

Ezra Pound: Anti-Semitism, Cantos and Confucianism

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines particular facets of American poet Ezra Pound's writings. Many have come to recognize the real Pound, even though some scholars still find him to be controversial. Enjoying his work necessitates a close reading of not just his poems and essays but also the reasons behind his political stance, canto writing style, conversion of Confucianism to philosophy, and frequent use of the Chinese ideogram in his writing. Because of his efforts to pinpoint the start of the Modernist Age of writing, which permanently altered the way poets present their work, Ezra Pound is a significant figure in literary studies. In addition, he deserves more respect because of his assistance and support for other artists, including Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce among others. In addition to these noteworthy details, his poetry is a masterful example of canto-style Imagist writing that transports the reader through a historical account, stunning imagery, and a philosophical analysis of the world. To help in understanding Pound and his accomplishments, these issues are addressed here.

Keywords: Ezra Pound; canto; Confucianism; Chinese ideogram.

I. INTRODUCTION

Let the Gods forgive
what I have made
Let those I love try to forgive
what I have made.
(Notes for CXVII et seq.)

Who is the real Ezra Loomis Pound? Is he the poet Pound? Is he the anti-Semitic Pound? Is he Pound, the national traitor? Is he Pound, the patient at Washington, D.C.'s St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Insane? What were his beliefs, and why would a gifted, kind, and powerful person allow his destructive ideas to ruin and tarnish his life and reputation? After all, Pound was regarded by his many friends as a gentle and compassionate man – the same kind of man that novelist Ernest Hemingway describes as being:

So far we have Pound the major poet devoting, say, one fifth of his time to poetry. With the rest of his time he tries to advance the fortunes, both material and artistic, of his friends. He defends them when they are attacked, he gets them into magazines and out of jail. He loans them money. He sells their pictures. He arranges concerts for them. He writes articles about them. He introduces them to wealthy women. He gets publishers to take their books. He sits up all night with them when they claim to be dying and he witnesses their wills. He advances them hospital expenses and dissuades them from suicide and in the end a few of them refrain from knifing him at the first opportunity (Tytell, 1987, p.193).

Pound's generosity toward those who showed the "faintest spark of submerged talent" was warmly praised by other writers and poets, including Wyndham Lewis, Hilda Doolittle, and Alfred Kreymborg (Bornstein, 1993, p.23). In fact, he had a significant impact on the careers of astute artists like Robert Frost, T. S. Eliot, and James Joyce. As the Irish poet and playwright's secretary during their winters together at Stone Cottage, he was also useful to W. B. Yeats (Nadel, 1999). Pound had many female friends in addition to his many male friends, such as publisher Alice Corbin Henderson, publicist Harriet Monroe, and financially independent Scottish painter Ethel Moorehead. The *Quarter* magazine was founded by Pound and "an angel" who said, "Pound is meriting the gratitude of this generation" (Wilhelm, 1994). There is proof that Moorehead supported Pound financially in addition to great praise, demonstrating the closeness of their friendship.

This paper examines Pound's philosophical foundations in an effort to reconcile the disparate perceptions of him. The tapestry woven in this article does not try to absolve Pound of his treasonous acts during World War II, nor does it justify his anti-Semitic views. This study looks at the sources of Pound's beliefs, his canto writing style, his interest in Confucianism, and his use of the Chinese ideogram in all of his poems – in other words, the sources of the aesthetic and philosophical components that shaped his works and way of thinking. The goal of this study is to identify the foundations of the contrasts that make up the multifaceted character of Ezra Loomis Pound. We begin by reviewing Pound's anti-Semitic beliefs and his use of the canto style of writing.

II. POUND'S ANTI-SEMITISM

Pound's early anti-Semitic views can be distinguished by his affiliation with London editor A R. Orage. From January 1911 to January 1921, Pound contributed to Orage's *The New Age* in London (Redman, 1991). According to Margaret Cole in the *New Statesman* in 1959, "the left-wing paper, which everybody who was anybody read," the *New Age* was regarded as a significant socialist publication (Redman, 1991, p.18). In "The New Age, Orage blasted the inequality of the sacrifice being made in the World War I conflict by the British working class: the conscription of men, but not of capital; the sacrifice of lives, but not of profit" (Redman, 1991, p.23). The lives of the innocent, hardworking youth were used as fuel for a war that the bankers were accused of funding. Around the world, bankers were mostly of Jewish descent, and this was also the case in London. Pre-World War II anti-Semitism is well documented, well understood, and widely acknowledged to have existed in the Western world. As Redlich (1991) recalls, the Catholic Church disclosed that "the clergy and bishops were generally anti-Semitic" (p.36). Hitler's admiration for American Henry Ford, who claimed in *The Dearborn Independent* that Jews around the world were to blame for the outbreak of World War I, is mentioned in the same text. Hitler was heading toward total conquest of Europe in 1941, and Pound might have been acclaimed as a prophet for seeing an issue most others missed if the coin toss had been any different from historical records.

A new perspective on anti-Semitism emerged when the extent of the anti-Semitic sentiment in the world was revealed through the Nazi death camps. The horror that was seen, captured on camera, talked about, evaluated, and documented was unimaginable to the global community. The world community was deeply affected by the planned, systematic, and well-organized extermination of the Jewish people, rather than only by the horrific propaganda films and speeches, the numbers of the six million people who were killed and subjected to torture, or even by the hatred directed towards the Jews. The human mind could not bear that scene (Tytell, 1987). Individuals who expressed anti-Semitic views were deemed guilty or insane. Pound was heavily involved in this judgment, partly because of his anti-Semitic writings but primarily because of his anti-Allies broadcasts during World War II from Italy. He had supported Mussolini over Roosevelt because he preferred fascism to democracy. His broadcasts were a frank expression of his views. The reader also observes that Pound was anti-Christian and anti-American, as noted by Tytell (1987), when his writing became blatantly anti-Semitic later in life.

As a result, the evidence is convoluted, as Pound's life frequently was. However, it is also evident that Pound was looking for a poetic form that would allow him to transform his philosophy into art and a philosophy that would articulate his worldview. The *Cantos* was the outcome. Formally, Pound's epic poem was inspired by Dante and the troubadours he had studied for a long time; however, philosophically, Pound would turn to the East.

We now discuss Pound's canto writing style and philosophy.

III. Pound's Preference for Confucianism and His Canto Style of Writing

The *Cantos* – the Italian word for song – reveal a style of writing, notably in the beginning *Cantos* 1-111 accredited to Dante, a Pound favorite, and as also found in the *Iliad* or Ovid's *Metamorphosis*. Pound began the idea of a canto when working on the vortex concept in 1914. Vortex suggests "a rush of ideas fining themselves down, focusing on some central point, which seems more useful to an epic poet" (Pound, 1998, p.60). Therefore, what emerges is not quite a song, but as explained by Daniel Albright, "an allegation of music that indeed can be heard, but only fitfully, as if the whole poem were a transcript of a radio broadcast that kept losing the proper channel, dissolving into static, or into the blare of the aggressive wrong stations occupying a bandwidth close to the faint right station (Albright, 1999, p.61). However, after reading through a *Canto*, the reader begins to 'tune in' to the poet's intent. The meaning is present, but unclear initially, brilliant when reread and studied, and intellectually enduring.

The Pound narrative relates that since his college days, Pound wanted to become a modern Dante who would write a world history in the style of *The Divine Comedy*. Wilhelm (1994) suggests that Pound decided to write about the "utopian Social Credit system advocated by Major C. H. Douglas of London toward the end of World War I" (p.4). "In 1928 I began an investigation of causes of war, to oppose same," Pound wrote, which is recorded in Tytell's account. Dante's *Divine Comedy* and Dante's style were the elements that prepared Pound to

enter a new expanse in writing. He was to have stated that "all great poets –Homer, Shakespeare, Dante – made history a part of their poetry" (Meacham, 1967, p.46).

Throughout his life, when asked what he believed, Pound would refer the inquirer to Confucius and Ovid. He avowed to believe the *Ta Hio*, the Confucian classic or great learning, the study of individualism and social responsibility (Cheadle, 1997).

According to Wilhelm (1994), Pound was determined to use the ethics of the Chinese sage, Confucius (the Latin translation for the Chinese name Kung according to the *Cambridge Encyclopedia*) as opposed to the monotheistic writings of Dante. Mary Paterson Cheadle wrote in her account of the Confucian translations that "a respect for individuality is precisely what Pound found most essential to Confucianism initially" (Cheadle, 1997, p.17). In a review of *Canto XIII*, as mentioned by Cheadle, there is a profound affirmation for individual thinking demonstrated when Kung asks four of his disciples a question, and each one of them answers in a different way. When asked who had answered correctly, Kung stated that they all did, "each in his own nature" (Cheadle, 1997, p.17). This would have been a positive reason for Pound to study and patronize Confucianism. Respect for individuality is a crucial point of Pound's personal philosophy. Another point of opposition to the Christian point of view was found in a letter that Pound wrote to his father in 1923 stating that "beginning in the middle of oneself is excellent, the exact reverse of Christian churchism which teaches: thou shalt attend to thy neighbor's business before thou attendest to thine own" (Cheadle, 1997, p.17). Cheadle continues, "This beginning in the middle of oneself also implies not only to Shakespeare's Polonius's 'to thine own self be true' but a responsibility to discipline and reform oneself" (p.17). That particular ideology is found over and over in Pound's writings and clearly states that the individual must find order within the self, and this order eventually spreads to the community and then the country.

Further evidence of Pound's leaning toward Confucianism, and away from Christianity, was found in Pound's *Provincialism the Enemy, II* and in an untitled article of *The New Age* printed around 1917 and quoted in Emery's *Ideas into Action*. The statement was also quoted by Cheadle in the Confucian Translations text:

Confucius was a "statesman" and "a man of great genius, a minister high in the State and living to his full age"; Christ was only a "profound philosophic genius... an intuitive, inexperienced man, dying before middle age, a provincial genius, a man of a subject nation, without the need, therefore of an ethics of government." (Pound, 1969, p.193). Confucius was a worldly man, and his philosophy was an ethics of individual, social, and political conduct, whereas Christ, having been young, outcast and therefore absorbed, presumably, with the self, founded an ethics of the soul and its afterlife. If Confucian fraternal deference were "introduced" in the West, Pound wrote around 1917, it would 'finish off Christianity" (Cheadle, 1997, p.18)

Pound was known to expound his dislike of Christianity, Judaism, and also Islam, according to Wilhelm (1994). Confucianism seemed the perfect fit to include in the Cantos, which were to be "an epic of judgment" (p.4). The Pound Cantos also consist of historical data, and names, and fragments from famous writings, at least in the first few Cantos, which is similar in style to Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

However, it serves this effort to review the writings of Kung and to analyze how those prolific views were incorporated into Pound's thinking, thus shaping his writings. According to Wilhelm (1994), Pound believed that Confucian morality was the most acceptable since it places more emphasis on self-control than it does on fantastical cures and life after death. Pound condemns those who taught otherwise. He was especially hard on most Greek philosophers because he said that they tend to be highbrow elitists with no concern for the people, and the only exception was Aristotle (Wilhelm, 1994). In 1928, Pound wrote *The Great Digest*, and in 1947, he wrote *Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot*, incorporating the Confucian *Analects* into this writing in 1950; they are now combined in one publication. The reasoning behind the "wobbling pivot", according to Wilhelm (1994), was to place the Aristotelian *mean* as a norm of conduct next to the Chinese ideogram (Chinese character or symbol) for "the middle," *Chung*, which he interprets as a kind of unwobbling pivot (129). We can assume from this information that Pound searched for the teachers whom he felt were most concerned for the common man. A study of the *Cantos* often reveals an informal type of speech that Pound frequently used, and this most logically is in opposition to elitist thinking and behavior and thus favoring the common man.

When it came to Christianity, which Pound did not admire, those few he quoted were St. Ambrose and St. Anselm. Conversely, Pound rejected the teachings of St. Thomas Aquinas, for example, "because he tried to turn theology into logical hair-splitting, as if trying to convert Aristotle to Christianity," (Wilhelm, 1994, p.129). Wilhelm also mentions that the approach to religion, in Pound's view, is not through discursive logic, but through poetry. Cheadle (1997) interestingly points out that Pound writes of good manners, taught by Kung, and the subject of manners is sprinkled throughout The Cantos, specifically mentioned in *Canto XCIX*, in which he says that manners starting with oneself, spread ultimately to the empire. This philosophical thinking is in direct contrast to the man, Pound. In England, he was known for his lack of manners. His lack of manners was portrayed by his boots and cowboy actions, his Philadelphia accent, and American barbarisms, that included bizarre talk, and loud, uncultured array of clothing. His wardrobe included green trousers made of billiard cloth that he wore with a pink velvet coat adorned with blue glass buttons. His character was supported by a walking

stick. Tytell (1987), in *Solitary Volcano*, concludes that he looked like a character out of a Puccini opera. He was also outlandish as a student in America, but even more so when he lived in London. Tytell (1987) claims that the role of the fool, that Pound often played, permitted the release of Pound's spontaneously rapid judgments: "The unpredictability of the fool and his defiance of acceptable manners and mores caused suspicion and disfavor" (p.30). We are noticing the starts of many contrasts.

However, returning to Pound's interest in Kung and reviewing Pound's *Confucius: The Unwobbling Pivot*, the reader is immediately introduced to the stone tablets that "were placed in the Imperial Academy in the metropolis." Several Chinese dynasties placed the Confucian teachings near learning institutions, where they could be studied and given measured importance:

And the books were incised in stone
46 tablets set up at the door of the college (*Canto LIV*)

In the Judeo-Christian community, Moses brings the commands written on stone to the populace. This mode of communication has the sense of permanence and command of significance. However, in *Canto LIV*, Pound explains that the forty-six stones were torn down and used to build a Buddhist Temple. Since we are aware of the perseverance with which Pound translated and reflected on Confucianism, especially in *Cantos LII* through *Cantos L-XXI*, which are the *Confucian Cantos*, the Pound student is encouraged to believe that Kung was of inestimable standing in Pound's thinking.

The Confucian Text invites the student to think independently right away. In the opening remarks of *The Analects*, advising editor Betty Radice notes that Kung emphasizes thinking just as much as learning. It is rooted in observing with affection how people grow, in resting, in being at ease in perfect equity. There, intelligence increases through the process of looking directly into one's own heart and acting on the results. This is a targeted and illuminating way of thinking.

In a reading of the *Analects*, Kung is quoted as stating, 'Exemplary people understand matters of justice, small people understand matters of profit' (Book 4:16). If Pound believed this Confucian philosophy, then he could not have believed that profit was desirable for those trying to reach that peak of personal perfection. He would have particularly opposed banks earning exorbitant amounts of interest. This would seem reasonable, and we know through his many negative references to usury (usury) that this is Pound's true thinking. Pound (1998) devotes *Canto XLV* to the subject of usury, and, in the conclusion of this *Canto*, Pound adds an explanation that usury is a charge for the use of purchasing power, levied without regard to production, often without regard to the possibilities of production, and uses as an example 'the failure of the Medici bank' (p.231). This is a theme referenced throughout his lifetime of writing. This is what is at the basis of his problems with governments and people, especially the Jewry whom Pound blames for utilizing "usury." The Jews were heavily involved in banking in the world community and were logical targets. Pound focuses on Kung, as having the model for government, ideologies, and success for every citizen.

To further explore the authority Pound allotted Kung, the student must study *Canto XIII*. Pound refers to Confucius, as Kung or Kung Fu-tse, which translates to Venerated Master Kong. An interesting exchange is recounted between the Master and an old friend who was seated by the roadside:

You old fool, come out of it,
Get up and do something useful
And Kung said
Respect a child's faculties
From the moment it inhales the clear air,
But a man of fifty who knows nothing
Is worthy of no respect. (*Canto XIII*)

This quote is wise. According to Cheadle (1997), "it is not right to respect authority blindly since authority may be corrupt." Cheadle reminds us that "Confucius advises a father to hide his son if his son has committed murder, and that is why Confucius gives his daughter and niece away in marriage to men who have themselves been imprisoned or evicted from government" (p.21). We know from Pound's history that he was frustrated with authority. In Cheadle's account, Pound was "convinced the political authorities in particular were to blame for the tragedy and travesty of World War I" (Cheadle, 1997, p.21).

In another epic poem, *Canto XLIX*, Pound refers to the floater – a person sitting by the road with begging bowls instead of working on the land. Kung did not prize the lazy man, and neither did Pound. There is also a passage, dwelling on order, from the common man to those who hold office, that interprets to "and if the prince has not order within, he cannot put order in his dominions", again a strong and meaningful charge, and an oft repeated theme that defines Kung to the student (*Canto XIII*).

Kung also expounds a similar philosophy to Aristotle's *golden mean*, the concept that moral excellence is the acquired rational capacity to choose the mean between extremes, as written in Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*

Book II (Stewart, 1973). In the Kung statement, "It is hard to stand firm in the middle" (Canto XIII), Kung suggests it is easy to hit past the mark or run to excesses. Pound concludes Canto XIII with the passage, "The blossoms of the apricot blow from the east to the west, and I have tried to keep them from falling." This signifies Pound's effort to keep Confucianism (Kung was traditionally associated with the apricot blossom) alive by bringing Confucian philosophy from the East (Orient) to the West (Terrell, 1993, p.64).

It is noted that Pound often mocks organized religion. In Canto XLIX, he writes, "And don't believe papists merely because they helped with the calendar". Cheadle (1997) indicates that Ovid's *Metamorphoses* presented an alternative to Christianity, as Confucianism did: "There was no tyranny or taboo; there was no single code of behavior imposed upon the individual by some external authority such as God, the church, or society" (p.25). Pound could relate to the social relations and order of Ovid and Kung and replied to the question "What does Mr. Pound believe?" by telling the inquirer to read Kung and Ovid (Cheadle, 1997, p.25).

In *Canto XCIX*, there is a beautiful line, "by the silk cords of the sunlight," which according to Terrell's *Companion*, refers to the Chinese ideogram *hsien*, often used in Pound's writings. The ideogram is referred to by Kung as "unmixed is the tensile light, the Immaculata, there is no end to its action" (Pound, 1969, p.187). In Pound's thinking, and according to *Canto LXXVII*, light is thought, and the sun is connected with language; the sun is God's mouth. In Casillo's account, light is the means by which the word or logo is transmitted, while the logo itself is identified with intelligence and light. "The sun is thus a logo-centric sign, a symbol of the divine origin or parent of speech, reason, and order," writes Casillo (1988, p.25-26). Many cultures view the sun, or light, as divine, but in Pound's writings, he expresses particular respect for solar religion, arguing that true religion derives from agriculture, thus the dependence on light and on the sun. In yet another account of Pound and his reference to the sun, Casillo refers to *Canto LXXXV*, in which Pound states, "The sun under it all," giving the sun the sense of stability. Linguistically, it is the basis for a cluster of themes and ideas that return ceaselessly, along a kind of metaphorical chain back to the idea of the sun as origin, sets the system into motion, and lies under linguistic definition (Casillo, 1988). This connects perfectly with Kung, whose disciples Tzu-Kung and Tseng Tzu both claimed the "Master to be bleached by the autumn sun, so immaculate was he that his whiteness could not be surpassed" (Pound, 1969, p.53). The Confucian purpose was to enlighten. This is clearly an enticement for Pound to emulate Kung's teachings, since he found in Kung a sense of perfection, a sense of enlightenment.

Since Pound used the Chinese ideogram in his work, it is important to understand the reason for this form of writing. The first ideogram in Pound's text of Confucian studies refers to light descending from the sun, moon, and stars. This translates to a component of ideograms indicating spirits, rites, and ceremonies. The second ideogram is the sun and moon side by side, indicating radiation, reception, and reflection of light – hence, the intelligence. The third ideogram is described as "sincerity." This is the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot verbally. The right-hand portion means to perfect or bring into focus (Pound, 1969, p.20). It would not be a great revelation to note that Pound is attracted to Kung's teachings because there is reference to light, and light shows the way to perfection. However, in the Confucian text, the fourth *analect* states "that light comes from looking straight into the heart and then acting on what is revealed, and when this is done, they first set up good government in their own states; wanting good government in their states, they first established order in their own families; wanting order in the home" and so on, until order is established. The conclusion of this *analect* states: "They set to extend their knowledge to the utmost. This completion of knowledge is rooted in sorting things into organic categories" (Pound, 1969, p.29). Kung then notes that when knowledge is rooted in sorting things into organic categories, knowledge is moved to fulfillment and again goes through the order of everything and concludes in the fifth *analect* that method by which the empire was brought into equilibrium. Kung then refers to the emperor down to the common man, singly and altogether, that this self-discipline is the root (Pound, 1969, p.33). Of course, what makes the root grow is the heat of the sun, and the root and its produce is the sense of enlightenment. The seventh *analect* declares that if the root is in confusion, nothing will be well governed. Thus far, Kung is prompting the reader to take a second look at this manner of thinking. It is straight and uncomplicated. It does not request miracles or regeneration from a Divinity, but it demands the individual to take charge of the self. It begins with the ruler and ends with the peasant. This is a teaching of responsibility. So far, it is good, reasonable, and understandable.

There is a reference for "finding the precise word for the inarticulate heart's tone which means not lying to oneself, as in the case of hating a bad smell or loving a beautiful person, also called respecting one's own nose. On this account the real man has to look his heart in the eye even when he is alone," and this quote is taken from the Confucian disciple Tseng, who made comments on Kung's teachings (Pound, 1969, p.471). Tseng comments on the method of improving oneself. He notes that "you can improve the old homestead by adding material riches and irrigation; you enrich and irrigate the character by the process of looking straight into the heart and then acting on the results. Thus, the mind becomes your palace, and the body can be at ease; it is for this reason that the great gentleman must find the precise verbal expression for his inarticulate thoughts," Tseng comments in the Sixth Chapter of *Comments* (Pound, 1969, p.51).

In reviewing Pound's style of writing, it is obvious that he wrote in a precise manner, saying just what he meant to say and having "fewer painted adjectives impeding the shock and stroke of it [poetry]" (Pound, 1968, p.3). Pound discussed critics in his essay *How to Read* and criticized those who used ambiguous language, saying they ought to be removed; and that these people were "too ignorant to have a meaning; but the critics who use vague terms to conceal their meaning, and all critics who use terms so vaguely that the reader can think he agrees with them, or assents to their statements when he doesn't" (Pound, p.37). Again, the reader sees the attraction toward Confucian thought and why Pound chose Kung as a model for his studies. There is no fluff with Kung, and no fluff with Pound. In fact, this lack caused him a considerable amount of trouble. One example of trouble can be noted when Pound writes regarding Joyce. Pound states, "It is surprising that Mr. Joyce is Irish. One is so tired of the Irish or 'Celtic' imagination flopping about" (Pound, 1968, p.400). This could not have endeared him to the Irish, but it was a compliment for Joyce. However, when Joyce attempted poetry and showed his work to Pound, "Pound condescendingly recommended that Joyce stuff the poems in a Bible or family photograph album" (Tytell, 1987, p.192). Was this a brutal insensitivity as Tytell suggests, or was it a brutal honesty that the student might suspect from studying those whom Pound found to admire, such as Kung?

On the other hand, Pound wrote essays regarding those who wrote directly, without anything insubstantial or trivial. He wrote an essay about Robert Frost, the unofficial American poet laureate who was excellent at his trade in his particular style. The reader may recall that Frost wrote and read his poetry at the 1960 presidential inauguration in his eightieth year. Earlier, Frost went to England and became acquainted with Pound around 1913. They were introduced by F. S. Flint, a renowned critic of the day (Tytell, 1987, p.45). Pound sympathized with Frost in an essay in which he states, "Frost has been scorned by the 'great American editors'. It is the old story". Pound continued his disgust with America and the American critics. He studies Frost's *A Boy's Will* by stating, "Mr. Frost's book is a little raw, and has in it a number of infelicities; underneath them it has the tang of the New Hampshire woods, and it has just this utter sincerity" (Pound, 1968, p.382). While he does not see Frost as a poet in the Modernist Style, he does offer that Frost's work comes from his own life: "He is without shame and without affectation" (Pound, 1968, p.383). This admiration for the beauty of sincerity harkens back to the teachings of Kung. Whether intentionally or not, Kung is present. In *The Unwobbling Pivot*, Pound serves the words of Tse Sze, a Confucian disciple: "Sincerity is the goal of things and their origin, without this sincerity nothing is. On this meridian the man of breed respects, desires sincerity, holds it in honor and defines his terminology" (179).

Kung also did not preach about an afterlife or a reward for a life well lived. Pursuing morality for its own sake is worthwhile. This developed thinking would have complemented Pound's thinking. Kung did not die a martyr's death or claim to be a descendant from a deity. His writings centered around wisdom, benevolence, and courage. These qualities would have attracted Pound. Born around 551 B.C., according to Huston Smith, a renowned scholar of religious studies, Kung was kind, loved to be with people, loved to talk, to teach, to drink, but not to excess, and enjoyed music and poetry. He cut across class lines, never slighted a poor student who could not pay him, was capable of sarcasm when he thought it deserved, and was exacting of himself even more than of others (Pound, 1969, p.157-5). We are essentially defining Ezra Pound here.

In contrast to Confucianism, the *Tao Te Ching*, the work of the Chinese sage Lao Tzu, could not be put into words. The opening line of the *Tao Te Ching* clearly states: "The Tao that can be spoken is not the true Tao," indicating that the Tao, or the Way, is beyond human comprehension, "Those who know do not say, those who say do not know." Pound, who insists on the truth and the obvious being presented to those in authority and those who follow it, finds these words intriguing but unappealing. Tzu was born around 604 B.C. and lived during the time of Kung. In fact, there is an indication that Kung met Tzu and asked to be tutored in the rites. Tzu was said to have spoken:

The very bones of those you talk about have turned to dust. All that remains of them is their words. You know that when a noble lives in times which are good, he travels to court in a carriage. But when times are difficult, he goes where the wind blows. Some say that a wise merchant hides his wealth and thus seems poor. Likewise, the sage, if he has great internal virtue, seems on the outside to be a fool. Stop being so arrogant; all these demands; your self-importance and your over keen enthusiasm — none of this is true to yourself.

That is all I have to say to you (Palmer, 1991, p.35).

Kung did not understand Tzu, whom he claimed was like a dragon that is not trapped by the lure of power, wealth, or position. While Tzu was certainly a sage to be revered, these thoughts are only fragments of his life and teachings. Pound would have required meanings to be framed by words and not ideologies that cannot be understood or cannot be spoken. Again, it is apparent why Kung became the sage for Pound's reference.

However, the American poet, Allen Ginsberg talked with Pound near the end of Pound's years. Although Pound had professed to be a pure Confucian, Ginsberg stated that "it has long been known from his talk about 'the

process' that Pound subscribed more to Taoist principles than he acknowledged" (Wilhelm, 1994, p.348). We note again that there are contrasts in the convictions of Pound. A yin and a yang exist.

IV. CONCLUSION

We have established from his writings and references that Pound was anti-Semitic and have identified when his unfortunate philosophy began and the basic tenets that Pound professed. We have reviewed his canto style of writing, his devotion to Kung and Confucianism and the resulting use of the Chinese ideogram throughout his writings.

We have reviewed his anti-Allies broadcasts during World War II and the consequential indictment for treason. In a letter written to Attorney General Biddle and dated August 4, 1945, he replied to the charges by saying, "I have not spoken with regard to this war, but in protest against a system which creates one war after another, in series and in system. I have not spoken to the troops ... Free speech under modern conditions becomes a mockery if it does not include the right to free speech over the radio" (Wilhelm, 1994, p.199). We next look at the possibility of insanity, which became his eventual plea.

Pound requested that he be allowed to conduct his own defense, but assigned Chief Judge Boitha J. Laws refused, stating that 'the charge was too serious' (Tytell, 1987, p.285). The court appointed Attorney Julien Cornell, who wrote that he found the poet under a "mental cloud." A claustrophobic problem, from which Pound suffered, manifested during his wait for trial and was described by Tytell as a claustrophobic attack that followed from his being locked in a cell and deprived of exercise, due to another inmate's escape attempt. The result was mental and physical exhaustion, and Pound was sent to an infirmary. Cornell suggested that he plead "insanity," and Pound did not object. At this point, there is no doubt that Pound thought of William Joyce, an Irishman hateful of and executed by the English for broadcasts Joyce made during the war, and also of Douglas Chandler, an American accused of being a traitor, and sentenced to life imprisonment in Boston (Wilhelm, 1994). When Cornell asked if Pound would stand mute or enter a plea, "his mouth opened once or twice as if to speak, but no words came out. He looked up at the ceiling and his face began to twitch. Finally, he said he felt ill and asked if he could go back to the infirmary" (Tytell, 1987, p.286).

Many were Pound's supporters, including Hemingway, Laughlin, and Archibald MacLeish, poet, author, and assistant secretary of state from 1944 to 1945 (Bush, 1999), who felt a civil rights defense would not work because of his anti-Semitism stance and so advised the insanity plea (Tytell, 1987). James Laughlin wrote to Eliot that "we realize Ezra is 'sane' and the world is 'insane', but since it is the world which habitually hangs or torments men of genius or vision this solution seems the most practical" (Tytell, 1987, p.285).

The brief trial concluded with Pound in silence, his hands were folded, his head was downcast; he was shuffling from one foot to the other and continuously rubbing his eyes, "which seemed full of pain" (Tytell, 1987, p.287). The judge ordered Pound to a local hospital to be examined by four psychiatrists, three appointed by the government and one appointed by Cornell. In *E. P.: The Solitary Volcano*, Tytell mentions a book written by Dr. Fuller Torrey, a psychiatrist. In Torrey's account, two members of the team were not eminently qualified and were excessively influenced by Dr. Overholser, chief of St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Insane in Washington, D.C., where Pound was placed. Later in 1984, a Poundian author by the name of Carroll F. Terrell states that Pound did not seek the defeat of the United States in World War II, so he was not guilty of treason, and if brought to trial, he would have been found not guilty. Further, Overholser did not commit perjury and did not coerce the three other witnesses into a conspiracy to join him in such perjury. He further stated that Pound required ego support, security, and eventual freedom from fear. Initially, after admittance to St. Elizabeth's Hospital for the Insane, Pound was frightened that a lobotomy would be performed and/or shock treatments, which would have ended his ability to (Terrell, 1993, p.149-153).

Let us review what is well documented about Pound to further explore the insanity charge. Pound was born in 1885 in Hailey, Idaho; he was an only child. After a few months of frontier living, his mother uprooted her infant Ezra to live in New York, then Philadelphia. The plush Victorian Style house in Philadelphia included "customary family portraits, a precious Ming vase, some oriental drawings, India prints on the chairs, a few heirlooms, lots of books, a piano and a small Hammond organ. The household also included a maid and the pretensions of grandeur" (Tytell, 1987, p.15-16). According to this account, Pound was read Longfellow before naptime. Apparently, he grabbed onto poetry as part of his comfort zone, which included the security of his mother, a lovely home and all the fittings of mental and bodily nourishment. At the age of eleven, he wrote his first poem about William Jennings Bryan. It was the same year as Bryan's attempt to defeat the banking establishment and gold standard, and this subject left an imprint on the child's mind (Tytell, 1987). (William Jennings Bryan, a fundamentalist, was famous for his "Cross of Gold" speech, which was instrumental in his presidential nomination in 1896, 1900, and 1908 (Rosenbaum, et.al, *New American Encyclopedia*). Also, Pound was an impressionable child, who often attended the Presbyterian Church with his grandmother. He heard the rants of the Reverend Charles Henry Parkhursts, and Tytell claims the pastor was an early model for the later rants of Ezra Loomis Pound. He often reacted negatively to his mother, and in a letter to Dorothy, his future wife, he proclaimed his mother a prude (Tytell, 1987). Recognizing his more than common, earthy expressions

throughout life and in the Cantos, there is clearly a rebellion against mother Isabel's sense of propriety and control, but she also gave Pound a sense of himself "as a dandy". From these early descriptions, we can detect that Pound saw himself as a nonconforming poet. In 1901, in college, he employed a gold headed cane and sometimes a broad-brimmed hat with a swooping feather. This is a crying out for attention. However, Pound's parents gave him attention and were encouraging. They believed his "grand declaration" that "I want to write, before I die, the greatest poems that have ever been written" (Tytell, 1987, p.19).

According to *Adolescence* by Santrock (1998), knowing the self, having an understanding of the self, and developing a healthy level of self-esteem and self-concept are critical to making a proper self-identity and to discovering where one fits in society. Self-identity is critical to the self in life. There are those in society who live their entire lives in a troubled state not understanding and unable to identify themselves.

Pound was a loner in college and did not enjoy group friendships. It is more than possible that Pound experienced emotional isolation (when a person lacks an intimate attachment), but it is certain that he experienced social isolation (when a person lacks a sense of integrated involvement). Being deprived of participation in a group or community, of companionships, and of shared interests, organized activities, and meaningful roles causes a person to feel alienated, bored, and uneasy (Santrock, 1998).

Later, in the year 1928, Homer Pound retired, and the two parents came to Italy to live with Pound, at Pound's insistence (Wilhelm, 1994). Isabel, Pound's mother, was the stoic, staid New England woman whom Pound claimed, "he did not appreciate until she was dead." Conversely, Pound's father was plain, old-fashioned, and the Italians "probably saw him as the sheriff out of the Grade-B cowboy movies popular in Italy at the time". Also, according to Wilhelm (1994), Pound's father had been doling out money to Pound since Pound left America for England in 1908. This gives a picture of a young man who had an attachment for his parents, in particular his father, and who relied on them for sustenance. This also gave him a measure of security and freedom.

Even though he lacked maturity, he was a genius of his own type. He studied and spoke a wide variety of languages, read extensively, could be charming enough to secure financial and influential aide, when need be, and he kept two intelligent and talented women tied to him for life. Most important, he engineered a new age in writing with the beginning of the Modernist Age. He seemed to have always wanted to be in the center of things, the vortex. The Poundian can be comfortable knowing the philosophies that he embraced were noble and the reasons that Confucianism became his "religion." He was, no doubt, a species of genius beyond understanding in many instances. His writing is of great value, with great insights.

His poetry must be read and reread, and the reader will find phrases that haunt because of their lucidity. The reader will never look again at an anthill in quite the same way or the "shafts of silk-like light shining through a cloud." The drive to know of him is haunting, because unlike most humans, he is an exaggerated version of the black/white image, the pairs of opposites, the contrasts.

In conclusion, Pound was released after twelve and a half years of confinement in St. Elizabeth's in 1958. While there, he interacted with a steady stream of artists that came to see him, talk to him, or listen. He was loved by those who loved him, but few understood him.

A note of encouragement to the Poundian is Pound's statement near the end of his life, made to Allen Ginsberg in 1967: "Any good I've done has been spoiled by bad intentions – the preoccupation with irrelevant and stupid things.... But the worst mistake I made was that stupid, suburban prejudice of anti-Semitism" (Wilhelm, 1994, p.344). Ginsberg graciously gave him his "blessing," and when Ginsberg asked if he accepted it, Pound replied, "after a moment of hesitation: 'I do' " (Wilhelm, 1994, p.345).

It is easier to face advanced age and the inevitable when goals have been accomplished and a measure of satisfaction has been achieved. At Pound's 82nd birthday party in 1967, he was known to make the statement, "Basil Bunting told me that the Cantos refer, but do not present" and Wilhelm offers that this is actually a very perceptive comment on Pound's work. However, Ginsberg gallantly offered that Bunting told him that Pound was to be praised for his economy of language (Wilhem, 1994, p.344).

In 1963, Pound granted an interview with a reporter for an Italian magazine during which "Pound admitted, 'All my life I believed knew nothing, yes I knew nothing. And so words became devoid of meaning'" (Tytell, 1987, p.335). This is a sad statement for a man who lived by use of the *word*. There is a deep and total lack of self-esteem and a strong indication of his lack of maturity. Was he just putting on a show all of his life?

When he was not involved in a thousand activities, i.e., writing operas and plays, editing his friends works and helping them publish their works, getting money for the backing of projects, and so forth, he wrote mind-stabbing lines. He wrote not only poetry, but also rich prose, and books that are sought after today, especially his *ABC of Reading*. Periodically, Poundians gather to discuss, review, and enjoy his work. Pound is a fascinating study, and the question was how could such genius end so tragically? There was beauty and tragedy, successes and failures, dramas and disasters, loves and hatreds, but much accomplished. It was Pound who edited Eliot's *The Wasteland*, and it was Pound that aided in the editing and publishing of Joyce's *Ulysses*. His greatest impact on writing, of course, is his influence on the Imagist poets and the introduction of the Modernist Age in writing that revolutionized the way poetry is written.

That so much could be accomplished in one lifetime of eighty-seven years is in itself mysterious and in its own way a writing of paradise.

I have tried to write Paradise
 Do not move
 Let the wind speak that is paradise.
 Let the Gods forgive what I have made
 Let those I love try to forgive
 what I have made. (Notes for CXVII et seq.)

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