just the right books.
I had almost turned down the pages.

Beauty is so rare a thing.
So few drink of my fountain.

So much barren regret,
So many hours wasted!
And now I watch, from the window,
the rain, the wandering busses.

The poem is melancholic, almost Oriental, and the sudden reference to the "historical" poet comes as a jolt back into a less reflective and specifically harsher present:

Now the third day is here -
no word from either;
No word from her nor him,
Only another man's note:
"Dear Pound, I am leaving England."[57]

"Hugh Selwyn Mauberley" is a virtual sequence of manoeuvers in which the poet is gradually distilled from the work. The very first section-title is a symbolic removal of the poet: "E.P. Ode Pour L'Election de son Sepulchre." After itemizing the degeneracies of his culture and the treasures of the past and sketching a series of contemporary portraits, Pound (in John Espey's words) "sings his own farewell" in "Envoi (1919)". At this point the figure of Hugh Selwyn Mauberley appears for the first time. The subsequent poems take us into Mauberley, into his internal visions, and to his death. The whole work ends with Mauberley's single

poem, "Medallion." Pound has systematically lifted away all direct reference to his own circumstance.

Due to the intentional character of experience, however, we must recognize that a subjective reduction necessarily refers to a corresponding reduction of the object. In that we are concerned here with "expression," the objective reduction becomes evident only as the very language of the work itself. In all of Pound's work we find reference to "concreteness" as the immediate mode of experience. From his editing of Fenollosa's manuscript to the "Axiomata" passage locating knowledge within "the domain of experience," Pound affirms the value of the natural object as the adequate symbol. In a letter to Harriet Monroe he says: "Language is made out of concrete things. General expressions in non-concrete terms are a laziness; they are talk, not art, not creation. They are the reaction of things on the writer, not a creative act by the writer."[58]

Creativity, then, consists in remaining true to the foundation of expression - the ideal dimensions of the intended object. T.S. Eliot has written that "Pound's verse is always definite and concrete, because he has always a definite emotion behind it."[59] This statement reveals an understanding of the correspondence between the expression and the expressed, in which, according to Husserl, we find not two theses to be kept separate, but one thesis only."

Pound writes:

> As to twentieth-century poetry,...it will, I think, move against poppy-cock, it will be harder and saner, it will be what Mr. Hewlett called 'nearer the bone.'... Its force will lie in its truth, its interpretative power (of course, poetic force always does rest there); I mean it will not try to seem forcible by rhetorical din and luxurious riot. We will have fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it. At least for myself, I want it so, austere, direct, free from emotional slither.[60]

Pound's own work has this austerity and directness. His poems involve an appeal to the reader's emotions "with the charm of direct impression, flashing through regions where the intellect can only grope."[61] All non-essentials are pruned away, most notably the ornamental adjective. Pound states that "the only adjective that is worth using is the adjective that is essential to the sense of the passage, not the decorative frill adjective."[62] Fenollosa had shown that adjectives were actually a form of spin-off from the noun (which, of course, have no counterpart in nature, according to Fenollosa). They tended to clutter the expression. By weeding out all non-essential adjectives Pound succeeds in eliminating emotional slither while retaining the original contour of the experience. Here, too, we place him between Browning and Yeats. For example, the following poem demonstrates remarkably well what Pound considers "essential to the sense of the passage." Each adjective performs an in-

dispensable function in the presentation. The poem is a translation of "The Beautiful Toilet"(by Mei Sheng, 140 B.C.) and consists of two modes of reference - one being a visual image and the other a succinct statement of circumstance:

> Blue, blue is the grass about the river
> And the willows have overfilled the close garden.
> And within, the mistress, in the midmost of her youth,
> White, white of face, hesitates, passing the door.
> Slender, she puts forth a slender hand.
>
> And she was a courtesan in the old days,
> And she has married a sot
> Who now goes drunkenly out
> And leaves her too much alone.[63]

The second section only serves to confirm the emotion called forth by the image in the first. In this case, each adjective (there are only four) stands out as a concrete unit in relation to the other. There is nothing excessive in the description. W.K. Wimsatt explains the danger of adjectival "slither":

> 'The general direction of philosophy from Locke to Kant' leads to 'the valuation of qualities over things. When the proper names and essences of things had been deprived of any special dignity, the things themselves easily became less impressive than their definitions, their periphrases, their qualitative connotations...'
>
> Pound had harsh things to say about description and explicitly differentiated the presentative method from it; for overmuch qualification of things by adjectives lessens the sense of reality in the particular by placing emphasis on the vague general kinds of secondary qualities. No longer is it the unique and particular gown that matters, but only the kind to which it belongs: 'blue gown.' Such usage only pigeonholes the object instead of truly particularizing.[64]

A striking example of Pound's ability to transmit an emotion with a minimum of description is best shown in a comparison of two translations of the same poem. The poem is entitled "Fan Piece, for Her Imperial Lord" and the translators are Herbert Giles and Pound. Giles' version is first:

> O fair white silk, fresh from the weaver's loom,
> Clear as the frost, bright as the winter's snow -
> See! Friendship fashions out of thee a fan,
> Round as the round moon shines in heaven above,
> At home, abroad, a close companion thou,
> Stirring at every move, the grateful gale.
> And yet I fear, ah me! that autumn chills,
> Cooling the dying summer's torrid rage,
> Will see thee laid neglected on the shelf,
> All thoughts of bygone days, like them bygone.

Pound, on the other hand, eliminates almost the entire text:

> O fan of white silk,
> clear as frost on the grass-blade
> You also are laid aside.[65]

Whereas Giles' "emotion" is made known through explicit statement and over-statement ("And yet I fear, ah me!..."), Pound depends upon one quiet simile within an equally quiet observation. In his reduction of the event he has removed all but the slightest evidence of a subjective presence and concentrated attention upon the object. The emotion is implicit in the expression.

A final poem, "The Jewel Stairs' Grievance," by Rihaku, will illustrate Pound's use of particulars, but, more importantly, will introduce the idea of interrelationship:

> The jewelled steps are already quite white with dew,
> It is so late that the dew soaks my gauze stockings,
> And I let down the crystal curtain
> And watch the moon through the clear autumn.
>
> NOTE: Jewel stairs, therefore a palace. Grievance, therefore there is something to complain about. Gauze stockings, therefore a court lady, not a servant girl who complains. Clear autumn, therefore he has no excuse on account of weather. Also, she has come early, for the dew has not merely whitened the stairs, but soaked her stockings. The poem is especially prized because she utters no direct reproach.[66]

Each concrete particular in the poem is a distinct entity and, as such, is clearly seen in its relationship to the others. Pound's concern for hardness, visual clarity and an exact and diversified terminology stems from his awareness that the particular object is in fact a body of potentialities which is capable of assuming great significance when set into certain relationships. In his essay on Cavalcanti Pound states: "Unless a term is left meaning one particular thing, and unless all attempt to unify different things, however small the difference, is clearly abandoned, all metaphysical thought degenerates into a soup. A soft terminology is merely an endless series of middles."[67] He is speaking here of philosophical terms, but the same holds true for poetry. If metaphor is the fusion of dissimilar things, then its impact will depend upon the original distinctness of the terms which it unifies. Pound calls for that quality of expression

> where the thought has its demarcation, the substance its virtu, where stupid men have not reduced all 'energy' to unbounded, un-

distinguished abstraction.

> For the modern scientist energy has no borders, it is a shapeless 'mass' of force; even his capacity for differentiating it to a degree never dreamed by the ancients has not led him to think of its shape or even its loci. The rose that his magnet makes in the iron filings does not lead him to think of the force in botanic terms, or wish to visualize that force as floral and extant (ex stare).[68]

To perceive the magnetic force-field as a rose is to experience it as it is given to consciousness. It is also to illustrate Fenollosa's statement that "primitive metaphors ...are possible only because they follow objective lines of relations in nature herself." More importantly, it is to see that force as distinct within the manifold network of experience.

Pound's mind had always worked in terms of the arrangement of particulars. In a 1908 letter to William Carlos Williams he described his technique: "I record symptoms as I see 'em. I advise no remedy. I don't even draw the disease usually. Temperature 102. pulse 78, tongue coated, etc., eyes yellow, etc."[69] We see here the basics of his poetic method - the clear presentation of significant detail in a particular arrangement, thereby suggesting a totality. In fact, Pound's early use of the term "image" referred to an arrangement of two or more units ("The one image poem is a form of super-position: that is to say it is one idea set on top of another.") For this reason

Pound had no need for symbols of fixed value like numbers in arithmetic (1,2,7). The significance of his image was a variable one, like that of algebraic signs (a,b,x). These latter depend upon their relationship to others for their value.

Thus we understand Pound's enthusiasm for describing art in terms of analytical geometry: It is only the difference in subject matter that separates the two. In analytical geometry one may actually create form by referring points to the axes of geometric planes by a series of coefficients. For example, "the equation $(x-a)^2 + (y-b)^2 = r^2$ governs the circle. It is the circle. It is not a particular circle, it is any and all circles. It is nothing that is not a circle. It is the circle free of space and time limits." Pound goes on to explain that art, too, has this ability to create: "Great works of art contain this...sort of equation. They cause form to come into being. By the 'image' I mean such an equation; not an equation of mathematics, not something about a, b, and c, having something to do with form, but about sea, cliffs, night, having something to do with mood."[70]

Causing form to come into being, then, is the immediate purpose of Pound's refinement and arrangement of specific terms. It is the product of "active genesis," in which the poet "directs a certain fluid force against circumstance."

Consider this passage by Husserl:

> We now understand the great tasks of the ego's self-explication, or his explication of his conscious life, which arise concerning objectivities posited or positable in that life. The heading, true being and truth (in all modalities), indicates, in the case of any objects meant or ever meanable for me as transcendental ego, a structural differentiation among the infinite multiplicities of actual and possible cogitationes that relate to the object in question and thus can somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis. Actually existing object indicates a particular system within this multiplicity, the system of evidences relating to the object and belonging together in such a manner that they combine to make up one (though perhaps an infinite) total evidence....[71]

Pound's awareness of the poem as "a system of evidences relating to the object" led him to experiment with all forms of poetic syntheses: Anglo-Saxon kennings, haiku, the ideogram. Husserl's statement, however, that multiplicities "somehow go together to make up the unity of an identifying synthesis" reveals the inadequacy of his own method to describe the process of metaphorical thought, the most immediately synthetic of all. It is only in poetic terms that unities are properly expressed and understood. In metaphorical thought the whole is equal to more than its parts. Metaphor is, after all, metamorphosis. Pound writes: "The undeniable tradition of metamorphosis teaches us that things do not remain the same. They become other things by swift and unanalyzable process."[72]

The unanalyzable quality of such experience proves to be the source of its poetic power. Pound often refers to "that sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from space and time limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art."[73] This brings to mind Poulet's description of the transcendental experience of the reader. That is, the reader is able to experience such a sense of liberation through a total dedication to the work. He participates in the process of communication by setting aside all aspects of himself not essential to the appreciation of the art. The following poem (which Pound selected as signet poem of all collections published after Personae) seems to describe not only this process but also Husserl's method of establishing a state of Epoche. It is entitled "The Tree" and defines the unique achievement of Ezra Pound:

> I stood still and was a tree amid the wood,
> Knowing the truth of things unseen before;
> Of Daphne and the laurel bough
> And that god-feasting couple old
> That grew elm-oak amid the weld.
> 'Twas not until the gods had been
> Kindly entreated, and been brought within
> Unto the hearth of their heart's home
> That they might do this wonder thing;
> Nathless I have been a tree amid the wood
> And many a new thing understood
> That was rank folly to my head before.[74]

Footnotes

1 Georges Poulet, "Phenomenology of Reading," New Literary History, Vol.1, No.1 (October, 1969), p. 55.

2 ibid., p. 57.

3 Edmund Husserl, Cartesian Meditations (The Hague, 1973), p. 6.

4 Ezra Pound, "A Retrospect," quoted by J. P. Sullivan, editor, in Ezra Pound: A Critical Anthology (Middlesex, 1970), p. 85.

5 Pound, Poetry VI (June, 1915), quoted by Hugh Witemeyer in The Poetry of Ezra Pound: Forms and Renewals, 1908 - 1920 (Los Angeles, 1969), p.50.

6 Husserl, Phenomenology and the Crisis of Philosophy (New York, 1965), p. 16.

7 Pound, The Spirit of Romance, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 50.

8 Pound, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 50.

9 Pound, New Age X (January, 1912), quoted by Witemeyer, p. 8.

10 Husserl, op. cit., p. 10.

11 Husserl, op. cit., p. 12.

12 I. M. Bochenski, Contemporary European Philosophy (Los Angeles, 1974), p. 139.

13 Maurice Natanson, Edmund Husserl: Philosopher of Infinite Tasks (Evanston, 1973), p. 85.

14 ibid., p. 91

15 Husserl, Ideas (New York, 1972), p.215.

16 ibid., p. 217

17 Natanson, op. cit., p. 97.

18 Husserl, op. cit., p. 217

19 Pound, Guide to Kulchur (New York, 1970), p. 60.

20 ibid., p. 60.

21 Pound, "Axiomata," quoted by Witemeyer, p. 26.

22 George Dekker, "Myth and Metamorphosis," in New Approaches to Ezra Pound, ed. Eva Hesse (Los Angeles, 1969), p. 296

23 ibid., 294.

24 Natanson, op. cit., p. 97.

25 Denis de Rougemont, Passion and Society, quoted by Dekker, p. 281.

26 Pound, Literary Essays, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 23.

27 Husserl, op. cit., p. 16.

28 Bochenski, op. cit., p. 134.

29 Ernest Fenollosa, "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry," quoted by Pound in Instigations (1920), p. 382.

30 ibid., p. 382.

31 ibid., p. 364.

32 ibid., p. 377.

33 Husserl, op. cit., p. 321.

34 T. S. Eliot, introduction to Ezra Pound: Selected Poems (London, 1928), quoted by Sullivan, p. 101.

35 Pound, The Spirit of Romance, quoted by Sullivan, p. 38.

36 Husserl, Cartesian Meditations, p. 14.

37 Pound, Literary Essays, quoted by Christine Brooke-Rose in A ZBC of Ezra Pound (London, 1971), p. 57.

38 Pound, "A Retrospect," quoted by Sullivan, pp. 83-84.

39 Pound, "Vorticism," quoted by Witemeyer, p. 177.

40 Husserl, op. cit. pp. 77-78.

41 Pound, "Vorticism," quoted by Witemeyer, p. 178.

42 ibid., p. 178.

43 Pound, Polite Essays, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 51.

44 Natanson, op. cit., p. 15.

45 Husserl, op. cit., pp. 34-35.

46 Pound, "Vorticism," quoted by Sullivan, p. 46.

47 Pound, quoted by Boris de Rachewiltz in "Pagan and Magic Elements in Ezra Pound's Works" in New Approaches to Ezra Pound, p. 177.

48 Hugh Kenner, The Poetry of Ezra Pound (London, 1951), p.166.

49 Witemeyer, op. cit., p. 60.

50 Pound, letter to W. C. Williams, quoted by Sullivan, p. 33.

51 Robert Browning, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 50.

52 ibid., p. 50.

53 Pound, "A Retrospect," quoted by Sullivan, p. 86.

54 W. B. Yeats, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 51.

55 ibid., p. 51.

56 Pound, Selected Poems (New York, 1957), pp. 1-2.

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62 Pound, letter to Harriet Monroe, quoted by Sullivan, p. 58.

63 Pound, Selected Poems, p. 50.

64 W. K. Wimsatt, Jr., The Verbal Icon, quoted by Herbert N. Schneidau in Ezra Pound: The Image and the Real (Baton Rouge, 1969), p. 91.

65 Pound, Personae, p. 108, quoted by Witemeyer, p. 51.

66 Pound, Selected Poems, p. 55.

67 Pound, quoted by Brooke-Rose, p. 128.

68 Pound, "Mediaevalism and Mediaevelism," quoted by Sullivan, p. 99.

69 Pound, letter to W. C. Williams, quoted by Sullivan, p. 33.

70 Pound, "Vorticism," quoted by Sullivan, p. 57.

71 Husserl, op. cit., pp. 62-63.

72 Pound, Affirmations, quoted by Brooke-Rose, p. 131.

73 Pound, "Imagisme," quoted by Sullivan, pp. 41-42.

74 Pound, Selected Poems, pp. 6-7.

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