

Of Poems and Propositions: T.S. Eliot and the Linguistic Turn

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*"A man will be imprisoned in a room with a door that's unlocked and opens inwards;
as long as it does not occur to him to pull rather than push."*

-Ludwig Wittgenstein, 1942 Notebook

CONTENTS

<u>Section</u>	<u>Page Number</u>
II. Abstract	3
III. List of Abbreviations	4
III. Preface	5-7
IV. Introduction	8-12
V. Chapter One: his dry and passionate talk devoured the afternoon: T.S. Eliot and Bertrand Russell	15
i. The New Realism	15-22
ii. Why Russell?	22-29
iii. Introduction to the Linguistic Turn	29-31
a. Early Interactions	31-35
iv. Between Fact and Fiction: Notes and Queries	35-41
v. Logical Atomism: Russell, Bradley, Leibniz	41-48
vi. Meaning	48-51
vii. Gazing Inward	51-56
vii. The Theory of Definite Descriptions	56-67
viii. A Conflict of Interest	67-69
ix. Towards Phenomenology: Shades of Consciousness	69-75
x. Conclusion	75-77
VI. Chapter Two: We can wait with our stools and our sausages.: T.S. Eliot and Edmund Husserl	78
i. Why Husserl?	78-86
a. Introduction to Husserl	86-95
ii. “The Husserl Period”: 1913 - 1916	95-99
iii. Point of View	99-103
iv. The Definite Indefinite	104-111
v. Josiah Royce’s Seminar: 1913-1914.....	111-120
vi. In The Margins.....	120-131
vii. Conclusion.....	131-133
VII. Chapter Three: A Comment on F.H Bradley	134
i. In the Margins	134-137
ii. Introduction	137-141
iv. Bradley as Phenomenologist	141-148
v. The Absolute	148-149
vi. Meaning	149-150
vii. Misled by Occasion	150-152
viii. Feeling	152-156
ix. Other Divergences	156-158
x. Intentionality	158-163
xi. Conclusion	163

VIII. Chapter Four: Before the taking of a toast and tea.: Critical Themes	164
i. The Metaphysical Poets	164-167
ii. Thought, Feeling, and Intuitive Expression.....	174-186
iii. Point of View.....	186-189
iv. The Objective Correlative	189-193
v. Phenomenological Criticism	193-194
vi. Living Language.....	195-196
vii. Conclusion	199
IX. Chapter Five: Let us go and make our visit.: Phenomenological Poetry	197
i. Introduction	198-199
ii. Metaphysical Methods	199-200
iii. Succession, Lists	200-205
iv. 1920s and 1930s: A Transitional Period	205-208
i. “Animula”.....	208-213
ii. “Ash-Wednesday”	213-217
v. Occasional Expression	217-225
vi. The Definite Indefinite	225-227
i. “Coriolan”	227-236
vii. That is not it at all.....	236-245
viii. “Four Quartets”	245-256
i. Horizons of Meaning	256-263
X. Conclusion.....	264-267
XI. Acknowledgements	268
XII. Bibliography.....	269
i. Primary Sources.....	269-272
ii. Unpublished Sources.....	273-275
iii. Books from Eliot’s Personal Library.....	275-276
iv. Secondary Sources.....	276-288

Abstract

This thesis describes how Eliot's concern for language and form finds roots in early twentieth century language philosophy. It also explores the way Eliot's early philosophical themes concerning language and meaning reemerge in his literary criticism and philosophical poetry during the 1920s and 1930s, and in his more explicitly philosophical Four Quartets. More significantly, this thesis historically elucidates Eliot's debt to the philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Bertrand Russell, reframing his philosophy within the two poles of the "Linguistic Turn". By closely examining Eliot's unpublished and only recently published essays and notes, the thesis unearths probable connections between Eliot's own philosophical interests and his later poetics, redefining his legacy as a prototypical modernist poet, and suggesting a new framework of study for scholars and students of literary modernism.

List of Abbreviations

CPP: Eliot, T.S. (1969). *The Complete Poems & Plays of T.S. Eliot* London, Faber and Faber Limited.

CPI: Eliot, T. S. and Spears Brooker, Jewel. and Schuchard, Ronald. *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Project MUSE. Web. 20 May. 2015. <<https://muse.jhu.edu/>>

CP II: Eliot, T. S. and Cuda, Anthony. and Schuchard, Ronald. *The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926*. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. Project MUSE. Web. 20 May. 2015. <<https://muse.jhu.edu/>>

KAE: Eliot, T.S. (1964). *Knowledge and Experience in the philosophy of F.H. Bradley*, Faber & Faber.

Preface

In the middle of the twentieth century, British idealist philosophy was facing a slow but unmistakable decline in popularity. The implications of this death for British literature and thought is described by C.S. Lewis:

Nor can a man of my age ever forget how suddenly and completely the idealist philosophy of his youth fell. McTaggart, Green, Bosanquet, Bradley seemed enthroned for ever; they went down as suddenly as the Bastille. And the interesting thing is that while I lived under that dynasty I felt various difficulties and objections which I never dared to express. They were so frightfully obvious that I felt sure they must be mere misunderstandings: the great men could not have made such very elementary mistakes as those which my objections implied.¹

T.S. Eliot was disappointed by the fall of the great metaphysicians and systems builders of his age, whose drive for absolute truth he greatly admired, despite a philosophical reticence to accept their approach wholeheartedly. Allusions to this disappointment appear in his late work. In Four Quartets, one finds: “And the wisdom of age? Had they deceived us, / Or deceived themselves, the quiet-voiced elders, / Bequeathing us merely a receipt for deceit?”² Eliot’s disappointment with Bradley’s failure to integrate into the philosophical canon, as we will see, was part of a larger concern for the shift from idealism to new realism -- a shift from the “big question” of metaphysics to a philosophy of language and logic that saw the world as external or indifferent to “subjective” consciousness. This philosophical moment is known as the “Linguistic Turn” (and is articulated in a book of the same title).³

Although Eliot’s relationship with philosophy of language is a significant one, the purpose of this thesis is explicitly *not* to find an “underlying idea” to the exclusion of all other influences or schools of thought.⁴ While Eliot’s philosophical inheritances are patently clear at

¹ Lewis, C. S. (1959). Address: "Fern-Seed and Elephants", originally titled "Modern Theology and Biblical Criticism", read at Wescott House, Cambridge, on 11 May, 1959. Published in *Christian Reflections* (1981). Available: http://orthodox-web.tripod.com/papers/fern_seed.html

² Eliot, T. S. (1969). *The Complete Poems & Plays of T.S. Eliot* London, Faber and Faber Limited, “East Coker”, p. 179, lines 76-78. **Hereafter The Complete Poems & Plays** will be shortened to: CPP

³ Rorty, R. M. (1967). *The Linguistic Turn: Essays on Philosophical Method*. Chicago, Chicago University Press

⁴ Stillman, A. (2008). "How to Meet Mr Eliot." *The Cambridge Quarterly* **37**(2): 270-275, p. 271

times, they are never straightforward. However, despite leaving philosophy behind, Eliot's philosophical ghosts, like his other early poetic influences, remained with him throughout his life.⁵ He describes the self-consciousness with which he started to craft a new approach to poetry: "Those were the years in which we were struggling to revive old communications and to create new ones".⁶ Eliot believed himself to be part of a significant new movement in poetry.⁷ He also described his attention to form as a revolution: "Contemporary literature, like contemporary politics, is confused by the moment-to-moment struggle for existence; but the time arrives when an examination of principles is necessary".⁸ For Eliot, the revolution would need to address the new questions posed by philosophers of language within his generation. What was the relationship between meaning and truth -- between those things that one believes and those things that can be verified? How does language guarantee or preclude the possibility of knowledge?

Form became a "modern problem" for literature at the same time it became a "modern problem" for philosophy; Eliot's work underscores the overlap between philosophy of language and modernist poetics.⁹ His recurring concern for a *diverse, flexible, living* poetic form is a central motif of his critical writings, and was initiated during his philosophical studies at Harvard and Oxford, in Germany and Paris. His early years were transcontinental

⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1928, 1932). The Sacred Wood: Essays on Poetry and Criticism. London, Methuen & Co., Ltd, p. vii: "I discovered that what had happened in my own mind, in eight years, was not so much a change or reversal of opinions, as an expansion or development of interests."

⁶ *ibid*, p. viii

⁷ The terms of the movement are described by the Symbolist poets -- Eliot's poetic predecessors -- as "this revolt against exteriority, against rhetoric, against a materialistic tradition; in this endeavour to disengage the ultimate essence, the soul, of whatever exists and can be realized by the consciousness; in this dutiful waiting upon every symbol by which the soul of things can be made visible; literature, bowed down by so many burdens, may at last attain liberty, and its authentic speech ... it becomes itself a kind of religion, with all the duties and responsibilities of the sacred ritual" (Symons, Arther (1899). The Symbolist Movement in Literature, p. 9).

⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays. London, Faber and Faber Limited, p. 109

⁹ Further or future studies might also be undertaken which trace the historical connection between early twentieth century language philosophy and the emergence of both practical criticism in England and new criticism in America.

and translinguistic. Eliot's interests concerning form contributed to his status as an archetypal modern poet. He admits certain *stylistic* borrowings from philosophy: "how closely my own prose style was formed on that of Bradley and how little it has changed in all these years".¹⁰ He often omits, however, philosophical influences of *substance*. This thesis is primarily concerned with detailing the latter inheritance. By staging Eliot's early thought between two philosophical approaches to twentieth century language debates, this thesis questions some of the classical assumptions concerning Eliot's poetic and philosophical positions and provides critics with a more complex picture of his vision of language. This, in turn, should suggest itself to new readings of modernist poetry -- readings that can account for the "subjective", "romantic", or "internal" aspects of modernist poetic projects.

Philosophical thought, in Eliot's view, is "fused", in some of his most admired poetic predecessors: "fused into poetry at a very high temperature", as he puts it in 1926.¹¹ Poetry can *perform* philosophy, though it might not *describe* or *espouse* it -- it can offer *the experience* of a philosophy -- rendering new points of view from old problems. Philosophy is *part* of the poetic life form, for a particular sort of poet. T.S. Eliot was one such poet.¹²

¹⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1964). Knowledge and Experience in the philosophy of F.H. Bradley, Faber & Faber., p. 89. **Hereafter, Eliot's thesis is shortened to KAE**, p. 11

¹¹ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry", p. 614

¹² See Eliot, T. S. (1952). "Scylla and Charybdis " Agenda: An Anthology (The First Four Decades 1959-1993): 285-299.

Introduction

The first half of this thesis articulates Eliot's debt to early twentieth century philosophy of language, and describes his urgent search for an "ideal form" of language during his years at Harvard. Alongside his studies of languages and logic, Eliot developed an epistemology of meaning in his early work -- a conception of the relationship between language, thought, and the world of experience. The second half of this dissertation unearths connections between Eliot's philosophical themes and his critical and poetic approaches.¹³

Eliot's debt to twentieth century language debates is considerable. His early vision of language is distinctly phenomenological and anti-realist, in the sense that, unlike the new realists and logical atomists of his day, whose theory of language posited that empirical "facts" attach to singular "truths" in the external world, Eliot's work emphasises the *experience* of words, by focusing on feeling, point of view, attention, and time-contingent or horizontal meaning; he sees "internal" or "personal" meaning and external fact or truth as *interdependent* realities. Like Husserl, whose central assumption was "that the sense or meaning (Sinn) and the validity (Geltung) of science is rooted in everyday structures of pre-theoretical experience", Eliot affirms the located "now" as part of the meaning-making process.¹⁴

Language that is eccentric, indexical, occasional, and indeterminate features prominently in Eliot's poetry, reinforcing his resistance to descriptivism. His early views on language are integral to his performance of a more quotidian poetics. Eliot echoes his

¹³ Banfield, A. (2000). *The Phantom Table: Woolf, Fry, Russell and the Epistemology of Modernism* New York: Cambridge University Press, p.x: What has been said of the relationship by existing scholarship of the relationship between twentieth century literature and language philosophy from the same period -- namely, that "The maternal influence [of the Cambridge Apostles on literary modernity] ... on the paternal side of the inevitable Bloomsbury family tree, has yet to be explored in all of its ramifications" is perhaps most applicable to T.S. Eliot's philosophical interests.

¹⁴ For an explanation of Husserl's legacy of indeterminacy, and the relationship between this and ambiguity in language, see Weiss, G. (1993). "Ambiguity, Absurdity, and Reversibility: Indeterminacy in de Beauvoir, Camus, and Merleau-Ponty." *Journal of French and Francophone Philosophy* 5(1): 71-83, and Rosen, S. (2002). *Elusiveness of the Ordinary: Studies in the Possibility of Philosophy*, Yale University Press, p. 55

philosophy of language in his poetry by using occasional reference, and a metaphysics “clothed” in the physical, present moment.¹⁵ Eliot’s philosophy of language favoured theories which might account for the *activity* of meaning-making. While not an idealist himself, Eliot defended F.H. Bradley’s unwieldy philosophical style against the growing popularity of the proto-analytic method.

As a critic, Eliot’s writing reflected his own early philosophy by appealing to those attributes of language that rely on the activity of consciousness. While promoting clarity and resisting vagueness, he defended the value of intuitive expression, emotional thought, and point of view throughout his critical work. Although the philosophical features of his criticism are often read against the influence of the idealist F.H. Bradley, Husserl’s phenomenology seems more precisely aligned with the positive content of Eliot’s own notions about language.

As a poet, Eliot’s method can also be described as phenomenological. Rather than labeling an external world of facts, or describing it to a particular audience, the phenomenal poet articulates a world that is integrated with the ego. Thus, the activity of meaning-making blends together phenomenal contexts and intuitive sensibilities -- not *descriptively*, but *experientially*, by reenacting the various contexts of meaning as they are bandied about in a restless mind in the present moment. Eliot’s poetics is time-steeped and experience-rich. The language of his poetics, particularly his mature philosophical poetics, is uniquely concerned with point of view -- with the curious perspectivism of individual voices, thoughts, projections, memories, and impressions. As dramas of consciousness, Eliot’s poems do not universally *define* a world or series of facts, but rather *transcribe* or *channel* the “present”, phenomenal, physical experiences of worlds, as it were, *from within* a variety of viewpoints. The expression of a continuous, ever-renewed dance between the metaphysical and the

¹⁵ In this thesis, metaphysics simply refers to universalising abstraction -- to those truth claims that can be said to exist “beyond physics”.

physical is an extension of Eliot's interest in early twentieth century language debates about the "death" of metaphysics, the way meaning works, and the significance of the perceiving subject to the process of truth formation.

This thesis locates Eliot between two philosophical positions: that of new realism and logical atomism on the one side, and that of phenomenology on the other. By viewing Eliot's early philosophical work on language historically and critically, I wish to propose a reevaluation of Eliot's poetics in light of two previously under-appreciated influences: the formative influence of Bertrand Russell and the new realists, and the quiet, almost private influence of Edmund Husserl's phenomenological approach. It is argued that the literary influence of F.H. Bradley, although significant, has been overstated, consequently overshadowing other aspects of Eliot's own philosophical explorations. This thesis reads Eliot's work within the context of early twentieth century philosophy of language, examining the intersection between modernist philosophy and literary criticism.

Chapter One considers Eliot's personal and philosophical connections to Bertrand Russell and to the movement known as new realism. Eliot encountered Russell's philosophy during his visiting lectures at Harvard. Eliot admired Russell's ambitions, and yet, the chapter describes Eliot's early suspicion of logical atomism and the theory of definite descriptions. Although scholars have considered Russell's role as a personal friend and mentor to Eliot during his formative years, few have described the ways Eliot grappled with Russell's looming philosophical legacy in detail. Eliot was explicitly opposed to Russell's programme. Eliot privately antagonises Russell in a number of previously unpublished essays, in marginal notations, in a graduate seminar which dealt extensively with Russell's philosophy of language, and in his dissertation. Further, the philosophical choices Eliot makes, in their contexts, show that Russell may have been one reason Eliot chose to study Bradley and Husserl. Eliot's opposition to Russell and the new realists remains a prominent, though easily missable, feature of his philosophical thought throughout his life, and may help to explain his

turn towards a hermeneutically open, semantically fluctuating, and process-orientated poetic practice. Central to this chapter is the term **atomism, or logical atomism**, which in the context of Russell's thought refers to an epistemology of linguistic "atoms" or "facts" -- a **correspondence theory of truth** -- whereby the primary function of language is to make truth-computational statements about external or objective facts. Chapter One addresses several previously unexplored documents, including Eliot's marginalia in E.B. Holt's The New Realism, his writing in Bernard Bosanquet's Logic, and his unpublished notes on logic.

Following from a discussion of Eliot's biographical and philosophical struggles with Russell's programme, **Chapter Two** explores new connections between Eliot's interest in Bradley and his close reading of classical phenomenology, especially his early study of Edmund Husserl's work. As a young graduate scholar, Eliot closely read Husserl's Logical Investigations in German, and the marginalia from this reading is addressed in detail for the first time. The Logical Investigations opposed themselves to certain features of Russell's thought. Eliot's reading of classical phenomenology was integrated into a broader chorus of influences which moved him away from philosophical literalism and towards a phenomenological concern for language and form. Eliot's phenomenological tendencies are detailed. Emerging literary scholarship, such as the work of Jūratė Levina, who traces connections between phenomenology and Eliot's poetry, is addressed. One aim of this thesis is to give historical credence to Levina's approach, and to encourage future research in this direction.

Chapter Three, a shorter chapter, argues that the influence of F.H. Bradley has been overstated in Eliot scholarship. By detailing Eliot's divergences from Bradley, Eliot's own philosophical position will be clarified. The intellectual consequence of this clarification is, potentially, a reevaluation of the classical conception of Eliot as a modernist poet of *impersonality, abstract idealism, and ironic objectivity* -- a poet whose work has traditionally been described as aimed at an escape from lived, phenomenal, or subjective experience.

The second half of the thesis traces Eliot's philosophical dispositions forward to his literary criticism and poetic work. **Chapter Four** considers the implications of Eliot's early philosophy for his literary criticism and poetic approach to language, articulating several reigning themes that cross over from his philosophy to his literary work. Eliot uses the terms **emotional thought** and **feeling** as analogs. The central concept indicated by these terms concerns an underlying, pre-articulate sensibility that unifies subject and objects. The term **intentionality** is to be read phenomenologically -- as the object-directed aspect or character of consciousness, rather than as the purely personal inclinations of the author, or as the intention of expressing a "singular meaning". "Intentionality" or something which is "intentional" in the phenomenological sense should not be confused with either intention in the common sense ("I intend to mean X") or intension in the logical sense ("the internal content of a concept is Y").

Finally, the thesis turns to consider phenomenological themes in Eliot's poetic work. **Chapter Five** explores Eliot's later career in particular, wherein his philosophy resurfaces more explicitly. Due to length constraints, this dissertation will focus primarily on his poetry and drama from the 1920's and 1930's, and on Four Quartets, which display transparently philosophical themes and devices relevant to those aspects of Eliot's consistent, mature language philosophy. Eliot's comments concerning a "philosophical poetics" during his later literary criticism and public addresses are considered, and questions are posed which suggest new directions for Eliot research and studies of modernism. Several scholars have noticed the phenomenological character of Four Quartets, and this thesis elaborates these early suggestions by examining specific poetic techniques which could be described as phenomenologically motivated. Chapter Five also discusses Eliot's search for **The Word**, as an allusion to the search for an "ideal language" or timeless metaphysics.

Chapter One: his dry and passionate talk devoured the afternoon: T.S. Eliot and Bertrand Russell

“But could we also imagine a language in which a person could write down or give vocal expression to his inner experiences – his feeling, moods, and the rest – for his private use? – Well, can’t we do so in our ordinary language? – But that is not what I mean. The individual words of this language are to refer to what can only be known to the person speaking; to his immediate private sensations. So another person cannot understand the language.”

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, Philosophical Investigations)

“Remember [this] principle: that to name is to destroy, to suggest is to create”

(Arthur Symons, The Symbolist Movement in Literature)

“All significant truths are private truths. As they become public they cease to become truths; they become facts, or at best, part of the public character; or at worst, catchwords”

(T.S. Eliot, Knowledge and Experience)

“One is thus tempted to ask whether in metaphysics definition can find its place.”

(T.S. Eliot, “Object and Point of View”)

To understand T.S. Eliot’s philosophy of language, it is necessary to locate his thought within the language crisis of early twentieth century philosophy, which was reshaped by new realism in America and England, and especially by the work of Bertrand Russell. Because literary treatments of Eliot’s published thesis have neglected the frequency with which Russell appears as an antagonist, some of the insights of Eliot’s early philosophy of language have been overlooked.¹⁶ Bradley’s influence is usually overstated, and Russell’s is all but ignored.¹⁷ This chapter seeks to address this imbalance by explaining T.S. Eliot’s early philosophy and its relation to Bertrand Russell’s writing.

Some sources place Russell’s first meeting with Eliot at Harvard in 1914, others place the meeting date almost seven years earlier, at a tea.¹⁸ Previously, Eliot’s philosophical

¹⁶ Menand, L. (2007). Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context USA Oxford University Press. p. 42-53 Also see Richard Shusterman claims that Eliot is an analytical realist in T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism, p. 36. To see why Shusterman’s claim is incorrect, one must first understand what Russell means by “realism”. See Russell, Bertrand. Logical and Philosophical Papers, p. 133.

¹⁷ CPI, p. xxvi

¹⁸ http://members.chello.nl/~a.vanarum8/EliotProject/Eliot_life.htm Lyndal Gordon makes this claim in her book on Eliot, The Imperfect Life of T.S. Eliot but does not give a source.

connection to Russell has been restricted to the appearance of Russell as a vague influence on Eliot's fiction and literary thought. For example, in his only published story from his early period, *Eeldrop and Appleplex*, as Anne Stillman points out, Eliot's persona in the story, Eeldrop, "asks questions about the language that surrounds unique events and classifications" with the conclusion that "classifications and objects that are classified are, in this sense, co-formative".¹⁹ As a parallel, in his thesis, Eliot argues, against Russell: "we arrive at objects... by meaning objects".²⁰ Although traditional scholarship (such as that of Christopher Ricks) has read the fictional exchange in *Eeldrop and Appleplex* as depicting a conversation between Ezra Pound and Eliot, Leithauser and Dyer argue convincingly that the story better fits the description of the relationship between Russell and Eliot.²¹ Certainly the characters' concern for the way language works in the act of categorising human experience seems to align itself neatly with Eliot's early thought. Clues to Russell's lasting influence on Eliot's thought are found more explicitly in his philosophical writing than in his literary writing, however.

A sharp contrast appears in Eliot's essays, letters, marginalia, and logic notes: between the definitive, *alienated* language of scientific logic on the one hand, and the internal landscape suggested by the language of the arts (a language grounded in consciousness) on the other. In his early writing, it becomes clear that Eliot's preference, far from being aligned with the fashionable new philosophies of the time, is for a language which affirms a unity between subject and world -- a "faith that spirit or consciousness is not something alien or wholly inexplicable in the material world, but that it was there the whole time, and its explicit appearance merely the natural unfolding of promise like the unfolding of a flower".²² He would not find affinities with his nascent views within the context of Bertrand Russell's

¹⁹ Stillman, A. (2006). "Culture's Lost Words." *The Cambridge Quarterly* 36(2): 189-196., p. 190

²⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1964). KEA, p. 137

²¹ Leithauser, G. G. and N. C. Dyer (1982). "Bertrand Russell and T.S. Eliot: their dialogue " *Russell.*, p. 116

²² Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "The Relativity of Moral Judgment", p. 198

philosophy, but would discover a useful antagonist against whom he posed a developing conception of the relationship between a subject and meaning. The process by which Eliot broke from Russell's school is outlined in this chapter, and central themes he retained from his early studies are catalogued.

The New Realism

To commence a journey along forgotten avenues of Eliot's philosophical thought, it is useful to start where he may have started, and read what he was reading. In 1912, a group of relatively obscure American authors published a book they intended to represent a transnational philosophical movement. Inspired by Bertrand Russell, Alfred North Whitehead, G.E. Moore and others, the authors of The New Realism stake a claim for a new school of philosophy: one known eventually as "analytic philosophy". The new realists described themselves as a "movement".²³ Their definition of realism was straightforward: "a thing is not correlated with or dependent upon the fact that anybody experiences it, perceives it, conceives it, or is in any way aware of it... Realism is opposed to subjectivism or epistemological idealism which denies that things can exist apart from an experience of them, or independently of the cognitive relation".²⁴

New realism was trenchantly "anti-subjectivist". It sought a hard, clear logic that could describe the world "out there" in unambiguous terms. In its simplest formulation, new realism holds that language "mirrors" or "represents" facts in the world, and that the more literal a language is rendered, the better one understands reality. Only recently made available, T.S. Eliot's private copy of The New Realism suggests that he read it while working on his dissertation in philosophy (completed in 1916).²⁵ His marginal notes in the text cast new light

²³ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy. New York, The Macmillan Company, p. 36

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 474

²⁵ The librarians at the Pepys Library at Magdalene College, Cambridge, have suggested this dating.

on the framework of his own work in philosophy at Harvard and Oxford as a graduate student in philosophy (1911-1916).

New realism is described in warlike terms. The authors held: “the New Realism should for a time remain a polemical one”.²⁶ The real world, the authors assert, is utterly indifferent to a human subject’s particular “take” on it. The real world cares nothing for the beliefs, feelings, and intuitions of the individual subject. Propositions alone, not speculations or intuitive wisdom, guarantees truth or error. Decades later, in lecture of 1955 in Hamburg, Eliot would argue against the cultural shift towards the technical jargon of logical analysis.²⁷ Eliot’s copy of The New Realism shows that he read it closely, and that he nowhere seems to be in agreement with its views.

Eliot’s marginal notations show that he was aware of new realism’s attack on the “unreality” of the internal landscape. “The New Realism is primarily a doctrine concerning the relation between the knowing process and the thing known”, Eliot observes, underlining the phrase.²⁸ He also notes that the authors take issue with “naïve realism”, which holds that (Eliot highlights) “things *are* just what they *seem*”.²⁹ Dreams and hallucinations of the mind cause errors in the assessment of reality, and, in another highlighted phrase, “The objectified dreamland of the child and the ghostland of the savage are outcome of the first effort ... to cope with the problem of error.”³⁰ In the margin next to this critique of the unreal, Eliot

²⁶ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 1

²⁷ Eliot, T. S. (1955). ‘Goethe as Sage’. Hamburg 1955. Draft, 32 pp. TS (TSE), corrected. Fair copy, 38 pp. TS, with a few minor corrections. 1p. carbon copy, 38 pp. TS, with a few minor corrections. 1p. carbon copy TS (TSE) quotations from Goethe. Shortened Version, 27 pp. TS with a few notes and marks in pencil. 5 May 1955., The Hayward Bequest, King's College Library, Cambridge University, p. 26: “[W]isdom is communicated on a deeper level than that of logical propositions; all language is inadequate, but probably the language of poetry is the language most capable of communicating wisdom. The wisdom of a great poet is concealed in his work; but in becoming aware of it we become ourselves more wise... that wisdom and the poetry are inseparable, in poets of the highest rank, is something I have only come to perceive in becoming a little wiser myself.”

²⁸ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 2

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3

highlights “The objects of our dreams and our fancies, and of illusions generally, are held to exist only ‘in the mind.’ They are like feelings and desires in being directly experienced only by a single mind.” Aside this phrase, Eliot places an “x”. Internality, with its landscape of feeling, desire, and unreal fancy, is seen as suspect to the new realism -- cut off, as it were, from shared, public discourses.³¹ It appears that Eliot disagrees with the notion that illusions cannot be shared, in some way (perhaps linguistically, though this is a speculative conclusion).

The New Realism’s treatment of the “unrealities” of consciousness received heavy marginal notations from Eliot. Most of Eliot’s notes pose questions about the status of “inner” meaning. When it is argued that “mental content simply is, and is in itself neither true nor false.” Eliot, in a margin, asks, “But what is it?”³² When the authors argue that “confusion is present wherever we find it said that a sensation or idea is ‘aware of,’ ‘refers to,’ ‘points at,’ or ‘means’ its object. The content does not refer to its object in any way”, Eliot responds: “What we say is that sensation and meaning are part of the whole.”³³ (Here “we” seems to indicate another school of thought -- one which would explicitly disagree with new realism.)

Eliot appears drawn to the idea of “unreality”, and defends it. The new realists speak of internal “unreality” thusly: “a thing may be objective yet unreal, as is commonly asserted to certain numbers and systems of geometry”.³⁴ Eliot underlines the word “unreal” and writes “unreal in some sense”. When, later, Eliot finds the argument: “I should not call the hallucinatory object necessarily ‘unreal,’” -- he underlines the line and writes: “What is unreal?”³⁵ Eliot also underlines: “In some cases of hallucination and illusion the error consists solely in the entertainment in the mind of mutually contradictory propositions” and

³¹ *ibid.*

³² *ibid.*, p. 357

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p 367

³⁵ *ibid.*

writes: “but are both props. in the mind ... illusion?”³⁶ When it is argued that “[W] whatever practical terminology may be found most convenient for the case of hallucinations, these afford no grounds for the argument toward subjectivism. The realistic account of them is clear, simple, and straightforward”, Eliot puts a large exclamation point in the margin.³⁷ He is clearly concerned that this new science will discard the *activity* of meaning, divorcing private visions from public conceptions of truth.

New realism poses itself against almost every other major philosophical school of its time: “contrasted with ‘phenomenalism’, ‘immediatism’ and ‘empiricism.’”³⁸ The authors say that tendencies towards “subjectivism” are “developed by Kant”. Eliot places an “x” next to the rejection of Kant as one who thought the world should be investigated through epistemology.³⁹ New realists also reject the work of epistemologists who think “the mind in knowing gives a form to the objects known” -- a view Eliot espouses in his thesis.⁴⁰ Eliot highlights the assertion that “Perhaps the most notable feature of a realistic philosophy is the emancipation of metaphysics from epistemology. This means that the nature of things is not to be sought primarily in the nature of knowledge”.⁴¹ There is no need, for new realists, to consider experiences “subjectively”, or for reflection on internal impressions or interpretations. Instead, reality is “out there” -- defined in terms of a system.

New realism wanted to eradicate vagueness. Eliot underlines the claim: “I believe that no knower, or ego, such as metaphysics means, exists. As to what reality is, I take no

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 370

³⁷ *ibid*.

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 99

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 47

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 48

⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 32

great interest”, and responds, in the margin: “But you use the word frequently”.⁴² When the text goes on to define reality: “reality is some very comprehensive system in terms of relation”, Eliot responds: “What is meant by comprehensive”.⁴³ Against idealist philosophy, the authors introduce “The Realistic Polemic”.⁴⁴ This new position would focus on an “independent world [which] can be directly presented”.⁴⁵ It is argued: “Inasmuch as subjectivism, renewed and fortified under the name of ‘idealism,’ is the dominant philosophy of the day, it affords the chief resistance which an innovating philosophy such as realism has to overcome.”⁴⁶ Eliot underlines this definition of ‘idealism’, and puts a question mark in the margin.

Eliot was aware that New realism was opposed to the “subjectivist” philosophies.

For example, he highlights the contention that:

The vogue of the psychological, introspective, or reflective method in modern thought has given rise to the custom of construing things first according to their place in the context of consciousness. Similarly, the habit of self-consciousness among philosophers has emphasised the relation of thing to self; and the prominence of epistemology in modern philosophy has tended to an initial characterization of things according to their places in the process of knowledge.⁴⁷

To the authors’ chagrin, the idealists were also interested in (Eliot underlines), “the principle of unity” -- that is, the unity of consciousness, where metaphysical categories are subject to conscious life or activity.⁴⁸ The book particularly excoriates idealists, for “the most insidious errors ... foisted upon mankind”.⁴⁹ In contrast, as Eliot read, “the practical man never reflects upon his own mental processes, and thus he fails to note that the certainty he feels towards

⁴² *ibid*, p. 366

⁴³ *ibid*.

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 11

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 10

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 11

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 16

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 17

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 19

things is not an attribute of them, but only a certain precision in his attitude toward them”.⁵⁰

New realists are described as more thoughtful, less susceptible to the snares of ordinary attitudes and feelings about one’s own perception.

New realism saw the discipline of logic as means of confronting subjectivism. The authors’ claim that “It behooves philosophy, then, both to ally itself with logic, in the investigation of the most ultimate concepts, such as relation, class, system, order ... and also to apply to its own constructive procedure the most refined tests of scientific form.”⁵¹

Axiomatic truths, in new realism, are contrasted with more “human” modes of valuation:

“There is no sure connection between the axiomatic and the significant”.⁵² New realism

wanted to annihilate precisely what Eliot pursues in his own work: “[new realism’s method] is fatal, not only to a mystical universalism in which the totality of things is resolved into a moment of ecstasy, but also to those more limited mysticisms in which complexes such as substance, will, activity, life, energy or power, are regarded despite the obvious manifoldness of their characters, as nevertheless fused and inarticulate”.⁵³ “It follows” the authors continue “that neo-realism rejects all philosophies in which metaphysics is sharply divorced from the special sciences, on the ground that while the latter must analyze, specify, and systematize, the former may enjoy a peculiar illumination of its own, in which the true heart of things is made apparent”.⁵⁴

In the new programme, intuition and analysis are opposed. Henri Bergson and F.H. Bradley are targeted, because they think that “to get at truth, at reality, [one should] avoid reason, and use feeling, intuition, ecstasy, absorption!”⁵⁵ Logic, to the new realists, did not

⁵⁰ *ibid*, Eliot underlines this, p. 20

⁵¹ *ibid*, p. 26

⁵² *ibid*, Eliot underlines this, p. 20

⁵³ *ibid*, Eliot highlights this, p. 33

⁵⁴ *ibid*.

⁵⁵ *ibid*, p. 160

participate in the world of feeling, subjectivity, or art -- it is a method altogether more clinical. Their difficulty with the modern age has to do with the way “logic as a science of such entities as terms, propositions, propositional functions, etc., is confused with the study of the art and processes of thought”.⁵⁶ Eliot highlights this. The authors propose a wholesale review of every metaphysical term previously taken for granted.⁵⁷ They argue (and Eliot highlights): “If we cannot express our meaning in exact terms, in terms that we are willing should stand as final, if like the sophists of old we must make long speeches and employ the arts of rhetoric; then let us at least cultivate literature. At present we are bad scientists and worse poets”.⁵⁸

New realism moreover espouses a scientific view of language: “in believing the sciences we assume their premises to be true, and this is our only assumption”.⁵⁹ (Eliot highlights this, and in a margin writes “What does it mean to say that their p. are true?”) Throughout the text, Eliot underlines uses of the word “logical” and expressions like “logically ultimate” or “logically prior”, often querying them. The young Eliot seems to particularly dislike the notion that reality is independent from human interpretation. He inserts a large “X” and double underlines the notion of “independent” reality in the text’s statement that new realism “is in sympathy with the whole modern trend of thought toward identifying reality with the elements, processes, and systems of experience. But it maintains that these elements, processes, and systems are *independent of being experienced*.”⁶⁰ In his thesis, Eliot will respond to this emphasis on objectivity by stating “We are not here concerned with the absolute objective criterion for the permanence and independence of any special class of objects; it is enough if we can make clear that we have no immediate distinction between

⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 40

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 28

⁵⁸ *ibid*, Eliot underlines the last line, p. 29-30

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 63

⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 103-104

object and feeling”.⁶¹ This blending of the internal and external will remain one of the fixed features of Eliot’s mature philosophy of language -- a position directly opposed to new realism.

Why Russell?

New realism, as a movement, can be read as a slightly more militant, American version of Bertrand Russell’s philosophy of language, and its affinities with Russell’s work are numerous. From his years as a graduate student until the end of his life, hardly a year passed without T.S. Eliot mentioning Bertrand Russell in his writing. Yet the nature of Russell’s influence on Eliot’s early studies is still somewhat opaque. In their 1982 article, Gladys Leithauser and Nadine Dyer issued a call for a reevaluation of the relationship between the two thinkers -- a call which has gone largely ignored: “Russell’s and Eliot’s mutual influence has not been made the major subject of a study by literary critics or philosophers, perhaps because literature and philosophy are generally regarded as separate disciplines. Yet an interdisciplinary study is demanded in the cases of Russell and Eliot because not only their personal lives but also their areas of expertise intersected”.⁶² I would agree that Russell “looms in [Eliot’s] dissertation as the major dialectical adversary in [his] metaphysic”.⁶³ Russell also plays a large part in much of Eliot’s later criticism, though the presence of this influence is quiet and easily missed.

The majority of Eliot critics have assumed that Russell is a marginal figure in Eliot’s philosophical or literary imagination. One reason for this could be that in his literary career, Eliot hardly utters a public word regarding Russell’s direct influence on his own work, and Russell’s statements about his influence on Eliot are contradictory. Russell acknowledges, for

⁶¹ Eliot, T.S. KAE, p. 25

⁶² Leithauser, G.G. and N.C. Dyer (1982). *Bertrand Russell and T.S. Eliot: their dialogue*, Russell, p. 7

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 12

instance, that Eliot's early poem "Mr. Apollinax" is about him.⁶⁴ He also claims to have inspired Eliot's descriptions of London in "The Waste Land".⁶⁵ However, he states in a footnote to his autobiography that "The suggestion sometimes made ... that one of us influenced the other is without foundation".⁶⁶ Carole Seymour-Jones (2009) focuses almost exclusively on Eliot and Russell's private relationship, and the rumours concerning Russell and Vivienne Eliot's affair. Jewel Spears Brooker and Ronald Schuchard, the editors of Eliot's recently published critical edition of Complete Prose, meanwhile, argue that "The essential context for the Harvard essays is the attempt of late nineteenth-century intellectuals in Europe and America to come to terms with Darwin's On the Origin of Species".⁶⁷ That Eliot was fighting a materialist science is true; but the fact that this materialism existed in the language debates, which were of explicit importance to Eliot's own thinking, is often overlooked.

It is not surprising that scholarship has found Eliot and Russell's relationship to be puzzling. Eliot leverages language philosophy oddly in his literary prose, at times. For example, in a 1920 letter to the Editor of *The Athenaeum*, he responds to "the question whether my article on 'The Perfect Critic' was itself philosophy or perfect criticism" by saying "I need only refer Mr. Hannay to the Principia Mathematica Chap. II., especially page 65 (The Theory of Types and the Cretan Liar: 'Hence the statement of Epimenides does not fall within its own scope, and therefore no contradiction emerges')".⁶⁸ Eliot's reference to the

⁶⁴ Russell, B. (1967). The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (1872-1914). London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. p. 212

⁶⁵ Russell, B. (1968). The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (1914-1944). London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd. p. 18

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p. 19

⁶⁷ Eliot, T. S. and Spears Brooker, Jewel. and Schuchard, Ronald. The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: Apprentice Years, 1905–1918. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. *Project MUSE*. Web. 20 May. 2015. <<https://muse.jhu.edu/>>. p. xxxiii nb: **Hereafter, Vol. 1 of The Complete Prose will be indicated by: CP I**

⁶⁸ Eliot, T. S. and Cuda, Anthony. and Schuchard, Ronald. The Complete Prose of T. S. Eliot: The Critical Edition: The Perfect Critic, 1919–1926. Baltimore, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. *Project MUSE*. Web. 20 May. 2015. <<https://muse.jhu.edu/>>., "The Perfect Critic: To the Editor of The Athenaeum" (16 May, 1919) p. 273 nb: **Hereafter, Vol. 2 of The Complete Prose will be indicated by: CP II**

liar paradox, as quoted by Russell, is used here to clear him of critical scrutiny. However, without the logical apparatus (the question is not whether Eliot is telling the truth), the use of Russell's work appears incongruous. Russell's rhetorical style -- his analysis, his fierce scepticism, and his appeals to logic -- are often adopted by Eliot in his later years, further contributing to the lasting impression of Russell as a cultural icon and personality. Eliot seems to particularly enjoy using the term "analysis" to lend a philosophical air to his criticism. For example, in 1923, he appears to copy Russell's methodological refining of categories, attaching this technique to literary criticism: "It is often said that there is in English no standard prose style. A more analytic statement of this criticism might be as follows: English prose, in comparison with that of the French, Italian and Spanish languages, developed late."⁶⁹ Here a performative translation is enacted from one statement to another, but this gesture is only superficially analytic. Eliot's stylistic borrowings should not be confused with the more substantial claims he makes, particularly in his early essays and thesis, about how language works within a poetic or philosophical context, which, as will be shown, have more in common with classical phenomenology than with either Russell's new realism or F.H. Bradley's idealism. Of both Russell and Bradley, Eliot writes: "With their "ideas" I have not been concerned; but with their influence upon sensibility through the intellect".⁷⁰

Scholars unfamiliar with twentieth-century language debates are inclined to think that Eliot's responses to Russell's work (outlined in this chapter) are original. For example, the editors of Eliot's Complete Prose argue that in the Royce seminar, "By focusing on the role played by interpretation, Eliot carves out a position of his own".⁷¹ Although his most closely held positions as a young man may have been eccentric, they had clear origin points,

⁶⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1923). CP II, "Contemporary English Prose: A Discussion of the Development of English Prose from Hobbes and Sir Thomas Browne to Joyce and D. H. Lawrence", p. 448

⁷⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1924). CP II, "A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors: 1 Writers Who, Though Masters of Thought, are Likewise Masters of Art", p. 517

⁷¹ CPI, p. xxxix.

which resurfaced in his later work, and these positions are not inconsequential to his poetic approach. Other critics suggest that the nature of Russell's influence was largely positive. For example, Richard Shusterman argues that Eliot's use of the term "analytic" in much of his literary criticism is inherited from Russell's analytic technique.⁷² A closer examination will help establish the extent and nature of Russell's influence on Eliot's thought.

Russell and Eliot were in contact for many years, but the most formative of these, philosophically speaking, were probably 1914-1918. As early as 1914, Eliot "was deeply absorbed in the study of Russell [and Whitehead's] Principia Mathematica".⁷³ He also read "Russell's A Critical Exposition of the Philosophy of Leibniz (1900) at Harvard and Oxford in 1914-15. He sent Russell's *Philosophical Essays* (1910) and The Problems of Philosophy (1912) as gifts to his mother (L1 134, 143). In spring 1914, he attended Russell's Lowell Lectures, published as Our Knowledge of the External World (1914)".⁷⁴ Despite admiring Russell's flair for clarity and rigor, Eliot's engagement with Russell's work was one of frustration and quiet disapproval.

In the mid 1920s, a period wherein Eliot himself was refining his poetic method, Russell appears explicitly as a villain -- an enemy of arts:

One is immediately struck by the arrogance of the scientist. No literary man would pretend to sweep aside the whole of the science of any century with the magnificence with which Mr. Russell dismisses nineteenth-century literature and art. And the truth seems to us to be exactly the reverse of Mr. Russell's implication. The man of letters or the man of 'culture' of the present time is far too easily impressed and overawed by scientific knowledge and ability; the aristocracy of culture has abdicated before the demagogy of science. In consequence, a mathematician like Mr. Russell, or even some pretender to scientific authority without Mr. Russell's achievement, can more easily persuade the populace in literary opinion than will the man with a genuine competence in literature... the claims of the scientists are fortified by the cowardice of men of letters.⁷⁵

⁷² Shusterman, R. M. (1999). T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism, Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd. p. 19-40

⁷³ *ibid*, p. 20

⁷⁴ CPI, p. 693

⁷⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1924). CP II, "A Commentary", p. 523

Eliot also charges Russell with “a vulgar conception of culture”.⁷⁶

Russell’s work had implications for the “big questions” of metaphysics and ethics -- questions that Eliot, in his later years, would continue to pursue. Eliot accuses Russell of a morality based on “the imposition of tyrannical and irrational habit”.⁷⁷ This imposition results in a “meagre impoverished emotional life”.⁷⁸ Throughout his writing, Eliot admits that he appreciates the ambitiousness of Russell’s programme, though he cannot agree with its move away from wisdom. He describes his emerging philosophical milieu as “on the whole anti-religious ... ascetically, even gloomily, scientific; and they professed considerable respect for Mr Bertrand Russell and his Cambridge friends”.⁷⁹ As a student “Eliot ... suffer[ed] from a feeling of inferiority to the exact scientist since it was felt that the mathematician was the man best qualified to philosophize. Those students of philosophy who had not studied mathematics did their best to try to become ‘imitation mathematicians’, at least to the extent of acquainting themselves with the paraphernalia of symbolic logic”.⁸⁰ The years in which Eliot found himself grappling with Russell’s work were the same in which he devised his own notions concerning the way meaning and expression operate in poetry.

Russell was a figurehead in a cultural war which altered the way Eliot addressed truth and meaning. Was truth itself simply a matter of discovering a logical-philosophical language which would be amenable to the sciences, and thus help get rid of the ambiguities of metaphysics, or was private meaning -- the beliefs, feelings, and interpretations of individuals -- somehow crucial to how language works? Eliot’s theory of language, in direct contrast to Russell’s, would gesture *inwards*, to the *experience* of words. Eliot was aware that the internal or intuitive justifications for metaphysics were going out of fashion. In a 1917 review, he

⁷⁶ *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, “Thoughts after Lambeth”, p. 367

⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 367-368

⁷⁹ Eliot, T.S. “Views and Reviews”, *New English Weekly*, Vol. 7, No. 8, p. 151-152

⁸⁰ Jain, M. (1992). *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years*, Cambridge University Press, p. 92

writes of “Russell who has insisted that philosophy must proceed from the simple, if it can be found, to the complex; and to Bradley, who has insisted that the simple cannot be found. These two writers between them have nearly laid metaphysics in the grave”.⁸¹ When contemporary (21st century) philosophers speak of the “death” of metaphysics or philosophy, they gesture at the death-blow dealt by philosophy of language to systems of belief.⁸² It was Russell’s expressed wish to steer discourse clear of the rocky coasts of faith and superstition: “It is my belief that the ethical and religious motives in spite of the splendidly imaginative systems to which they have given rise, have been on the whole a hindrance to the progress of philosophy... It is, I maintain, from science, rather than from ethics and religion, that philosophy should draw its inspiration”.⁸³ In keeping with this disavowal of superstitious belief, language must, Russell thought, arrange its predicates to be “treated as terms in classes by implication or negation”.⁸⁴ For the young Eliot, whose philosophical interests involved questions of ethics, meaning, and art, the new philosophy of language posed a major threat. Eliot’s Harvard notes highlight a concern for language and expression as both philosophical and poetic, creating a marked sense of tension throughout his early writing.⁸⁵

Within the new school of language philosophy, divergent visions of language

⁸¹ Eliot, T.S. (1917). CPI, “A Contemporary Thomist”, p. 624

⁸² Russell, B. (1992). Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13. London, Routledge. p. 328: “Some modern philosophers hold that we know much about language, but nothing about anything else. This view forgets that language is an empirical phenomenon like another, and that a man who is metaphysically agnostic must deny that he knows when he uses a word. For my part, I believe that, partly by means of the study of syntax, we can arrive at considerable knowledge concerning the structure of the world.”

⁸³ Russell, B. (1988). Mysticism and Logic. Great Britain, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers p. 97-98

⁸⁴ Russell, B. (1992). Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13. London, Routledge. p. 190

⁸⁵ During Eliot’s years at Harvard, Russell’s search for an ideal language of logic was coming to fruition just as Eliot’s interest in the forms of poetic expression began to germinate. Manju Jain explains: “Conrad Aiken recalls that from the moment that Eliot and he met in the offices of the *Harvard Advocate* in 1908, their constant concern over the next five years was with the problem of finding a new poetic language: ‘We were feeling our way towards it, something less *poetic*, more inclusive, more quotidian, admitting even the vernacular, and lower in pitch: a new poetic voice, one in which one could *think*’”. It was precisely the vernacular -- the vague language of ordinary speakers -- that the early analytic theorists sought to “clarify”. See Jain, M. (1992). T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, Cambridge University Press, p. 61

developed. The analytic-continental divide was born of these differences. But in the early days, according to John Searle, both the analytic and the continental approach were “characterized by a concern for logic and language, which is markedly different from the concerns of earlier centuries of philosophy”.⁸⁶ Like the new realists, Russell argued that language needed to correspond to an external, objective world, in order to align itself with mathematics. Eliot disagreed. For instance, a 1915 essay, Eliot argues: “Number, in other words, and geometry, are merely descriptive; they tell nothing of the nature of the world which they describe. Number may be the order, but is not the structure, of the world”.⁸⁷ Here we are reminded of the voice of Mallarmé at the turn of the century:

Contrary to the facile numerical and representative functions, as the crowd first treats it, speech which is above all dream and song, finds again in the Poet, by a necessity that is part of an art consecrated to fictions, its virtuality. The line of several words which recreates a total word, new, unknown to language and as if incantatory, achieves that isolation of speech... a certain ordinary fragment of speech, at the same time as the memory of the named objects bathes in a new atmosphere.⁸⁸

Eliot asked: “is this belief [in the external world] actually held by any but philosophers? The truth of such a belief is limited by the meaning which the terms have in practice. The existence of an external world hardly seems to be a ‘probability’ at all; it is either something which only a madman would doubt, or something which only a philosopher would assert. Do we know in the first place what we mean by an ‘external world?’”.⁸⁹

Though Eliot admired Russell, he was often at odds with him, to the point of hostility, philosophically. Later in life, Eliot seems to have been more transparent on this count. In a letter dated 1964, a year before his death, for example, Eliot writes to Russell concerning his radio broadcast: “As you may know, I disagree with your views on most

⁸⁶ Searle, J. R. (1999). "The Future of Philosophy." *Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences* Vol. 354 No. 1392, Millenium Issue. p. 2069

⁸⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1915). CP I, “Thought and Reality in Aristotle’s *Metaphysics*”, p. 216

⁸⁸ Mallarmé, S. (1896). "Crisis in Poetry " <http://www.scribd.com/doc/37980116/Mallarme-Crisis-in-Poetry-1896-Ingles>, p. 851

⁸⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1915) CP I: “A Review of Theism and Humanism”, p. 399

subjects, but I thought that you put your beliefs over in a most dignified and even persuasive way”.⁹⁰ This mixed expression of high admiration and respect for Russell’s role as a cultural icon and polite, but definite, philosophical remove from the content and implications of Russell’s philosophy, is characteristic of his interactions with Russell as the leader of a new philosophical school. Eliot’s disagreements also extended beyond language philosophy. He saw Russell’s atheistic secularism, for example, as a cultural threat to Europe: “if you find examples of humanism which are anti-religious, or at least in opposition to religious faith of the place and time, then such humanism is purely destructive, for it has never found anything to replace what it destroyed”.⁹¹

Introduction to the Linguistic Turn

As Richard Shusterman explains, “analytic philosophy was essentially born of Moore and Russell’s rebellion against Bradley”.⁹² Russell and Bradley correspond publicly about their fundamental philosophical differences concerning the analyzability of the world using a logically restricted (literalist) language between 1910 and 1912, and Eliot’s thesis sides with Bradley against Russell when alluding to these debates.⁹³ The other primary philosophy against which Russell defined his theories of language was that of Alexius Meinong, who believed that whatever can be described exists in some way. Meinong was the original focus of Eliot’s graduate thesis, and only later did Eliot change his title to highlight Bradley exclusively. In 1914, Eliot argued “along the line of Meinong’s proposed *Gegenstandstheorie*” in his early essays.⁹⁴ Eliot’s original 1913 thesis title was *Meinong’s*

⁹⁰ Russell, B. (1969). *The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (1944-1969)*., p. 52-53

⁹¹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, “The Humanism of Irving Babbit”, p. 475

⁹² Shusterman, R. M. (1999). *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*, p. 18

⁹³ Russell, B. (1992). *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*, p. 349-358, 389-397

⁹⁴ Costello, H. T. (1963). *Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello*. New Brunswick New Jersey, Rutgers University Press. p. 176. This theory is Meinong’s theory of intentional objects. Simply stated, Meinong believed it was possible to intend objects that do not exist. In other words, thought is not limited to empirical data.

Gegenstandstheorie considered in relation to Bradley's Theory of Knowledge. In other words, the defense of the “unreal” against Russell’s version of realism was Eliot’s original focus of inquiry.

Russell’s conversion to new realism had already taken place in the early 1890s.⁹⁵ By mid-century, Russell was dominating the philosophical landscape in both Europe and America. In a 1944 interview with J.P. Hodin, Russell’s new programme is described in grandiose terminology. Sitting across from Russell, Hodin muses: “His ‘logical atomism’ crushes relentlessly the spiritual ravings in all philosophical systems, as wind spreads the fog”.⁹⁶ Russell’s philosophical goal during the early twentieth century, shared by the new realists, was to “show that the exactitude of mathematics depends on its being concerned with an abstract world, a world of essences or Platonic ideas ... not subject to the inaccuracies of sensory knowledge, and ... not constrained by the subjective variations one would have to fear in accepting a psychological theory such as that of Kant”.⁹⁷ In his lectures and correspondence, Russell expressed the belief that truth and falsity is found in literalism and specificity: “As to truth and falsehood, I should say that inquiry begins, as a rule, with an assertion that is vague and complex, but replaces it, when it can, by a number of separate assertions each of which is less vague and less complex than the original assertion. A complex assertion may be analysable into several, some true, some false; a vague assertion may be true or false, but it is often neither.”⁹⁸ The more literalist an interpretation, the more trivial the questions posed by metaphysics seem to be.⁹⁹ Russell’s philosophy aspired to a true description of the world -- a description which might be useful to mathematics and the

⁹⁵ Ayer, A. J. (1971). *Russell and Moore: The Analytical Heritage* London Macmillan, p. 3

⁹⁶ Hodin, J. P. (1944). "Bertrand Russell and T.S. Eliot on the Future of Mankind: Part II, T.S. Eliot." *Samtiden*

⁹⁷ Russell, B. (1992). *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*. London, Routledge., p.133

⁹⁸ Russell, B. (1940). *An Inquiry Into Truth and Meaning*. Great Britain George Allen & Unwin. p. 101

⁹⁹ Russell, B. (1988). *Essays on Language, Mind and Matter, 1919-26*. London, Unwin Hyman., p. 174-175

sciences.¹⁰⁰

Early Interactions:

In March of 1914, before traveling to Germany, Eliot read Frege, Russell, Mill, and others for his logic coursework. In the academic year 1913-1914, Eliot was president of the philosophical society at Harvard, and attended Russell's lectures on logic, as well as his teas.¹⁰¹ Russell taught a logic course called "Philosophy 21" jointly with H.T. Costello, as well as a jointly taught course with A.R. Chandler called "Philosophy 9c", which dealt with Russell's theory of knowledge. Eliot took both courses, and his notes indicate a detailed and thorough account of Russell's philosophy. The logic course focused extensively on Frege, Russell's own work, and the philosophy of atomism. Eliot's unpublished notes from the logic course enthusiastically mark the date of Russell's arrival in very large printed notation:

"March 14 B Russell!"¹⁰² Of Russell's arrival to the United States, Victor F. Lenzen recalls:

the nation welcomed Russell as a logician. Indeed, Professor Royce said to me about Russell, 'He has received more attention than any logician since Aristotle.' To the students, Mr. Russell was an almost superhuman person. I cannot adequately describe the respect, adoration, and even awe which he inspired ... Bertrand Russell was at the height of his fame as a pure philosopher during the Harvard period.¹⁰³

Russell was a man of many admirers, but at Harvard he would have had just as many critics. His influence extended beyond the halls of philosophy departments.¹⁰⁴ He was a cultural icon, and a prominent member of the Bloomsbury Group. S.P. Rosenbaum catalogues numerous examples of Russell as literary symbol -- immortalised both as hero and villain by a number

¹⁰⁰ Russell, B. (1992). Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13. London, Routledge., p. 116-124

¹⁰¹ Eliot, T.S. CP II, p. xxxvii, p. 693

¹⁰² Eliot, T. S. (1913). Notes on logic, A.MS. 15s (15p.) Notes from H.T. Costello's *Philosophy 8a*. , The Houghton Library, Harvard University

¹⁰³ Lenzen, V. F. (1971). "Bertrand Russell at Harvard, 1914." Russell **3**, p. 4-5 Victor F. Lenzen was the secretary of the Josiah Royce seminar in the year Eliot participated. This will be treated later. See Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press., p. 2

¹⁰⁴ Rosenbaum, S. P. (1984). "Bertrand Russell in Bloomsbury " Moran and Spadoni: p.11-29

of modern novelists.¹⁰⁵ His intellectual influence was substantial, due to the immensity of his public prestige and philosophical gravitas.

In the words of editors of Eliot's Complete Prose, in his early essays, "Eliot attempts to walk the high wire between idealism and realism or, more specifically, in this incarnation of his argument, between Bradley and the Neo-Realists, including their progenitors Russell and Moore".¹⁰⁶ The positive content of his views on language, however, is not detailed. Eliot's thought rejected new realism, while admiring its devotion to clarity. Nor did Eliot definitively espouse British idealism as a reaction:

I have outlined the view of a 'real world' which these four theories mentioned by Mr Russell seem to overlook. There is a real world, corresponding to that intended by these theories, which is neither identical with Bradley's Reality nor incompatible with it... we cannot too frequently be told that the world of practice is supported by interest and valuation. But our interests and our values, we shall be told vary from moment to moment. So does the real world, according to that fragment of it which happens to be our focus of attention.¹⁰⁷

Eliot describes, as a phenomenologist would, a world that is intermingled with points of present human attention. Eliot conceives of the real world as contingent on points of view, rather than on Platonic facts or idealist abstractions.

In the fifth chapter of his thesis, Eliot argues emphatically against Russell's realism, stating: "the realistic assumptions which underlie [Russell and Meinong's] solutions ... alone create the problem... the assumption that there is one world of external reality which is consistent and complete [is an] assumption which is not only ungrounded but in some sense certainly false. Reality contains irreducible contradictions and irreconcilable points of view."¹⁰⁸ Despite his philosophical rejection of new realism, it would have been in the young Eliot's best professional interests to tread lightly. By the time he finished his thesis, Eliot was deeply indebted to Russell, both professionally and personally.

¹⁰⁵ Rosenbaum, S. P. (1998). Aspects of Bloomsbury: Studies in Modern English Literary and Intellectual History. Toronto, Palgrave Macmillan

¹⁰⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPI, p. xlv

¹⁰⁷ Eliot, T. S. (1964). KAE, p. 89.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p. 112

Eliot made a strong impression on the famous philosopher at Harvard. In his personal correspondence, Russell describes his first impression of Eliot as being that of a “very well-dressed and polished [man] with manners of the finest Etonian type” and gets to know Eliot at weekly graduate teas for a post-graduate group of twelve students.¹⁰⁹ In 1914, Eliot travels abroad to Europe and Oxford and continues to meet with Russell on a regular, informal basis, and to correspond frequently.¹¹⁰ Eliot’s arrival in Oxford takes place just three years after Wittgenstein famously arrives in Cambridge to work under Russell’s tutelage, and the same year Wittgenstein begins his monumental philosophical work, the Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, which is published in 1918.¹¹¹ It is highly unlikely that Eliot would have been unaware of Wittgenstein, as Russell speaks of him at length to his students. Lenzen, for example, remembers Russell’s obsession with Wittgenstein vividly:

I especially recall one remark in his first meeting with the small class in Logic (for which I have no notes); he said ‘A fact is not a thing. When I say that I am talking nonsense. Nevertheless, I want you to take it as a profound truth.’ This paradoxical statement manifested the influence of Wittgenstein. Mr. Russell told us about the latter, his genius, and his original ideas. He told us about a meeting between Wittgenstein and Whitehead, on which occasion the former paced the floor and made esoteric pronouncements about logic ... The class in Logic was a small class for special students in the field.¹¹²

Lenzen, after traveling to Europe on a scholarship, writes: “In September, 1916, I traveled to England ... In London I visited with Mr. Russell one evening at 57 Gordon Square ... At this time, T.S. Eliot, who had also been a student of Russell’s at Harvard, was in England, and in contact with Russell. Mr. Russell gave me Eliot’s address and remarked humorously, ‘he

¹⁰⁹ Russell, Bertrand. Letter to Lady Ottoline Morrell, 27 March 1914, in Morrell, L. O. V. A. C.-B. (1963). Ottoline: The Early Memories of Lady Ottoline Morrell. London, Faber and Faber., p. 257

¹¹⁰ See , for example, Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 103: “I see the charming Bertie Russell from time time time, having in fact been to Cambridge recently”, etc.

¹¹¹ “Russell was a fellow at Trinity College, Cambridge, from 1895 to 1901, and a lecturer in philosophy there from 1910 to 1916, when he was dismissed from Trinity because of his opposition to the war. In the intervening years he lived at different times in the neighborhood of both Oxford and Cambridge and moved in university circles” (Ayers, p.5).

¹¹² Lenzen, V. F. (1971). "Bertrand Russell at Harvard, 1914." Russell 3, p. 5

writes great poetry”¹¹³ Russell’s remark possibly implies that Eliot, who is working in philosophy at the time, lacks a talent for philosophy.¹¹⁴ Despite philosophical differences, however, the two men are drawn to one another. Lady Ottoline Morrell describes the dynamics of their social interactions in 1917: “Eliot and Russell crouching before a dying fire. Long silences were punctuated by Russell saying something characteristic; like ‘How much good it would do if one could exterminate the human race’”¹¹⁵

Russell plays a similar role in the lives of both Eliot and Wittgenstein, adopting them into his care like a father, and in Eliot’s case, lending money, an apartment in London, introductions to the literary elite, correspondence with Eliot’s parents, secretarial work and dancing lessons for Vivienne Eliot, paying for the young Eliots’ holidays, and providing opportunities for philosophical publication in the *Monist*, *The New Statesman*, and the *International Journal of Ethics*.¹¹⁶ In Russell’s words: “it is the purest philanthropy ... I am fond of him, & really anxious to be of use to him.”¹¹⁷ Eliot writes to Russell often with an urgent fondness, and a desire to discuss things in person (for instance: “I have been counting on seeing you and having a talk with you in London ... I am so anxious to see you”).¹¹⁸ Eliot

¹¹³ *ibid*, p. 6

¹¹⁴ Though there is much to suggest that Eliot, under Russell’s supervision, encountered precisely the questions dealt with by the young Wittgenstein, and may have even been aware of his work (via Russell) there is no current research suggesting that the two ever met. Ray Monk, the renowned biographer of both Wittgenstein and Russell, has told me that he has not found any record of such a meeting, but that extensive research could be warranted in this case, as it may yet unearth some suggestion towards this hypothesis.

¹¹⁵ Dunaway, D. K. (1989). *Huxley in Hollywood* New York, Grand Rapids, Philadelphia, St. Louis, Harper & Row., p. 395

¹¹⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPI, p. lvi, and p. lv.: “As one of England’s most famous intellectuals, Russell was in a position to act on his charitable impulses. He introduced Eliot to members of the editorial boards at *The International Journal of Ethics*, *The Monist*, and *The New Statesman*. An astonishing forty-eight of the approximately eighty prose items that Eliot published between 1916 and 1918 appeared in these three journals, and of these, his longest and most substantial articles. These pieces were focused on philosophy and the social sciences, areas to which Eliot brought credentials gained in his work at Harvard and Oxford”. See Also: Eliot, T. S. (2009). *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1)* London, Faber & Faber, p. 865

¹¹⁷ Clark, R. W. (1975). *The Life of Bertrand Russell*. London, Jonathan Cape and Weidenfeld & Nicolson., p. 312

¹¹⁸ Eliot, T. S. (2009). *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1)* London, Faber & Faber.

studies Russell's work closely, in the context of new realism. The sharing of intellectual property is not unidirectional, however, as Eliot also sends Russell his poetry, and apparently receives positive feedback from Russell during his composition of "The Waste Land". He writes "It gives me great pleasure to know that you liked the *Waste Land*, especially Part V which in my opinion is not only the best part, but the only part that justifies the whole, at all".¹¹⁹

Between Fact and Fiction: Notes and Queries

During his courses in logic, Eliot focused on the divide between mathematical logic and creative language. In his notes on logic, he jots down the sentence: "the mathematician cannot create", and commits to memory a number of the assumptions a logician uses when dealing with language.¹²⁰ He is informed that logic and mathematics must define absolutely -- "A definition cannot have the on one side and a on the other". The rigidity of signification is clearly a central concern. He is taught that a number is not a creation of minds, but an external truth.¹²¹ He learns that, according to the emerging analytic discipline, "N[umber] is objective", that "All our axioms (prim[itive] prop[ositions]) are principles of deduction", and that "Anything implied by an elementary true prop[osition] is true".¹²² His notes also convey the fact that from March 5, 1914, he is reading Russell's Principia Mathematica as homework.¹²³

The contrast between alienated language and embodied or located language emerges in Eliot's unpublished notes from J.A. Smith's Oxford lectures on logic and on Giovanni Gentile (Feb, 1915). Eliot learns that for Smith (an idealist): "Art + philosophy are bound

¹¹⁹ Russell, B. (1967). The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (1872-1914). London, George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., p. 173

¹²⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1913). Unpublished notes on logic, A.MS. 15s (15p.) Notes from H.T. Costello's *Philosophy 8a.* , The Houghton Library, Harvard University, p. 6

¹²¹ *ibid.*

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 7-8

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 13

together by a relation of constant + unfailing reciprocity”.¹²⁴ Though the disciplines may be related to one another, art is described by Smith as engaging a unique perspective, whereas logic requires one to eradicate all difference in terminological interpretation.

In his notes, Eliot lists a range of philosophers under the heading “Formalistic: Hamilton... Moore, Russell. As these logicians go on they become less + less certain that they are dealing with thinking... Logic conceived as methodology. Normative... wants to become a mathematics of math... logic as a scientific account of scientific thinking.”¹²⁵ Eliot also becomes familiar with the critique of this approach: “Smith criticises unphilosophical character of these logics. They neglect the historical. Much is called thinking that is not thinking. The logician declines to deal with imagination, perception, memory, etc.”.¹²⁶ The school that *was* dealing with these features of consciousness, and specifically their relation to logic and meaning as-perceived by a subject, was Husserl’s classical phenomenology.

Eliot learns from Russell’s logic course that human awareness is reduced, in logic, to “acquaintance” noting: “Various kinds of acquaintance, but crudely speaking ... Start with truisms ... Acquaintance with particulars: ... perhaps some cases of memory”.¹²⁷ Importantly for Eliot, the *internal* or *individual* meaning is seen by Russell as irrelevant. Eliot learns that Russell’s theory of knowledge aims at turning beliefs into “data” which can be treated scientifically.¹²⁸ In his essays from the period, Eliot accuses Russell of “neutralizing” reality by excluding the interpretive element:

¹²⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1914-1915). Unpublished notes on logic, The Houghton Library, Harvard University., A.MS.; [Oxford] 12 Oct [1914]- 8 Jun [1915]. 96s.(97p.) Notes from J. A. Smith's lectures on logic and on Giovanni Gentile (10 Jan-1 Feb 1915). p. 7-9

¹²⁵ *ibid*, p. 21-22

¹²⁶ *ibid*, p. 22

¹²⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes on logic. MS (13) TS. and A.MS.; [Cambridge, Mass.] 10 Feb-30 Apr [1914]. 42s.(79p.) Notes from Bertrand Russell and H. T. Costello's Philosophy 21. Includes A.MS. notes from Russell and A. R. Chandler's Philosophy 9c; [Cambridge, Mass.] 17 Mar-30 Apr 1914, p. 38

¹²⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary”

The 'neutral entities' of this theory [promoted by "Russell and his American disciples"], which are supposed to be mental or physical according to their context, are not properly speaking psychological content at all, and so cannot be a case of content without object. The theory as presented by Russell differs slightly from that of the others, in that the apprehending consciousness is something (as I understand it) primitive and simple, to which sense-data appear, and which proceeds to build a world out of them founded upon analytic judgments of sense, or primitive propositions. Mr Russell seems to think that the judgment "this is red" does not imply the existence of anything beyond red; or rather, the red is the this, and the meaning of the two terms is coextensive; and so long as he maintains this doctrine I suppose that he cannot be argued with; though I think that it can be shown to be inconsistent with his own theory of "acquaintance". As a matter of fact, his theory at times demands that sensation should be wholly content - for we know sensations in an immediate way which is wholly denied to objects, and we construct objects out of sensations; and at times, as above, demands that the sensation should be wholly object. Each of these views I believe to be false alone, and both to be false together.¹²⁹

Finally, Eliot rejects Russell's epistemology outright. In a note on the original typescript of Eliot's thesis (later excised from his final published version, but included in the recent publication of his Complete Prose), Eliot writes: "I find [Russell's] notion of acquaintance completely unsatisfactory".¹³⁰ In the published version of his thesis (as is typical of the public and private choices Eliot makes concerning these disagreements) this strong rejection of Russell's view is toned down: "And so I cannot find any more satisfaction in the account of Mr Russell than in that of Meinong".¹³¹

Although Jūratė Levina does not locate Eliot's belief within the framework of analytic philosophy -- "anything articulated in language is an existent of some kind: Ivanhoe, the present King of France, golden mountains, round squares, and bogies are all real" -- she argues that Eliot's philosophy engages the shadowlands of interpretive thinking.¹³² Of Russell's thinking on the subject, Eliot notes: "Hallucinations are not events. And in a proper physics they never find their proper place".¹³³ Eliot's thesis states the opposite, raising the

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p. 171

¹³⁰ Eliot, T.S. CPI, p. 330

¹³¹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 104

¹³² Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36(3), p. 197

¹³³ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes on logic. MS (13) TS. and A.MS.; [Cambridge, Mass.] 10 Feb-30 Apr [1914]. 42s.(79p.) Notes from Bertrand Russell and H. T. Costello's Philosophy 21. Includes A.MS. notes from Russell and A. R. Chandler's Philosophy 9c; [Cambridge, Mass.] 17 Mar-30 Apr 1914, p. 39

value of these “alternative” states of consciousness and their subsequent expressions, and complicating Russell’s realism: “An hallucination, therefore, is not a ‘mistake’ ... It is attached to the real world, but its real relations are in the direction of physiological foundation, and this involves a much more radical change of point of view than mere error”.¹³⁴ Eliot later questions the assumption that human consciousness can be reduced to either “real” or “unreal” propositional truths.¹³⁵

Eliot seeks a form of expression that can describe a world that is complex, transitory, and immediate, rather than truth-computational. He describes the truth of fiction as a kind of transcendently intuited possibility: “the fiction is thus more than a fiction: it is a *real* fiction”.¹³⁶ Art does not *define* an object, but outlines horizons of possible truth. In fiction, “we assume a complete agreement or identity, [though] the presentation is like a point at which the circumferences of two circles are in contact: the one point may be taken twice over in two diverging contexts”.¹³⁷ Eliot writes that an individual’s point of view is maximally at play during the creative (as opposed to the propositional) meaning act.¹³⁸ He refers Russell to the speaker’s interpretive process (as Husserl would do) and criticizes the reduction of experience to a simple, singly understood “fact” or predicate of logic.¹³⁹

Scholars have frequently suggested that Eliot was influenced by Russell’s understanding of “facts” as they concern literature.¹⁴⁰ Yet Eliot clearly defines “fact” against Russell’s terms in his own philosophy: “A fact, I would submit, is a *point of attention* which

¹³⁴ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 117

¹³⁵ *ibid*, Chapter 5

¹³⁶ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 124

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p. 59

¹³⁸ *ibid*, p. 125-126

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p. 127. Eliot protests that dead laws (like dead metaphors) are not valid: “I am tempted, by the way, to regard as a dead letter a law which cannot be violated. Is not this law as useless as the vermiform appendix?” (131)

¹⁴⁰ See Shusterman, R. M. (1999). *T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism*, p. 27

has only one aspect, or which can be treated under one aspect. A fact, then, is an ideal construction, and has its existence within a more or less variable sphere of practical or scientific interest” (emphasis mine).¹⁴¹ A more divergent definition of fact could not be asked for, if one is comparing Russell on this point; Russell’s philosophy relies on the stipulation of discrete units within reality, recognized equally by any given speaker. Eliot is aware of this stipulation, but argues “Facts are not merely found in the world and laid together like bricks”.¹⁴² Facts emerge from a felt totality, in Eliot’s view.¹⁴³ This totality, which can be expressed in creative or “fictional” language interests Eliot. To Russell, as Eliot notes: “The experience required in order to understand a prop[osition] is the constituents of the proposition. A constituent is a symbol with whose meaning you must be acquainted”.¹⁴⁴ The “meaning” of a proposition, in this context, is something unmoving and simple. The goal of the proposition is to fix a referent. Meaning, in this view, is stationary. It is explicitly not an *activity*. Eliot will later contest this.

In Russell’s Harvard lectures, sensation is articulated as a kind of “data”, not a mysterious internal process to be expressed through idiosyncratic or peculiar claims. Eliot’s notes depict how he learns from Russell a number of analytic philosophy’s key axioms, such as, on April 2, the contention that “value always attaches to a particular” and “Sense-data are particulars - though when you try to mention a thing you mention too much. The sense-data is

¹⁴¹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 60

¹⁴² *ibid*, p. 60

¹⁴³ As regards relations, Eliot agrees with Bradley: “the experienced fact is not the mere terms and the relation. It involves a felt totality, and on this inclusive unity the relation depends” (*Essays on Truth and Reality*, 200). Bradley, with Eliot, denies anything like “ultimate facts” (204-214). Likewise, the predicate form gives no sense of absolute grasp on reality, as it does for Russell. Predication, as a form of linguistic qualification “implies diversity and contradiction, and a process aiming at harmonious and complete comprehension” (xi). Bradley’s contribution to Eliot’s thinking is complex, but one of the shared principles is the notion that a feeling of unity of the whole precedes any judgement (230-233).

¹⁴⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes on logic. MS (13) TS. and A.MS.; [Cambridge, Mass.] 10 Feb-30 Apr [1914]. 42s.(79p.) Notes from Bertrand Russell and H. T. Costello's Philosophy 21. Includes A.MS. notes from Russell and A. R. Chandler's Philosophy 9c; [Cambridge, Mass.] 17 Mar-30 Apr 1914, p. 18

one object ... it (happens to be) an object for one person alone. This is not a logical necessity".¹⁴⁵ According to Russell, an individual's particular interpretation of a word is irrelevant to the meaning of a proposition.

Russell's lectures emphasise the importance of reducing complexity in experience to mathematical logic. Eliot copies down Russell's philosophical position concerning atomic facts: "What is complex must have a complex symbol... The purpose of R (the letter) is merely to symbolise a relation between x and y, by creating a relation between the symbol x and the symbol y. We do not have to know what naming is, before we can give a name".¹⁴⁶ Knowing why or how humans name something, in other words, is secondary to the use of terms within logical systems. Russell's insistence on literalism is uncompromising: words stand for or denote facts in the external, objective world. Failing this, they are discounted. Eliot notes that Russell believes "A prop[osition] not only denotes a fact but is a fact. There is always a sort of fundamental unity between symbol and symbolized".¹⁴⁷ This is also called the "correspondence theory" of truth, whereby a single term stands as an absolute designation of an atomic fact (so, to take a common example, "red flower" stands in absolute relation to a certain state of affairs that can be atomically broken down -- a redness, and a thing which is called a flower).¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 22-23

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 23

¹⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 24

¹⁴⁸ Eliot refutes the correspondence theory in several places. The first indication of his disagreement is found in his private copy of The New Realism, wherein he emphasises that truth and falsity exist *in the experience of the world*, not just in the way words attach to objects. When it is argued that "a sensation that contains no content beyond the moment, or no element of self-transcendancy and no tendency to action, is an unreal figment of the psychologist's imagination ... When a child clutches at and misses the stick which he perceives as bent in the water, he does not *infer* from an internal sensation or image of a bent stick to a bent stick existing outside him. But rather, the image of the bent stick which is cast upon his retina (as it would be cast upon a photographic plate) produces a purely physical brain-stage which directly 'implies.' or has for its 'meaning' or 'potentiality' an external bent stick. The implicate of the brain-state, however, happens in this case not to exist, and therein consists the error." Eliot argues, in the margin: "Then the image does imply error" (Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 291-292).

Russell's attempt to delimit consciousness by restricting facts to propositional form is noted by Eliot. In his graduate Essays, Eliot argues: "The correspondence theory of judgement [promoted by Russell] demands an 'external' reality; but the metaphysician leads one to the conclusion that truth and reality are identical; that the test of the real is intelligibility. The theory of correspondence is indeed self-destroying".¹⁴⁹

Logical Atomism: Russell, Bradley, Leibniz

Logical atomism asserts that the universe can be *atomised*: that is, each discrete "fact" can be logically accounted for in language. Russell's atomistic view of objects assumes discrete entities which can be readily defined. This approach is shared by the new realists.¹⁵⁰ Like a surgeon dissecting a patient into individual organs for medical treatment, Russell's approach to language slices open the nebulous universe and sets aside its constituent pieces for logical assessment and description. Eliot listens as Russell promotes a strong version of the atomist position: "The orange is a bundle of particulars, and it is these particulars which have qualities, and not the orange".¹⁵¹ The *particular aspects*, of experience -- those aspects which can be readily named, defined, and described -- are of interest to Russell at the time of his lectures. There is no "essence" of the orange, as it were, holding the particulars together.

By 1918, Eliot was keenly aware that Russell was "coming to the end of a course of eight lectures on The Philosophy of Logical Atomism".¹⁵² Logical atomism involved the way

¹⁴⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1915). CPI, "Thought and Reality in Aristotle's Metaphysics" p. 217. We might compare Eliot's highlighting in Edmund Husserl's Logical Investigations (discussed in Chapter 3 in greater detail): "We hereby apprehend the truth as the ideal correlate of the transient subjective act of knowledge, as standing opposed in its unity to the unlimited multitude of possible acts of knowing, and of knowing individuals" (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 145).

¹⁵⁰ For instance, Eliot highlights the new realist's definition of time: "Time is a one-dimensional infinite and continuous manifold of individuals, called instants, related by an asymmetrical transitive relation" (Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p.190).

¹⁵¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes on logic. MS (13) TS. and A.MS.; [Cambridge, Mass.] 10 Feb-30 Apr [1914]. 42s.(79p.) Notes from Bertrand Russell and H. T. Costello's Philosophy 21. Includes A.MS. notes from Russell and A. R. Chandler's Philosophy 9c; [Cambridge, Mass.] 17 Mar-30 Apr 1914, p. 41

¹⁵² Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 260

names attached to atomic facts: “The sentences which express atomic propositions are composed of proper names and predicates” and “the meaning of a name is to be identified with the object which it denotes. Consequently a name which fails to denote anything is meaningless.”¹⁵³ Atomism resists semantic change: “any change which does not involve a change of structure does not make much difference”.¹⁵⁴ As a result of Russell’s popularization of atomism:

The notions of qualities and predicates came to be highly restricted, being identified in formal logic with their extensions. The assumption that reasoning was to be restricted to reasoning about things came to dominate to such an extent that it was no longer explicitly mentioned. The ‘classical’ in ‘classical mathematical logic’ in the twentieth century came to mean the extreme restriction of the notion of predicate to just its extension: those objects of which it is true. This was in opposition to other views of reasoning in which epistemological, psychological, modal, or other aspects of propositions and predicates were taken into account.¹⁵⁵

The atomist excludes all non-definitive, non-truth-computational, language from analysis, and this becomes a convention of the discipline. Russell describes logical atomism by saying that “out of the original manifold of events, logical structures can be built ... The world consists of a number, perhaps finite, perhaps infinite, of entities.”¹⁵⁶ Logical atomism relies on an external,

¹⁵³ Ayer, A. J. (1971). Russell and Moore: The Analytical Heritage London Macmillan, p. 12

¹⁵⁴ Russell, B. (1988). Essays on Language, Mind and Matter, 1919-26. London, Unwin Hyman., p.176

¹⁵⁵ Epstein, R. L. (2006). Classical Mathematical Logic: the semantic foundations of logic Oxford and New Jersey Princeton University Press, p. xxii

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, 177-178

Platonic, and static understanding of the world.¹⁵⁷ The atomist programme requires a reduction of “ordinary” expressions to facts.¹⁵⁸

Eliot’s views on language will develop in the opposite direction -- towards *underlying unity* -- a prearticulate *felt oneness* with objects -- as the basis of knowledge and language.¹⁵⁹ In his thesis, he will claim that “original unity -- the ‘neutral entity’ -- though transcended, remains, and is never analysed away. In our perception of a red flower the original mere red, in which awareness and awared are one, persists”.¹⁶⁰ To understand this, we might consider the difference between a rich, evocative experience of red experienced *in the present*, and compare this experience to the way one might want to consider red as a category term, subtracted from context.¹⁶¹ The word focuses our attention on one aspect of the experience, but there is usually “more” to the experience itself than the word “red” would have us believe. In Eliot’s view, words provide a sketch, or model, but not a perfect replica, of the world. The word “red” in no way does full justice to the complexity of the felt totality. As-

¹⁵⁷ In the postscript to the last installation of his autobiography, Russell summarizes what he believes to have been his driving philosophical motivation throughout his life. “I wanted to find out whether anything can be known ... I thought that certainty is more likely to be found in mathematics than elsewhere. But I discovered that many mathematical demonstrations ... were full of fallacies, and that, if certainty were indeed discoverable in mathematics, it would be in a new kind of mathematics, with more solid foundations. But as the work proceeded, I was continually reminded of the fable about the elephant and the tortoise” (Russell, B. (1969). The Autobiography of Bertrand Russell (1944-1969). London, George Allen and Unwin, Ltd, p. 220). Russell remarks on his “inner failure, though of little moment to the world, has made my mental life a perpetual battle. I set out with a more or less religious belief in a Platonic eternal world, in which mathematics shone with a beauty like that of the last Cantos of the *Paradiso*. I came to the conclusion that the eternal world is trivial, and that mathematics is only the art of saying the same thing in different words. I set out with a belief that love, free and courageous, could conquer the world without fighting. I came to support a bitter and terrible war. In these respects there was failure”. In The New Realism, Eliot puts an “x” next to the claim that knowledge of realities independent of us “*depends entirely on our success in discovering universal laws in the occurrences of phenomena*” (Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 131).

¹⁵⁸ See Russell, Bertrand. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism and Other Essays, p.171-172

¹⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 45

¹⁶⁰ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 30

¹⁶¹ Jain shares this reading of Eliot’s philosophy: “In actual fact, Eliot is critical of all philosophical systems for their failure to encompass the richness, density, and complexity of experience ... Language, too, is inadequate to express reality... It is only at moments and within the limits determined by particular purposes that we attempt to think clearly, and to harmonize our meanings and pursue them to ‘the precipice of intelligibility’. There is inevitably a loss of density and richness in any progression towards articulation and completeness” (Jain, 86-87).

experienced, there is “more” to the object of consciousness than its aspect of redness. Eliot takes great pains to detail a theory of objects which allows for a greater degree of variety in terms of experienced truth, rather than relying on all objects as discrete “things” to be labeled singularly.¹⁶²

New realism agreed with Russell that the world should be parsed into discrete, definable entities. “A neo-realist” the authors of The New Realism argue, “recognizes no ultimate immediacies nor non-relational nor indefinable entities, except the simples in which analysis terminates”.¹⁶³ Eliot puts a very large “X” next to the statement: “so far as causation is observable or verifiable at all ... it must be regarded as a complex or process in which there is a relation of necessity between distinguishable and definable parts”.¹⁶⁴ This is an atomist position. He also appears to disagree too (by way of an “x”) with the neo-realists’ desire to “distinguish ‘relation’ and ‘dependence.’”¹⁶⁵ In the section titled “*The propositions of logic and mathematics are independent of consciousness*” Eliot writes “all right this ---- confusing.” and places a large question mark in the margin. When it is argued that a proposition does not depend on consciousness, Eliot writes, in the margin: “the prop.[osition]

¹⁶² Eliot has three significant essays on objects, all currently unpublished, which will be dealt with in Chapter 2: Eliot, Thomas Stearns, 1888-1965. [*On objects*]. A.MS.; [Oxford, n.d.]. 6s.(6p.), Eliot, Thomas Stearns, 1888-1965. *Suggestions toward a theory of objects*. TS. with A.MS. revisions; [n.p., n.d.]. 5s.(5p.), TS. with A.MS. revisions; [Oxford, n.d.]. 5s.(5p.), Eliot, Thomas Stearns, 1888-1965. [*Object and point of view*]. A.MS.; [Oxford, n.d.]. 5s.(5p.) Russell acknowledges the problem of point of view in his essay on Logical Atomism, when he writes, in 1918, “I have said that ‘red’ could not be understood except by seeing red things... you might have a hypothetical person who could not see red, but who understood the physical theory of colour and could apprehend the proposition ‘This has the colour which has the greatest wave-length.’ Conversely, you might have a hypothetical person who could not see red, but who understood the physical theory of colour ... but who would not be able to understand the proposition ‘This is red’, as understood by the normal uneducated person. Therefore it is clear that if you define ‘red’ as ‘The colour with the greatest wave-length’ you are not giving the actual meaning of the word at all; you are simply giving a true description, which is quite a different thing, and the propositions which result are different propositions from those in which the word ‘red’ occurs”. Meaning and truth are divorced; the “true” description is the scientific description, not the meaning of the word “red” as understood by uneducated speakers. Russell, Bertrand. The Philosophy of Logical Atomism and Other Essays, p. 173

¹⁶³ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 32

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 110

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 114

is the result of some consciousness.”¹⁶⁶ It is argued, again, that the proposition does not rely, for its veracity, on “a background of feeling, or to an apperceiving mass, or to the activity of a self or responding organism. The proposition in question is therefore not dependent on knowledge in the whole-part sense ... the proposition is sufficiently determined, without reference to knowledge, by the logical and mathematical system to which it belongs”.¹⁶⁷ To this, Eliot responds with exasperation in the margin: “why do all these people go daft with the lust of producing a logical series!!”

Universal identifiers, according to Eliot’s early essays and dissertation, are necessary, but are also somewhat artificial: “the I is a construction out of experience, an abstraction from it; and the *thats*, the browns and hards and flats, are equally ideal constructions from experience, as ideal as atoms”.¹⁶⁸ Here “ideal as atoms” is an oblique nod in the direction of Russell’s philosophy. However, Eliot rejects Russell’s view in favor of a more opaque understanding of experience:

in the first place, immediate experience is not at any stage of consciousness merely a presentation which can be isolated from other elements also present or subsequent in consciousness. It is not ‘sense-data’ or sensations, it is not a stream of feeling which, as merely felt, is an attribute of the subject side only and must in some way be ‘related’ to an external world. And it is not, lastly, more pure or more immediate in the animal or the infant mind than in the mind of the mathematician engaged upon a problem... In these words we have expressed the whole difference between Bradley’s view of experience and those of certain other contemporary philosophers.¹⁶⁹

In this case I interpret “certain other contemporary philosophers” to mean “Russell and his following”.

¹⁶⁶ *ibid*, p. 129

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 130

¹⁶⁸ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 19 He puts this differently when he comments on hallucinations. Hallucination illustrates a case supporting the argument that at any given moment a point of view can be variable, and this means that our own identity is variable: “The *I* who saw the ghost is not the *I* who had the attack of indigestion” he writes, at once signaling fiction (in this case Dickens’ *A Christmas Carol*) and magnifying philosophy’s inability to deal with change’s effect on identity (in this instance personal identity). Fiction has reality insofar as it can be considered and can effect the lives of others “other men’s experiences are realities with which we come into contact, and which are continually influencing us”, p. 122

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 16

The popularity of the atomist materialism is distasteful to Eliot. In the conclusion of his thesis, Eliot writes: “We may easily be overawed by language, and attribute to it more philosophic prestige than it really deserves”.¹⁷⁰ Eliot writes to Russell on April 13, 1918, after years of struggling with his philosophy. Although here, as elsewhere, Eliot acknowledges Russell’s *political* philosophy as “awfully gratifying” he tells Russell that “I should not, of course, be able to be present, as unfortunately on previous occasions” for his public lectures on atomism.¹⁷¹

There are two responses to atomism which, for Eliot, are significant to the course of his own philosophical development. One response is Bradley’s; he emphasises diversity within systems of classification. Bradley disagrees with Russell’s simplification of relations into a two-dimensional descriptive network. Bradley’s “literary” assumptions about terms come under public attack by Russell.¹⁷² Bradley, in a response to Russell, argues: “no class can be related merely to itself... everywhere relation without diversity is meaningless”.¹⁷³ Eliot shares this denial of the rigidity of Russell’s demands for a systematic classification of “types”, with its indifference to the “ground” of consciousness, siding with Bradley: “Any name I take to be an example of identity in diversity”.¹⁷⁴

The other response to Russell’s programme can be witnessed in the reassessment of previous philosophers, including Gottfried Leibniz’s critique of atomism. In 1916, Eliot wrote two essays on Leibniz for *The Monist*.¹⁷⁵ In his 1916 treatment of Leibniz, Eliot calls the

¹⁷⁰ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 159

¹⁷¹ Eliot, T. S. (2009). *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1)* London, Faber & Faber, p. 260-261

¹⁷² Russell, B. (1992). *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*. London, Routledge. 139: “Mr. Bradley has strongly advocated, and many previous philosophers have held, the view that ... relations, in the last analysis, are nothing but agreement or disagreement as to predicates, and that what is valid in a relation is only the adjectives of the apparently related terms”.

¹⁷³ Russell, B. (1992). *Logical and Philosophical Papers 1909-13*. London, Routledge p. 391

¹⁷⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 187

¹⁷⁵ Eliot, T.S. CPI, p. lvi

representationalist, correspondence theory of truth -- “the exact correspondence between constituents of propositions and constituents of things” -- a philosophical “incoherence”.¹⁷⁶ This move away from what is stratified and crystalline is common when Eliot articulates the relationship between meaning and truth.

Richard Shusterman notices that Eliot tends to use the word “analysis” in his literary criticism, and from this he infers that Eliot espouses logical atomism, and that Russell is one of the most significant influences of Eliot’s philosophical period.¹⁷⁷ This is not only a mistaken reading of Eliot’s own thought, but a misleading one. By ignoring the philosophy as-such, and focusing only on the occurrence of words and “themes” such as “analysis” and “definite”, Shusterman misrepresents Eliot’s views. In his thesis, Eliot contends that logical atomism is a reductive project. He looks for a “middle way” between the sceptic’s materialism and the idealist’s metaphysics, proposing a dialogue between the complexity of diverse experience and the categories used to represent this experience: “meaning involves ... the relation of identity through which a universality of function is recognised through a diversity of situation”.¹⁷⁸ Eliot thinks that knowledge changes with experience, and situates the process of meaning-making within the passage of time. He argues that “the curious dualism of Mr Russell ... which has much in common with obvious, though I can hardly think correct, interpretations of Plato, will not hold good of a world which is always partially in time, but never wholly in time, with respect to any of its elements”.¹⁷⁹ The changing nature of the world (a world that is messy, diverse, but “one”, rather than atomistic) requires flexible understanding of categories: “in any use of an abstract term, we may distinguish between the logical meaning, which is an intended object, and the real meaning, which is a part of the

¹⁷⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1916). CPI, “The Development of Leibniz’s Monadism”, p. 445

¹⁷⁷ Shusterman, Richard. (1982). *ELH* **49** (Spring, 1982), p. 168

¹⁷⁸ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 100

¹⁷⁹ *ibid*, p. 101.

experience and not an object real or intended”.¹⁸⁰ Here, the “real meaning” escapes the logician’s grasp altogether, because it is not a “discrete atom” of information, but is grounded in the “now” of diverse experience. What “real meaning” might be is somewhat opaque in Eliot’s early philosophy and writings, but it appears to be justified internally -- something that unifies the subject with the world, flitting on the horizon of what can be expressed. Crucially, individuated consciousness is not alienated from the world, but integrated with it.

Meaning

In Eliot’s later writing, “real meaning” is ascribed to poetic thought. He retains an interest in “the pre-logical mentality ... available only to or through the poet”.¹⁸¹ Poetic thinking is a kind of fermentation or contemplation of complex experiences of meaning, which expresses an underlying unity: “When a poet’s mind is perfectly equipped for its work, it is constantly amalgamating disparate experience; the ordinary man’s experience is chaotic, irregular, fragmentary. The latter falls in love, or reads Spinoza, and these experiences have nothing to do with each other, or with the noise of the typewriter or the smell of cooking; in the mind of the poet these experiences are always forming new wholes”.¹⁸² An underlying unity of consciousness, as it exists in the present, makes new meaning possible.

Another response to Russell’s representationalist view of meaning (one word, one fact) involves Eliot’s interest in the present moment. In Eliot’s private copy of Bernard Bosanquet’s Logic: or the Morphology of Knowledge (1911), nearly all of the marginalia deals with the status of signification as it pertains to the mind, in its *present situation*, which Eliot often calls “point of view”. Eliot puts a question mark next to the word “objective” in Bosanquet’s description of an “objective world”, and circles “for us” in the sentence: “the real world or world of fact thus seems for us to fall within and be included in the objective world

¹⁸⁰ *ibid*, p. 103

¹⁸¹ Eliot, T. S. (1948). The Use of Poetry. London Faber & Faber, p. 148

¹⁸² Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP P2, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 380

or world of meanings, as if all that is fact were meaning”. To Eliot, a point of view is a *real experience*: When Bosanquet speaks of impressions which are “*merely* in the mind”, Eliot underlines the word *merely* and writes “Why merely at all?”¹⁸³ Eliot reads a description of what constitutes “objective reality”: “When I use the word ‘red’ I do not refer to or mean my idea of red considered as my idea ... I mean a colour, a quality of surface, or at least of light, which I represent to myself by help of one or more reds which I have seen, but which I think of as not dependent either for being or for quality on my happening to know it”.¹⁸⁴ In the margin, Eliot writes: “Idea here as Anschauung”. The term “anschauung” means “intuition”, and is used by Edmund Husserl.¹⁸⁵ This note confirms that he is reading Husserl alongside the English and American philosophers of language, perhaps looking for a way to bring experiences of consciousness to bear on philosophical truths.

Philosophically, the young Eliot holds that words are flexible, finicky tools which gesture towards a complex unity between the active consciousness and ideas. Eliot carefully criticises Russell’s descriptivism.¹⁸⁶ His skepticism towards descriptivist philosophies is outlined in his essay, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, quoted here at length:

when a philosopher pretends to emerge with some “positive result” which can be formulated, which declares triumphantly that reality is this or that, some discovery which informs us that anything is anything else than what we supposed it to be before we began to philosophise, then the philosopher is simply pulling out of his pocket what he put there himself. The token that a philosophy is true is, I think, the fact that it brings us to the exact point from which we started. We shall be enriched, I trust, by our experience on the Grand Tour, but we shall not have been allowed to convey any material treasures through the Custom House. And the wisdom which we shall have acquired will not be part of the argument which brings us to the conclusion; it is not part of the book, but is written in pencil on the fly-leaf. For the point to which we return should be the same, but somehow is not, but is a higher stage of reality; and even though degrees of reality be all accounted for in our theory, yet if our theory

¹⁸³ Bosanquet, B. (1911). Logic: Or The Morphology Of Knowledge. Oxford, The Clarendon Press, p. 73

¹⁸⁴ *ibid*, p. 17

¹⁸⁵ “Husserl makes heavy use of the term “Anschauung” whose primary function is to call attention to what is immediately given to us in experience” (Smith, B. a. S., David Woodruff (1995). The Cambridge Companion to Husserl. Cambridge, University of Cambridge Press, p. 86).

¹⁸⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1918). CPI, “Style and Thought: An unsigned review of *Mysticism and Logic and Other Essays*”, p. 691

were literally true, reality would not have changed while we have been theorising. But at this point it is wise to stop.¹⁸⁷

The expressions “material treasures”, the defense of “wisdom” against this materialism, and the pencil mark on the fly-leaf, all alert us to Eliot’s own view -- language cannot be viewed as a totalising system of truths, but is rather a kind of ongoing interpretive process.

Interpretation alters facts.

Though abstract categories may be “artificial” in terms of their claims to truth, the work of logic betrays a crucial metaphysical instinct, in Eliot’s view -- an alternative “view of life” -- an *aiming at* or *orientation towards* truth. Logic *itself* is not suspect (and, as he puts it in a letter, is “of great value”)¹⁸⁸, but rather the notion that the logical way of thought is the truest expression of reality:

It may seem a trivial waste of breath to dispute about the true definition of judgment, when apparently it is all one in the end and makes no difference in the meantime. In reality our whole view of life is at stake in the finest shred of logic that we chop. And in this progress we cannot help but take hold of what elements in our world seem to us the most stable, analyse everything else into these, and proclaim our discovery of the truth. Does it seem to you that will is the self-realisation of an idea? I for my part cannot help feeling that I know quite as much about will as I do about self-realisation, if I know anything about either.¹⁸⁹

Here, as elsewhere, logic reveals *our point of view*. Logic does not, however, guarantee epistemic access to the external world.

To the young Eliot, knowledge is a *process*, and requires flexibility of terminology. In another essay, he writes: “...there is a stricter, more limited sense, in which knowledge is mere apprehension of objective truth and reality, and the wider sense in which it is conceived as an organic system. In the second sense one can speak of knowledge as an activity - in the first one cannot. The first sense is that emphasized by most realism (cf. Pritchard, Russell) the

¹⁸⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 191

¹⁸⁸ Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 88

¹⁸⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 191-192

second that of idealism.”¹⁹⁰The aspects of Bradley’s work which most appeal to the young Eliot are those aspects emphasising variability and change.

Gazing Inward

In poetry too, the Eliot of 1917 sought a vision of language which was flexible, evocative, and could articulate an *experience of consciousness*, rather than a fixed set of descriptive sequences. He looked for “the inexplicable line ... which can never be recaptured in other words”.¹⁹¹ He argues that the “contrast between fixity and flux, this unperceived evasion of monotony ... is the very life of verse”.¹⁹² This curious admixture of conscious activity and formal clarity is directly analogous to Eliot’s nascent philosophy of language -- which admired the clarity of Russell’s approach, even as it sought out language which employed indeterminacy.

Eliot’s vision of language was to affirm a “constant evasion and recognition of regularity”, justified by the poet’s intuition and skill for combining different experiences into a unified totality.¹⁹³ From this perspective, freedom from end rhyme, for example, is not seen as a sloppy anarchism, but a stricter attention to the natural, indefinable, perhaps even *hidden* internal musicality or meaning, discoverable in the daily contexts of expression. The aligning of language with its natural cadences and associations found in everyday contexts is justified by a need to reinfuse poetry with a sense of activity.¹⁹⁴ Eliot despaired that philosophy of language lacked *life*. In an unpublished letter to Conrad Aiken, he writes: “what good does philosophy do? I am interested, myself, in giving up red, orange, yellow, green, blue ... am of the opinion that all philosophy should start with a study of biology, morphology, and such ‘literature’ as *The Origin of Species*. From the first in particular would I have philosophy

¹⁹⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1914) CPI, “The Privacy of Points of View”, p. 178

¹⁹¹ Eliot, T.S. (1917) CPI, “Reflections on *Vers Libre*”, p. 513

¹⁹² *ibid.*

¹⁹³ *ibid.*

¹⁹⁴ *ibid.*, p. 516

spring. So why write a philosophy? Why indeed study philosophy? Why not indeed study life ...? But enough for now".¹⁹⁵

Eliot's frustration with new realism is borne out in his leveraging of Bradley against the movement. In his article for *The New Statesman* on "The Borderline of Prose" (1917), Eliot outlines the benefits and challenges of modern prose poetry. He concludes by referencing Bradley (against Russell), a move he makes a number of times elsewhere:

And lastly, here is a passage from an author whom I should not hesitate to classify with Ruskin and Newman as a master of the English language; a passage which occurs in a work entitled *Principles of Logic*, and therefore not likely to be found by seekers of the poetic, but which owes its merit to somewhat the same quality which the others have: 'That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we can feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or unearthly ballet of bloodless categories.'¹⁹⁶

The expression "ballet of bloodless categories" or "bloodless alphabets" appears several times in both Eliot's published and unpublished writing, sometimes in paraphrased form. This expression is lifted directly from Bradley, who writes, against Russell:

That the glory of this world in the end is appearance leaves the world more glorious, if we feel it is a show of some fuller splendour; but the sensuous curtain is a deception and a cheat, if it hides some colourless movement of atoms, some spectral woof of impalpable abstractions, or *unearthly ballet of bloodless categories*".¹⁹⁷

In a previously unpublished manuscript -- a statement given in front of Harvard's philosophical society, over which Eliot presided as president in 1913, he repeats: "The neo-realistic movement appears to the uninitiated at least a spontaneous outburst of feeling, a song without words; and so we observe Mr. B. Russell directing with passionated enthusiasm his unearthly ballet of bloodless alphabets".¹⁹⁸ This is a rejection of Russell's language

¹⁹⁵ Eliot, T.S. (22 May, 1913). Unpublished letter held at Houghton Library, Harvard University. bMS Am 1432 (32) Letters to Conrad Aiken, "What shall you do this summer?" p. 1-6

¹⁹⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1917) CPI, "The Borderline of Prose", p. 540

¹⁹⁷ Bradley, Francis Herbert. *Principles of Logic*, p. 533, emphasis added

¹⁹⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1913). CPI, "The Relationship between Politics and Metaphysics", p. 90

programme. Was there a connection, then, between Eliot's attack on descriptivism in philosophy and his rejection of descriptivism in poetry?

These two attacks seem to emerge at the same moment, and often employ precisely the same vocabulary. Here, as elsewhere, Eliot argues that the logic of poetic meaning must always defer to "unexplored possibilities" which advance based on an "inner necessity".¹⁹⁹ This "inner logic" of the poem is central to Eliot's poetic approach. He criticises a poem when it "becomes abstract, and the word separates from the thing".²⁰⁰ Eliot was inspired by symbolist poetry, which praised Balzac, because he was "not merely a philosophical thinker; because *he dealt in flesh and blood*, and knew that the passions in action can teach more to a philosopher, and can justify the artist more fully, than all the unacting intellect in the world".²⁰¹ Eliot too admired the fleshed-out, *living*, active, "ordinary" forms of language

Eliot's rejection of atomistic logic, along with his scepticism of descriptivism complements his early appreciation for a poetic form that heightens sensuous detail, where "the feeling and the material symbol preserve exactly their proper proportions" -- where meaning and truth "meet in the middle". This instinct to "blend" the external world with feelings and *present* sensations is also evident in his philosophy:

To reduce the world to a set of formulae is to let it slip through our fingers in a fine dust; but to fly into an emotional orgy or retire into a sunlit stupor is to let the world slip through our fingers in a thin smoke. Between the two extremes is found the subject-matter of conversation, upon which intelligence feeds... The difference, then, between the view which I urge and idealism is that while the idealist, on ascending into heaven, pulls his ladder up after him, I prefer to return to lay my head upon a stone.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1917) CPI, "The Borderline of Prose", p. 541

²⁰⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1917) "Observations", p. 712

²⁰¹ Symons, A. (1919). The Symbolist Movement in Literature. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 31, emphasis added

²⁰² Eliot, T.S. (1915). CPI, "The Relativity of Moral Judgment", p. 198

This is the beginning of Eliot's mature view of poetic language -- a view that would champion careful attention to the unities binding thought with present activity and experience. This emphasis on an internal sensitivity to the unity between consciousness and the physical world ("my head upon a stone") as we will see, has more in common with phenomenology than with new realism.

The philosophy of Eliot's time was obsessed by the question of how humans describe and define the world; it asked how humans define objects. Eliot learns that the question of objects (or rather, the question concerning the way language defines objects) is the source of contention in the realist/anti-realist debate. In his lecture notes, Eliot learns that there is one way of coming to terms to the unreal within language -- that is, artistically: "[Imaginary] objects always present to us, in dreams or madness. But, such objects predominantly present in artistic experience. A work of art= [an object that is] ... individually richer. There is a great deal in it, which, if it hadn't been for the activity of its creator would have been individual. This character -- individuality, singularity, uniqueness, thisness -- Every real experience is this experience".²⁰³ The lectures showcase an emerging tension between realist understandings of objects and the pliable use of words as interpreted by *this moment*. Eliot insists on a philosophical fusion of objects within the active consciousness: "Both real object and unreal object are, qua objects, equally real; when, both, so to speak, are at the fovea".²⁰⁴ He argues, like Eeldrop in his fiction, that words and objects are codependent: "Without words, no objects".²⁰⁵ The world and the expressions of the world are co-dependent.

Co-dependency in language involves a located, bodily experience of the world. In his previously unpublished essay on causality, Eliot writes, "I agree thoroughly with Mr Russell when he speaks of cause as a superstition: I only question whether we can be without

²⁰³ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes on logic. MS (15) A.MS.; [Oxford] 12 Oct [1914]- 8 Jun [1915]. 96s. (97p.) Notes from J. A. Smith's lectures on logic and on Giovanni Gentile (10 Jan-1 Feb 1915). p. 90

²⁰⁴ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 131. The fovea of the eye concentrates vision.

²⁰⁵ *ibid*, p. 132

superstitions. I am apt to stop to pick up a pin, and Mr Russell may say that I do so because I am superstitious”.²⁰⁶ Eliot playfully mocks Russell’s notion of “the real world”. In the paper, which focuses its criticism almost exclusively on Russell, Eliot finds solace in idealism, since according to him “An idea is not an x which means something, it is simply and barely the meaning, and it demands effort of abstraction to realize that the naming is not itself a thing, for in manipulating the word ‘meaning’ (or ‘reference’) we tend always to substitute (a) a thing which means or (b) a thing which is meant”.²⁰⁷ Language is a process of *coming to mean*, and consciousness cannot be studied “from the outside”.²⁰⁸ Subjective consciousness cannot be marginalised:

In its transatlantic form this theory [of language put forward by Russell] does not posit consciousness at the start, but finds it in certain combinations and selections of the neutral entities. In this form the view presents the difficulty that if it is to be true, we will have a very awkward time explaining how we came to know so much about it. For that which is previous to either content or object can only be that which we call ‘immediate experience’ - something which is essentially incapable of definition ... It is certainly neutral, but what ground have we for speaking of it as ‘entities’? What analogy or resemblance does it bear to sensation?²⁰⁹

Eliot’s paper questioned the assumption that the world is *already* fixed, neutral, or objective. He concludes: “Real knowing, I believe, is not something which can be studied atomically, or as soon as you get down to the ‘simpler case’ of knowing, it turns out there stripped naked to be not knowledge at all.”²¹⁰ He reasserts and underlines the role human evaluation plays in any description of states of affairs: “Valuation is everywhere present; every object, even every

²⁰⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Cause as ideal construction”, p. 126

²⁰⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Suggestions toward a Theory of Objects”, p. 132

²⁰⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary”, p. 171 We could compare Eliot’s contempt for Russell to Husserl’s contempt for J.S. Mill, who argues that discrete sensations can be unproblematically categorized in a theory of types: “Remarkable self-deception: as if by laying down a mode of speech we could decide whether a unitary thought-object corresponds to a multitude of acts or not ... One must therefore cease to speak as if one were doing psychology where concepts are being investigated” (Eliot’s underlining copied, Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 245

²⁰⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary”, p. 171

²¹⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Privacy of Points of View”, p. 179

metaphysical theory, has its value... Reality itself should be a value - the ultimate value".²¹¹

Eliot's focus on value here is a reaffirmation that interpretation is continuously reshaping knowledge in *this* moment. His refusal to accept a world without values extends to a broader critique of Russell's emphasis on definiteness.

The Theory of Definite Descriptions

In his copy of The New Realism, Eliot double highlights the new realist's distaste for suggestive theories of language, which are seen as "improper": "In philosophy this reliance on the suggestive, rather than the proper denotative or connotative function of words, is due ... to the wide vogue of doctrines that are fundamentally inarticulate".²¹² The new realists, like Russell, want to purge language of ambiguities: "Words are properly signs... the only means of escaping quarrels about words is to use words with discrimination, with careful reference to their objective purport, or usefulness as means of access to ideas."²¹³ The authors quote John Toland, who thought that if words do not have ideas "fix'd to them" (Eliot underlines), they are simply "words spoken in air, and cannot be the ground of a reasonable service".²¹⁴ Eliot also double highlights the authors' contention that "The clarity of words depends in the end on their possessing a conventional reference to simple objects".²¹⁵ Russell shared the new realists' desire to scrub so-called "ordinary language" of vagueness:

Russell was no fan of ordinary language, but he thought that the ambiguities and vagaries of ordinary language could be cleaned up by analysing ordinary-language sentences into the predicate calculus ... the philosophical analysis of language itself became a central -- indeed some would say *the* central -- problem in philosophy. What exactly is the relationship between language and reality? How is it that words can stand for things in the real world? What exactly is the nature of truth and reference?²¹⁶

²¹¹ *ibid*, p. 4

²¹² Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 18

²¹³ Eliot double underlines all of this, *ibid*, p. 22

²¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 22

²¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 23

²¹⁶ Searle, J. R. (1999). "The Future of Philosophy." Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences **354** (1392, Millenium Issue), p. 2071

These questions will thematically reoccur in Eliot's poetry, wherein a search for meaning merges with a search for a deeper connection to the modern world.

Definition, in the eyes of the new realists, ought to be *conventional*. The authors argue (and Eliot highlights): "Definition, then, means two things: first, a convention regarding the substitution of a single word for a group of words; second, a convention regarding the reference of words to objects".²¹⁷ The method of analysis, in this context, "means only a careful, systematic, and exhaustive examination of any topic of discourse. It cannot, then, be proper to assert that such procedure destroys its object."²¹⁸ Next to this claim, Eliot marks an "x". Eliot's many "x's" indicate disagreement, and so to Eliot, such a procedure *does* have implications for the object itself, because there is a close connection between one's point of view and the object one describes.

Eliot's graduate writing on poetry contrasts descriptivism with a freer form which allows for interpretive play. In his 1916 critique of Lee Masters, for instance, Eliot sows the seeds of his anti-descriptivism in his view of poetic form: "Mr. Masters sometimes fails in a situation ('Arabel') because he does not fix before you the contact and cross-contact of souls, the breath and scent of the room. His mind is reflective, not evocative... In descriptive passages ... we have a vision from the moral emotions, not an immediate application of all the senses."²¹⁹ Eliot experiments with indefinite reference, and unleashes, at the same time, "an immediate application of all the senses" in his early poetry as a kind of counterpoint to definite description. This will be further examined in the final chapter.

Russell's theory of definite descriptions, first introduced in his essay "On Denoting" (published in "Mind", 1905), created the framework for analytic philosophy. David Foster Wallace neatly summarises this theory for the literary reader:

²¹⁷Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). *The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy*, p. 23

²¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 24

²¹⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1916). CPI, "Mr. Lee Masters: A review of *Songs and Satires*, by Edgar Lee Masters", p. 488

Now, technically, the Russellian logic that comprises language's Big Picture consists all & only of 3 things: simple logical connectives like 'and,' 'or' & 'not'; propositions or 'statements'; & a view of these statements as 'atomic,' meaning that the truth or falsity of a complex statement like 'Ludwig is affable and Bertrand is well-dressed' depends entirely on the truth value of its constituent atomic propositions -- the prenominate molecular proposition is true if & only if it is true that Ludwig is friendly *and* it is true that Bertrand is dapper... the world is nothing but a huge mass of data, of logically discrete facts that have no *intrinsic* connection to one another.²²⁰

Russell's was a world of disassociated data points. The world as Eliot conceived it, on the contrary, was unified, interconnected, messy, ambiguous, interwoven. Alluding to the aims of analytic philosophy in his thesis, Eliot's quips: "The sharper and more complete the lines, the more theoretical the account".²²¹ As elsewhere, the word "theory" for Eliot is a dirty word. Eliot explains that "it is a mistake, I think, to treat the word as something which barely points to the object, a sign-post which you leave behind on the road ... reference is a kind of activity, original or delegated".²²² The theory of definite description, addressed by Eliot's essay "The Validity of Artificial Distinctions",²²³ is sometimes seen as Russell's greatest contribution to philosophy of language.²²⁴ Stated simply, the theory attempted to eradicate ambiguity from philosophical expression, by taking seemingly ambiguous statements, such as "The present king of France is bald" and rendering them in their logical form, so as to be refuted or affirmed. What one *really* wishes to assert is:

- A) There is a present king of France.
- B) At most one thing is the present king of France.
- C) Something that is the present king of France is bald.

By altering the form of the statement into a logical one, Russell got rid of the ambiguity in the original statement, replacing it with a form that might be affirmed or denied by figuring out which part of the statement "fails to refer" to reality.

²²⁰ Wallace, DF, introduction to Markson, D. (1988). Wittgenstein's Mistress. Champaign, Dublin, London, Dalkey Archive Press, p. 253-254.

²²¹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 137

²²² *ibid*, p. 129

²²³ reference

²²⁴ For a preliminary account of this, see, for instance, Grayling, A. C. (2009). On Bertrand Russell's Theory of Definite Descriptions

Eliot's view of the theory of definite descriptions is stated in his thesis: "'The King of France is bald.' This is true or false or meaningless according to its context and bearing. That the theory needs working out in great detail I cannot see. It would be tying knots in the east wind".²²⁵ This dismissive attitude implies that to "tie a knot" around language -- to force language into a primarily designatory mode -- contradicts something like the natural tendencies and proclivities of description, which can shift their point of reference depending on context. Russell's theory of definite descriptions clashes with what Eliot sees as the task of philosophy during this period: "The task of philosophy, it appears to me, is largely ... to disentangle the muddled knots of the world".²²⁶ Eliot sought a philosophy that would unite, rather than divide, points of view and worlds of meaning. Much of Eliot's dissertation is grounded in an attack on the denotative aspect of Russell's project, which would account for his interest in phenomenology. As Fabio L. Vericat has rightly noted: "This [continental phenomenological] school was also heavily involved in logical pursuits yet defied Russell's heavy materialism epitomized in logical atomism... attracted instead to the opposite process: the objectifying inertia of denoting phrases. Eliot exploits this contrast in his thesis".²²⁷ Though he fails to mention Husserl, as we will see Husserl's philosophy had lasting sway in the content of Eliot's more closely held beliefs about language and consciousness.

The primary question concerning the theory of definite descriptions is "what is it?" Understanding the truth about a fact is contingent on understanding *what to call it: what to name it*. To the argument that the primary function of language is to pin down the world using category terms, Eliot rejoins: "identity is a fragile and insecure thing".²²⁸ This theme -- the

²²⁵ *ibid*, , p. 138. "The present King of France is bald" is the favorite example used in Russell's theory of definite descriptions.

²²⁶ Eliot, T.S. "Ethics" *bMS Am 1691.14 (32) TS*. with A.MS revisions: Oxford, p. 2

²²⁷ Vericat, F. L. "Ghostly Objectives: Metaphysics and Style in T.S. Eliot's 'Hamlet and his problems'." Nomadas 1. Revisita Critica de Ciencias Sociales Y Jurdicas

²²⁸ Eliot, T. S. *KAE*, Faber & Faber, p. 162

transitory and procedural aspects of meaning-making -- is without question a reigning motif in Eliot's 1917 "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", among other early poems:

Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'
Let us go and make our visit.
...
The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase,
And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin,
When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall,
Then how should I begin
...
Is it perfume from a dress
That makes me so digress?
...
'That is not what I meant at all.
That is not it, at all.'
...
It is impossible to say just what I mean!
...
'That is not it at all,
That is not what I meant, at all.'²²⁹

To Eliot, the answer to the search for meaning lies not in *definition* of "externality", but in a drama of consciousness as it encounters the phenomenal world ("Let us go and make our visit"). In the poem, one encounters a conflict or interplay between meaning as something specific, determinate, and exact, and meaning as something that is subject to the fluctuations of conscious intention, struggling to articulate itself. The speaker is uneasy with definite description. Each iteration of the search for meaning contains a slight shift: "That is not what I meant at all." becomes "That is not what I meant, at all." and "That is not it, at all." becomes "That is not it at all.". Repeating the statement verbatim, Eliot alters punctuation which alters, subtly, the *feeling* of the meaning. "That is not it, at all" *feels* less certain than "That is not it at all.", though the words remain identical. Eliot will replicate this technique -- the use of *precisely the same words* to indicate diverse feelings -- in later work. In "Prufrock", as later in *Four Quartets*, the passage of time crucially alters the experience of meaning-making, "unfixing" it from its easy resting places. Meaning gestures inwards, towards a horizon that is

²²⁹ Eliot, T. S. CPP, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", p. 15-16, lines 11-12, 56-59, 65-66, 98-99, 105, 110-111

always receding before the speaker. This theme reappears in a more philosophical way in *Four Quartets* as “knowledge derived from experience...the pattern is new in every moment / And every moment is a new and shocking / Valuation of all we have been”.²³⁰

Eliot’s fascination with names resurfaces repeatedly in his poetic practice. Christopher Ricks describes the Eliot of the 1920s and 1930s, and the Eliot of *Four Quartets*: “The energies of this young American had been diversely fired by names. There were his fabricated correspondence columns in *The Egoist* in December 1917 ... there was his persistent, even obsessive, making play and making free with names”.²³¹ This “making play” with names is possibly a result of butting heads with Russell’s approach to names -- names, for Russell, were to signify *one particular state of affairs, and no other*. Names, for Eliot, were to act as poetic or even musical features of art -- evoking, alluding, and colliding with his poetic imagination. His use of names to defy reference can be read as a critique of Russell’s views concerning definite description.

Eliot’s 1908 reading of the The Symbolist Movement in Literature -- a founding text of his poetic development -- would have further encouraged his critique of descriptivism. The introduction describes symbols as “arbitrary” forms of expression -- they express “an unseen reality apprehended by consciousness”.²³² The symbol both “reveals and conceals”.²³³ The symbol is described as a manifestation of the infinite in the finite.²³⁴ “Description is banished that beautiful things may be evoked, magically; the regular beat of verse is broken in order that words may fly, upon subtler wings”.²³⁵ The Symbolist poets “used the language of the

²³⁰ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “East Coker”, p. 179, lines 84,86-88

²³¹ Ricks, C. (1988). T.S. Eliot and Prejudice. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 242

²³² Symons, A. (1919). The Symbolist Movement in Literature. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 2

²³³ *ibid*, p. 2

²³⁴ *ibid*, p. 3

²³⁵ *ibid*, p. 8

people in order to render the people with a closer truth”.²³⁶ The book also criticises modern writers who move away from emotion as “analytic” and “anatomist”.²³⁷ Eliot’s earliest poetic influences seemed to pose themselves in direct opposition to the philosophy of language he studied. For example, Jules Laforgue was one of Eliot’s earliest and most significant poetic inspirations.²³⁸ Laforgue’s poetry, according to Symons, makes “subtle use of colloquialism, slang, neologism, technical terms, for their allusive, their factitious, their reflected meanings, with which one can play, very seriously”.²³⁹ Eliot’s poetry capitalises on the dramatic, nonsensical, idiomatic, and allusive aspects of language.

“Mr. Apollinax”, Eliot’s 1916 poem about Russell, toys with definite descriptions. The humorous epigraph, in Greek, from Lucian: “What a novelty! By Hercules, What paradoxes! What an inventive man!” or: “What a novelty! O Hercules, What a wonder! Man is a crafty creature of many wiles” suggests a multifaceted personae -- a man who resists being reduced to descriptive vocabulary.²⁴⁰ Russell himself resists being defined: “I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair / Or grinning over a screen/With seaweed in its hair./I heard the beat of centaur’s hoofs over the hard turf / As his dry and passionate talk devoured the afternoon.”²⁴¹ Secondly, Russell and the other American professors are given sobriquets, rather than definite descriptions. Eliot experiments extensively with nicknaming throughout his early work. A nickname, in a sense, is the antithesis of a name as conceived by Russell’s own philosophy; it defines somebody based on personal, eccentric associations, rather than a shared universal category. Thirdly, the presence of Mr. Apollinax himself is

²³⁶ *ibid*, p. 169

²³⁷ *ibid*, p. 34-35

²³⁸ Svarny, E. (1988). The Men of 1914: T.S. Eliot and early Modernism. Philadelphia, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, p. 46

²³⁹ Symons, A. (1919). The Symbolist Movement in Literature. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 297

²⁴⁰ Mittal, C. R. (2001). Eliot's Early Poetry in Perspective New Delhi, Atlantinc Publishers and Distributors, p. 36-37

²⁴¹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, p. 31, lines 13-17

immediately referred to the speaker's internal associations: "Fragilian", "Priapus", "an irresponsible foetus", "the old man of the sea", "the beat of centaur's hoofs over the hard turf".²⁴² Here, the "meaning" or "definition" of Mr. Apollinax's personality is obscured by the poet's myriad associations: some of them strange, even morbid: "I looked for the head of Mr. Apollinax rolling under a chair".²⁴³

In the poem, definition defers to association, mood, caprice, and -- significantly -- to the *phenomena which are co-present with the experience of Russell as an individual*. The identity of the persona bumps up against the phenomenal: "laughter" "teacups", "a chair", "talk", as well as the speaker's own interpretive associations, imagined as-present: "the lady in the swing", "coral islands", "drowned men drift down in the green silence, / Dropping fingers of surf", "seaweed in its hair", which are further mediated by contrasting, ephemeral moods: "worried", "grinning", "passionate".²⁴⁴ Similarly, the identities of Russell's host are overruled by their phenomenal corollaries: "Of dowager Mrs. Phlaccus, and Professor and Mrs. Cheetah / I remember a slice of lemon, and a bitten macaroon."²⁴⁵ Here, as with "Prufrock", the question of meaning is posed, and description is forced to defer to the phenomenal: "'He is a charming man' - 'But after all what did he mean?' - / 'His pointed ears He must be unbalanced' --".²⁴⁶ The poem, in effect, is a humorous critique of Russell's approach to description.

In two previously unpublished 1914 essays, "On Definition" (retitled "Definition and Judgement in Bradley and his Critics" by the editors of the Complete Prose) and "The Validity of Artificial Distinctions", Eliot makes his developing views on language explicit. He begins by confronting Russell's privileging of definition over interpretation:

²⁴² *ibid*, lines 3, 4, 7, 9, 16

²⁴³ *ibid*, line 13

²⁴⁴ *ibid*, lines 2, 13, 17, 5, 10, 11-12, 15, 11, 8, 17

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, lines 21-22

²⁴⁶ *ibid*, lines 18-19

every definition is relative to a point of view, and it is only when and where differences of point of view are negligible that we can be said to have an adequate definition. I refer to Mr Russell's definition of definition: definition signifies that a symbol just introduced is identical in meaning with a more complicated symbol previously used. It is obvious that much that is ordinarily called definition will not fall under this account. It is only applicable in the abstract world in which all terms are taken in extension.²⁴⁷

In Eliot's understanding, words as definitive references are over-simplified. Words are not to be confused with numbers, which signify *absolutely*, since words always refer to experience, and experience is *richer* than language: "We have the concept, and fit various experiences to it".²⁴⁸ For this reason, Eliot also emphasizes the importance of words in context: "nothing can be said to be dependent or independent except according to context".²⁴⁹ Eliot argues that symbols and concepts are different, thereby showing the manner in which numbers and words can diverge in function: "Nor on the other hand is [the sign] identical with concept, as Mr Moore seems to hold. It is a reference or intention of reality. It is a superior object, in that it means reality, while to make it an object, we mean its meaning, its Sinn, not its Bedeutung".²⁵⁰ The sense / reference distinction, alluded to here, is the contribution of Frege, picked up by Russell, Bradley, and Husserl.

References to Husserl are suspiciously missing in the majority of Eliot's early essays, despite the fact that Eliot was reading him precisely during this period and espouses phenomenological positions. In his early essays, the notion of "point of view", discussed at length in the context of phenomenology, emerges against over-rigid definition: "The difficulties of definition are occasioned by the fact that every definition is relative to a point of view".²⁵¹ The word "occasion" might also allude to Eliot's curious attention to occasional expressions, treated in following chapters. Likewise, Eliot argues from the phenomenological

²⁴⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Definition and Judgment in Bradley and his Critics", p. 183

²⁴⁸ *ibid.*

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*

²⁵⁰ *ibid.*, p. 184

²⁵¹ *ibid.*, p. 183

platform explicitly: “the reality which it is of is the particular reality of the person who has the idea”.²⁵² Eliot also argues for the supremacy of interpretation over definition: “Definition must be into *inferiora*, interpretation into *superiora*.”²⁵³

Eliot argues that there is always necessarily more than one context of use for each word, and the criterion for correspondence is point of view. A word can restrict the possibility of interpretation to a single meaning, but it has *many* possible interpretations, depending on context and speaker. Put differently, it is useless to search for *the* definitions of words, as if words are numbers:

Any name I take to be an example of identity in diversity: the meaning of a name always goes beyond and brings together the contexts in which it has been used. While on the one hand it finds meaning only in use, and while its meaning in use is never complete, but is always being enriched by new application, yet there is always present an element in the meaning which is something different from any sum of uses.²⁵⁴

There is, for any given term, many possibilities.²⁵⁵

Eliot argues that even the simplest words “escape” us theoretically:

it is easily forgotten that the meaning of a name is not simply present or absent. Rather, it disappears like a gas-balloon into the sky: the person who let the toy escape, and who continues to fix his eye upon it, can still see it long after it has become impossible for a random eye to find. To the philosopher who has been manipulating names in common use, the meaning remains the same while the critic exclaims that it has been completely and unscrupulously altered. And I conceive that any philosophic explanation which involves the taking over of a term or terms from daily use and disposing the rest of reality according to them - and this is a procedure which enters inevitably into every philosophic progress - is an explanation which is lamentably deficient. You not only cannot prove your result; you cannot within the rights of your own conscience impose it upon your neighbour. It can only be maintained by faith, a faith which like all faith, should be seasoned with a skillful sauce of scepticism. And scepticism too is faith, a high and difficult one.²⁵⁶

²⁵² *ibid*, p. 185

²⁵³ *ibid*, p. 185

²⁵⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 187

²⁵⁵ “All of these meanings take the wing from a comparatively small circle of conscious interest where meaning is perfectly clear - that is, clear enough; there is a wider circle where the meanings do not consciously appear, but into which they can be interpreted without doing violence; and there is a widest circle within which the meaning approximates, without ever quite reaching, the zero point” (189). This exact theme is taken up by the later Wittgenstein in his Philosophical Investigations.

²⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 187

Words, to Eliot, can be as abstract or as concrete as necessary, but their justification comes from a broader, living *activity* of meaning-formation -- an activity that should not be discarded, in his view, from philosophical conceptions of language.

In “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, Eliot insists that words must contain within themselves many potential meanings. In most cases, forcing language to operate in a one-word-one-referent relation is a sort of *necessary* violence, but a violence nonetheless. Such restriction of meaning:

is hardly wiser than trying to cram both feet into one shoe...The extension of meaning (on the one hand extension of the meaning of names, and on the other hand extension of the being of facts) is, it must be insisted, not a falsification; it is imprudent, but so is a balloon ascension; though our balloon finally collapse, we have taken a certain number of observations while in the air; and it will be only to the eyes of the vulgar that our descent appear a disaster. ²⁵⁷

From this perspective, literalism in philosophy is both artificial and useful, but it does not guarantee access to reality. What Eliot objects to is not that language *can* be treated in an overly restrictive or logical manner, but rather cases when it confuses this literalism with reality itself.

Eliot’s views on language have implications for his understanding of the purpose of philosophy and metaphysics. He goes so far as to say that Russell’s school, which cannot accept that the faculties of the mind are central to an understanding of how truth works, is his “nemesis”.²⁵⁸ From his perspective, *belief*, not materialist epistemology, constitutes the core of human understanding, and ultimately of any truth that might be considered or created. We *believe* that a word can be attributed to a state of affairs. This belief is *just* a belief, but is no less valuable for that:

For... so far as we believe in a system we are inside it: there is no ‘theory’, for the theory is the reality... The theory of judgment which we devise, for example, is not verified by turning round to inspect the world which we have left and to count the steps of our progress. The backward glance may yield regrets for our adventurousness, or may even change us to salt, but can bring out no information. Our theory of judgment is justifiable only by the system we build upon it. We

²⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 189

²⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 190

ascend a dizzy precipice, and the ledges crumble underneath; to return is disaster, to proceed offers at least the chance of triumph.²⁵⁹

It is impossible to have a purely objective view of the mind's interpretations, because one *is* a mind. A categorical judgment, therefore, will also be a confession of one's belief.

A Conflict of Interest

Given his outright dismissal of Russell's philosophy of language within his writing, it is odd to witness Eliot's public praise of Russell's *style*. In his 1918 review of Russell's "Mysticism and Logic", Eliot appears to praise Russell's work highly, stating that "Mr. Russell reaches the level of the very best philosophical prose in the language". However, he immediately follows the praise with comments that to anybody in his own philosophical milieu would be seen as just shy of cheeky:

The only contemporary writer who can even approach [Russell] is Mr. Bradley. As a philosopher Mr. Bradley attains a perfection which is so emphatically a perfection of destruction, the most valuable part of his work is so purely sceptical, that his greatness is due rather to a consummation of dialectical technique than to a single vision. His relation to philosophy is like that which Mr. Balfour, answering questions, maintains towards statesmanship. His hardness is of the surface, and conceals an affinity to Walter Pater. But Mr. Russell's hardness is from within.²⁶⁰

Bradley's philosophy was directly opposed to Russell's, and thus the comparison doubles as a slight. In this particular review, Eliot also pits Russell against "German Thought"²⁶¹:

The liberation of English philosophy from German influence, glibly discussed in the autumn of 1914, will have been the work, not of Mill (who was an amateur), but of Mr. Russell. His victory has been largely due to the possession of a science which most admirers of German philosophy in this country but imperfectly understood, but in the end will be due to his style, a style which this science has trained.²⁶²

²⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 188

²⁶⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1918). *Style and Thought: a book review of 'Mysticism and Logic, and Other Essays' by Bertrand Russell*. *The Nation*. United States. **22**, , p. 770

²⁶¹ Here, as elsewhere, Eliot betrays his astute observation of the philosophical politics of his time. He tends to lump German thinkers together on the public stage. In his 1916 review of *Philosophy and War* by Émile Boutroux, Eliot reveals that he is aware of the connection between politics and German philosophy. He chastises Boutroux for "conventional attitudes" which result in an uncritical and uniform attack on all things German -- saying that Boutroux "buries" his more constructive critical views "in a volume of commonplace patriotism" (CPI, p. 438-439).

²⁶² *ibid*.

Eliot's public praise of Russell's style seems at odds with his private, sometimes visceral rejection of the premises of proto-analytic philosophies, and may account for the confusion scholars have when approaching the relationship between Russell and Eliot more generally. There are several other moments in Eliot's later career where he will pit the work of "English thought" against the work of "German thought".²⁶³ This legerdemain concerning the "English" or "German" mind is one of the many contradictions attributable to his philosophical work, and could be more political than substantive.

Eliot's public delicacy towards Russell's work would wear off over the years. Much later in life, for example, he quips: "as the contemplation of Man's place in the Universe has led Lord Russell to write such bad prose, we may wonder whether it will lead the ordinary aspirant to understanding of good poetry".²⁶⁴ Even at this late stage, Eliot sees Russell's work in contradistinction to the work of the artist. Those closer to Eliot's circle often remark as to the mutually acknowledged irreconcilability between the two thinkers' philosophical positions. In Men Without Art (1934), Wyndham Lewis addresses the fact that the two men are often wrongly seen by the public as having similar views:

Of course I know that such a statement as 'the poet has, not 'a personality' to express, but a particular medium, which is only a medium and not a personality,' fits in very well, for instance, with Bertrand Russell's account of the psyche -- a rendezvous as it were for a bundle of sticks, not the sticks but just the rendezvous -- or with the functional picture of the Behaviorist. But those are *not* the affiliations to which Mr. Eliot is most apt to give his official recognition! And of course he never misses an opportunity of showing his disapproval of Bertrand Russell.²⁶⁵

²⁶³ "Eliot says that he finds German philosophical thought of great value, because he usually disagrees with it; citing Karl Mannheim as an example. This view of Mannheim is also expressed in Eliot's obituary letter on Mannheim to *The Times*, 25 January, 1947) (Behr, 60). In the same year, Eliot writes a letter of 30 October to *The Times* on "'Mass Deportations', Eliot expresses his agreement with Russell, who in previous correspondence has pleaded that the Germans in Great Britain ought not to be automatically sent back to Germany, as prevailing conditions there are so bad" (Behr, 61). The next year, in radio broadcasts to the BBC's German service, in what will later be collected as Notes towards a Definition of Culture, Eliot "stresses the common cultural heritage of Germany and Great Britain, which includes the Germanic founding of the English language and the literature of Greece and Rome, as well as the Bible..." (Behr, 61). He simultaneously remembers his language studies at Harvard.

²⁶⁴ Eliot, T. S. (1948). The Use of Poetry. London Faber & Faber, p. 134

²⁶⁵ Lewis, W. (1934). Men Without Art. London Cassell & Company, Limited, p. 74-75

Although he put a polite face on his divergences from Russell's philosophy, Eliot's conflict with Russell's thinking was substantial. This left him looking for other avenues of investigation.

Towards Phenomenology: Shades of consciousness

In addition to staging Russell and new realism against the "subjectivism" (or epistemology) of F.H. Bradley, it appears that Eliot read The New Realism alongside early phenomenology. When the authors argue, for instance: "Let us assume, then, that consciousness is a process containing a nervously endowed organism, a specific type of response to stimulation, and portions of an environment selected by the response ... when there is consciousness of *B*... *B* is therefore deducible from those factors under the terms of the laws governing its relations with them", Eliot writes, in the margin: "How can you separate *sein* from *dasein*?"²⁶⁶ That is, how can you separate being from being in a particular way ("being there" or "existence")? Elsewhere, Eliot underlines the claim that "The universe is not all real; but the universe all is." and writes in a margin: "Can a thing be without being something?"²⁶⁷ This language is derived from the phenomenology of Husserl, and is later developed by Heidegger and French existentialism.

In his notes, Eliot defends inner life against the "new realist polemic". When it is asserted: "No examination of thought discovers the law of contradiction or proves it, rather such an investigation presupposes it", Eliot writes, in the margin: "It all depends on what you call thought!"²⁶⁸ When it is argued, likewise, that "*Value is independent of judgements about value*", and that "object-of-desire [is not an] object of consciousness... needs, desires,

²⁶⁶ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy. New York, p. 134 n.b.: very messy handwriting here -- the orthography is somewhat unclear. The first word is without question 'sein', but the "d" of "dasein" almost looks like an "s", because it is very sloppy. The librarian agreed that this was the most probable interpretation of the word, as there was no other likely interpretation.

²⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 360

²⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 81. Similarly, he also underlines "all thought, if not optative or imperative, is categorial" on p. 10 of Bosanquet's *Logic*.

demands, etc., together with their objects, must be regarded as facts to be thought about, and if possible explained systematically.” Eliot writes in a margin “? define value”.²⁶⁹ Eliot double highlights that fact that “By ‘subjective’ [new realism] mean[s] whatever is dependent on consciousness”.²⁷⁰ Consciousness is divorced as it were, from the objects of the world, rather than integral to them. Eliot highlights many of The New Realism’s speculations on how mind and the world relate to the body. New realism would reject thinkers like Josiah Royce, who the authors argue, (and Eliot highlights) “is fond of substances, of ‘inner’ or of ‘deeper’ fundamental facts, and of inaccessible universes ... it happens that the realism of the present day has strong aversion for these things”.²⁷¹ When it is argued that “*Works of art are dependent on consciousness*” Eliot writes, in a margin “? No more than math[ematical] prop. [ositions/erties]”.²⁷²

Eliot grounds his ideas about language on a broader defense of more “subjective” modes of signification. The new realists hold that “subjectivism is founded upon error, and that realism is founded upon truth.” This is met, in the margin, with Eliot’s large exclamation point.²⁷³ New realism casts doubts about subjective value judgements about objects which are really just “temporal illusions” -- aesthetic, fleeting judgements without any logical truth ascertainable:

As one passes down a dark street and past a lighted window, the darkness of the street seems more profound, although the night is really no darker: but just so a photographic plate carried past the light of the window is thenceforward less sensitive to the faint illumination of the darkness beyond, and this illumination is for it one of reduced intensity. But in such a simple fact of modified physical process no one sees raised at all the issue between reality and unreality, or between the material and the mental.²⁷⁴

²⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 148

²⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 136

²⁷¹ *ibid*.

²⁷² *ibid*, p. 141

²⁷³ *ibid*, p. 300

²⁷⁴ *ibid*, p. 309

In a margin, Eliot writes “Plate is deluded also - i.e. - the illusion is part of the object.” This is the phenomenological position. The world and the subject *blend* -- the world is altered by human designs for it, and the mind is altered by objects it perceives.

Eliot defends consciousness, not *against* or *contrary to* the world, but *as bound up with* the world. This unity is referred to, in his philosophical writing, as “feeling”. In the original unpublished notes for his essay on ethics, he writes: “I believe that any system of values is built up on feelings, [~~crosses out the underlined section~~] and that feeling is the ultimate criterion, and that as our feeling changes, so will that which is valuable always be something else”.²⁷⁵ This investment in feeling as it pertains to human values might seem unexpected, considering Eliot’s critical and poetic reputation for coldness and irony. Yet feeling is a “criterion” -- almost an “ultimate” one -- of meaning, whereas literality is seen as of secondary interest. The leap between one sort of experience and a broader category relies on interpretation, not literalism:

Every transformation of type involves a leap which science cannot take, and which metaphysics must take. It involves an *interpretation*, a transmigration from one world to another, and such a pilgrimage involves an act of faith ... in a metaphysical theory there is an attempt to bind together all points of view into one. And this, I think, should show us why the notion of truth, literal truth, has so little direct application to philosophic theory. A philosophy can and must be worked out with the greatest rigour and discipline in the details, but can ultimately be founded on nothing but faith: and this is the reason, I suspect, why the novelties in philosophy are only in elaboration, and never in fundamentals.²⁷⁶

Metaphysics is necessarily referred back to the phenomenal, in this view: “to the builder of a system”, Eliot muses, “the identity binding together the appearance and the reality is evident; to anyone outside of the system it is not evident”.²⁷⁷ Philosophy will always fail in its attempts to find an “ideal language” when it refuses to admit that it is *interpreting* via its

²⁷⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1915) unpublished notes for essay -- “Ethics”, Houghton Library, Harvard University, bMS Am 1691.14 (32) TS. with A.MS revisions: Oxford, p. 4 Republished without crossed out section as “The Relativity of Moral Judgement”, CPl, p. 199

²⁷⁶ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 163

²⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 167. Jane Mallinson points out the connection between building and uniting different ideas: “For Eliot, as for Bradley, it is the degree of completeness and cohesion which holds between ideas which enables us to build our world” See Mallinson, J. (1988). “Making the truth: A reading of T.S. Eliot's dissertation and his early literary criticism ” *Man and World*, p. 459

truisms through the context of a particular reality. Eliot thinks that philosophy should investigate language, as it were, from within: “Our theories make all the difference in the world”, he urges, “because the truth has to be *my* truth before it can be truth at all”.²⁷⁸ In an important sense, by neglecting the landscape of internality, the philosopher neglects truth.

Eliot’s defense of intuitive or inner sensibilities of meaning is unwavering, despite the unpopularity of this view during his philosophical moment. There is an oblique reference to Wittgenstein’s ideas in Eliot’s thesis on this point, though he mentions it in relation to Rudolf Christoph Eucken: “*es gibt keine Privatwahrheiten*” -- there are no private truths. Eliot writes: “I do not recall the context, and am not concerned with the meaning which the phrase had there; but I should reverse the decision, and say: All significant truths are private truths. As they become public they cease to become truths; they become facts, or at best, part of the public character; or at worst, catchwords”.²⁷⁹ Eliot copies this statement from a graduate essay into his thesis. The full statement, as found in his essay “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions” reads:

the advance toward articulateness and completeness is invariably attended by a loss of density and richness... the greatest philosophies have themselves something of this density and richness, and consequently are themselves subject-matter for study almost as difficult and inexhaustible as the world itself... I recollect a word of Eucken’s: ‘*es gibt keine Privatwahrheiten*’. In a sense, I think, all significant truths are private truths; they must be made mine before they can be true for me. As they become common they become either inarticulate (in gaining in density) or they become insignificant $2+2=4$. But is this a truth at all?²⁸⁰

Here, Eliot’s focus on the interpretive modality recalls his reading of The New Realism, wherein Eliot highlighted the statement: “‘Two plus two equals fourteen,’ was false fifty million years ago” and in a margin asks “in what sense?”.²⁸¹ Concerning truth, the inner criteria, not the public criteria, are what seem to matter most to the young Eliot.

²⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 169

²⁷⁹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 165

²⁸⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 190

²⁸¹ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 53

Precision involves the precise *meaning*, which in turn relies on precision of emotion. Feeling, according to Eliot, improves the *quality* of one's point of view (or attention), which is always changing in the phenomenal "now". In a reading public, Eliot looks for "trained sensibility or subtlety of feeling, that is, concentrated attention".²⁸² In his 1927 essay, "Shakespeare and the Stoicism of Seneca", he returns to this early philosophical concern for the unity of feeling and thought, which was central to his graduate epistemology. He writes: "The poet who 'thinks' is merely the poet who can express the emotional equivalent of thought ... We talk as if thought was precise and emotion was vague. In reality there is precise emotion and there is vague emotion. To express precise emotion requires as great intellectual power as to express precise thought."²⁸³ While the standard reading of Eliot traces his combination of feeling and thought to Bradley, it is important to note that Bradley made certain contrasts that Eliot did not accept, and it is more likely that the interest attaches itself to Eliot's own unique phenomenological philosophy of language. "Frege and Bradley in different ways and with different emphases distinguished sharply ... between the ideas, impressions, and feelings that were the subject matter of psychology and whatever it was that formed the subject matters of philosophy and logic".²⁸⁴ Eliot, meanwhile, focused on the interconnected impressions and phenomenal occurrences that colour metaphysical attempts. In this respect, his philosophy of language is more phenomenological than idealist, which might explain why his later poetry is so remarkably aligned with phenomenological thought, both old and new.

The internal world is the poet's raw material. One might consider what Symons said of Laforgue: "In Laforgue, sentiment is squeezed out of the world before one begins to play at

²⁸² Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, "Modern Tendencies in Poetry", p. 212

²⁸³ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p.134-135

²⁸⁴ Ayer, A. J., Kneale, W.C. et al (1957). *The Revolution in Philosophy*. London, New York Macmillan & Co LTD, St. Martin's Press, p. 6

ball with it”²⁸⁵ Eliot’s 1917 poetic imagination already wondered at this approach: “Would it have been worth while, / To have bitten off the matter with a smile, / To have squeezed the universe into a ball / To roll it towards some overwhelming question,”²⁸⁶ He was concerned with the question of *meaning* -- whether one ought to *feel* one’s own meaning, or to adopt a more scientific vision of language, which tries to articulate a universal, public truth. Eliot wanted a form that would play with sense and reference *and* heighten feeling and associative range.

The Eliot of the 1920s and 30s continued the work of his early philosophy, transferring it into a poetic attempt: “a reintegration of intellect and imagination”, which, according to David Spurr, ultimately failed.²⁸⁷ Spurr writes that “This language fuses subject and object in such a way that the speaker relinquishes any self-identity that would separate him from nature; intentional qualities that ordinarily form part of the perceiving mind now issue from the landscape itself”.²⁸⁸ This technique is not necessarily *new* to Eliot’s ‘20s and ‘30s poetry. Consider, for instance, the way “The morning comes to consciousness / Of faint stale smells of beer” in “Preludes”, the way the speaker of “Hysteria” is “lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by ripple of unseen muscles.”, and so forth.²⁸⁹ Spurr notices, in Ash-Wednesday, a surplus of “language that unites tenor and vehicle, subject and object”.²⁹⁰ In effect, this is the beginning of Eliot’s philosophy of language testing itself formally -- an attempt to reintroduce consciousness to language, by eradicating literalism and emphasising the oblique, allusive, and time-contingent. His attempt to represent acts in

²⁸⁵ Symons, A. (1919). The Symbolist Movement in Literature. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 304

²⁸⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1917). CPP, “Prufrock”, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, p. 15, lines 91-94

²⁸⁷ Spurr, D. (1984). Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 79

²⁸⁸ *ibid*, p. 90

²⁸⁹ Eliot, T.S. CPP p. 13, lines 15-22, p. 22, lines 14-18, p. 32, lines 4-5

²⁹⁰ Spurr, D. (1984). Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 51

objects -- to shift from objectivism to subjectivism -- is surprisingly consistent with his earliest philosophical interests.²⁹¹

Conclusion

Eliot's relationship to Bertrand Russell is conflicted, though his rejection of Russell's philosophy of language is explicit. The inferiority complex Eliot seems to have concerning Russell as a philosopher could have been produced by his peers during the Royce Seminar, or perhaps reinforced by his B+ grade in logic.²⁹² But it is more likely that Eliot was dissatisfied with Russell's work because he was looking for something different altogether: uses of language that were open to the work of interpretation *from the present*. Despite philosophical differences, to the very-end of their public lives, the tenuous thread between Russell and Eliot would resurface. Their rivalry was a thing of gossip columns and hearsay, obscuring the significance of their mutual philosophical interest in language as part of epistemological inquiry. In a 1948 gossip column, for instance, Leonard Lyons writes:

When Lord Russell was in Paris, a French poet told the philosopher-mathematician that no mathematician ever could write poetry. "Mathematicians are too cold, too scientific," said the poet. Russell merely reminded him: "One of my students was T.S. Eliot" ... The poet then said that the sex feeling has much to do with the writing of poetry. "If that is true," replied Lord Russell, "then the snail -- which has both male and female reactions -- should write the best poetry in the world."²⁹³

To cite another of many examples, upon the occasion of Bertrand Russell's death, Valerie Eliot wrote to *The Times*:

Sir, -- My husband, T.S. Eliot, loved to recount how late one evening he stopped a taxi. As he got in, the driver said: 'You're T.S. Eliot'. When asked how he knew he replied: 'Ah, I've got an eye for celebrity. Only the other evening I picked up Bertrand Russell, and I said to him: 'Well, Lord Russell, what's it all about', and do you know, he couldn't tell me.'

Yours faithfully,
VALERIE ELIOT

²⁹¹ Spurr describes Eliot's "Romantic submission of the self to the Natural World" in *Ash-Wednesday* and *The Waste Land*. One could read this submission phenomenologically: the world *as consciousness*.

²⁹² Vericat, F. L. (2000) "Ghostly Objectives: Metaphysics and Style in T.S. Eliot's 'Hamlet and his problems'." *Nomadas 1. Revisita Critica de Ciencias Sociales Y Juridicas*. <http://www.ucm.es/info/eurotheo/nomadas/n1-fvericat1.htm>

²⁹³ Lyons, L. (1951). *The Lyons Den. Week-End Edition, New York Post*. New York, New York. **150**: 291

Even at the very end, Russell appears, anecdotally, as an important figure to Eliot's legacy, with philosophical links suspiciously missing.

By 1917, Eliot would already be confessing his fatigue with the direction of philosophy, despite his original excitement:

The philosophical market does not at the present time manifest much liveliness. It is, indeed, very dull, if we compare it with the active first decade or first twelve years of the century. Then appeared the most important writings of Mr. Russell and M. Bergson, the vogue of William James was at its height, and the New Realists in America were dusting the arena under the imperial and slightly amused gaze of Mr. Santayana.²⁹⁵

Nevertheless, Eliot's interest in form and meaning followed him throughout his life. Eliot's early antagonistic relationship to Russell's work can be read against his philosophical poetry -- a form which performed acts of meaning-making, while playfully undermining definite description. His dissatisfaction with new realism helped contribute to a modern poetics which sought to unite the subject with objects of consciousness. Eliot writes: "Sensibility is always reaching after thought, and thought after sensibility. So the philosophies of the nineteenth century, whether of Kant, or Fichte, or Hegel, of Schopenhauer, or James, or Bradley or Russell are corrupted by feeling; the poetry of the nineteenth century, whether of Wordsworth, or Shelley, or Tennyson or Browning, is corrupted by thought".²⁹⁶ Eliot's lifelong wrestling with the significance of signification would entail a fusion of poetry with his early philosophy of language. However private his later philosophical development might become, this fusion was probably self-conscious: "For a perfect art to arise, there must be a kind of co-operation between philosophy and poetry".²⁹⁷ Though Eliot's philosophy would later be depicted by literary criticism as mere curiosity, his lifelong philosophical interests were evident even in

²⁹⁴ Eliot, M. V. (1970). Bertrand Russell. The Times London, England

²⁹⁵ CP I, p. 729

²⁹⁶ CP II, p. 749

²⁹⁷ CP II, p. 750

his most mature poetic work. Meaning formation, in Eliot's view, is not a matter of literalist translation, but a matter of depicting the fluctuation of consciousness as it attempts to make sense of the world through words, which are constantly returning to the present for justification.

Chapter Two: We can wait with our stools and our sausages.: T.S. Eliot and Edmund Husserl

“The phenomenological world is not the bringing to explicit expression of a pre-existing being, but the laying down of being. Philosophy is not the reflection of a pre-existing truth, but, like art, the act of bringing truth into being.”

(Maurice Merleau-Ponty, Phenomenology of Perception)

“Mr. Eliot held that, epistemologically, what is sharply contrasted at one stage of development as the true and the false, takes on a different, more conciliatory, aspect at a more advanced stage... He thought the case of comparative religion especially good to bring this out, for here interpretation has succeeded interpretation, not because the other opinions were refuted, but because the point of view has changed.”

(Harry Costello, Josiah Royce’s Seminar, 1913-1914)

“His art is aware of other ways of being aware here and now.”

(Christopher Ricks, T.S. Eliot and Prejudice)

Eliot’s philosophy of language is significantly marked by his reading of phenomenology. His own conceptions of language, which focuses on the subjective centre of all acts of meaning-making, are derived from this reading. This chapter will clarify Husserl’s influence on Eliot’s early thought, by examining his unpublished and published writings, and by reading his work against his study of Husserl’s Logical Investigations.

Why Husserl?

While Eliot found cause for concern in Russell’s philosophy of language, he appears to have discovered positive sources of inspiration for his own conception of language elsewhere. Among these sources was the classical phenomenology of Edmund Husserl, who addressed the problem of a “pure” or “ideal” language by attending to acts of meaning creation and conscious points of attention as they unfold in the present moment. There is a distinct phenomenological thread running through Eliot’s early work, spilling into his criticism and poetry. This chapter will attempt to make this stream of his thought explicit. In his marginalia to Husserl’s Logical Investigations (treated later), Eliot highlights the claim that “phenomenology, underlines all clarifications in pure logic... Every epistemological

investigation that we carry out must have its pure foundation in phenomenology”.¹ Eliot may have borrowed this notion of a “pure” philosophy and integrated it into his particular reading of F.H. Bradley. For example, he writes, of Bradley: “the philosophy is a *pure* philosophy ... It is, for example, a *purer* philosophy than that of either of his most distinguished (but younger) contemporaries: Bergson and Bertrand Russell”.² As Bourne-Taylor and Mildenberg rightly point out, “phenomenology [is] an important clue to the nature of the modernist aesthetic project”.³ The “pure” philosophy Husserl proposed had, as its goal, an ideal language (that is, a metaphysics), but this ideal was arrived at using an entirely different approach to that of new realism and descriptivist philosophy. To the phenomenologist, language is not, as the new realists held, simply a truth computational system which is indifferent to human interpretation, it mingles conscious points of attention, interest, and investment, with memories, expectations, and phenomenal events together.

It must be stated at the outset that the influence of phenomenology on Eliot’s work is not simple. Just as Russell was not simply a philosophical antagonist, Husserl’s philosophy of language was not adopted in entirety by Eliot. There are some significant divergences between the two thinkers on a variety of subjects. For example, some critics read Husserl’s philosophy as less introspective or supportive of private vision than Eliot’s.⁴ It falls outside the scope of this dissertation, however, to do more than tease out those central tenets or themes which Eliot appeared to have most appreciated, and which have relevance to his later criticism and poetry.

¹ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 176-177,

² Eliot, T.S. (1924). CP II, “A Prediction in Regard to Three English Authors: Writers Who, Though Masters of Thought, are Likewise Masters of Art”, p. 515-516

³ Bourne-Taylor, C. a. M., Ariane (2010). Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruzelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wein Peter Lang, p. 1. The authors describe Eliot’s phenomenological tendencies as “a reaction against the excesses of late Victorian sentimentalism”, p. 191

⁴ Sokolowski, R. (1971). "The Structure and Content of Husserl's Logical Investigations." Inquiry (14), p. 320: “How has Husserl come to meanings as ideal entities? Not by private visions, as critics sometimes insinuate, but by disclosing invariants in working expressions.”

In an unpublished letter from Eliot to Montgomery Belgion, dated 16 February, 1940, which reflects on his earlier work in philosophy, Eliot admits that his views on language are derived from phenomenology. He describes:

... that baffling feeling which I always found so exhausting in the youthful days when I attempted to practise philosophy - which I can only describe as a kind of awareness of subtleties and refinements and qualifications hovering in the corner of my eye, which I could never quite focus: accompanied by the suspicion that if I could focus them, there would be a further area of qualification again, flickering on the periphery. A sort of infinite regress, which gave me a despair of philosophy for myself. I have, of course, always recognised a similar unexplored and only partly explorable area in poetry, *which is perhaps what interests me most in the practice of poetry*; but the means and ends of poetry are adapted to dealing with this, in their own way, more adequately. But the point that interested me, for myself ... [is] to find the ‘conations’ of pursuit beginning to operate again automatically, with the same failure of energy and faith in ability to follow up the beginnings. There was perhaps at bottom an admission that following them up would require a sacrifice of other activities which I was not prepared to sacrifice. *If I could have given myself up completely to this kind of speculation, I suppose I should have become a sort of minor Husserl or Heidegger.*⁵

Significantly, Eliot privately admits his affinity with phenomenological approaches to language -- saying that this particular take on philosophy is “what interests him most in the practice of poetry”. The “conation”, or *desire or will to perform an action*, is what interests Eliot about language, both philosophically and poetically. Rather than start with data-points, Eliot and Husserl start with the mind itself -- not as an object of psychological study, but as a process, with many varying modalities and contexts. The notion that poetic expression somehow lends itself to the type of philosophy Eliot espouses is telling.

It is also noteworthy that Eliot acknowledges his interest in phenomenology during the 1930s, when he started working on *Four Quartets*. In a letter to Enrich Alport in 1930, Eliot reiterates his private interest in Heidegger: “I should very much like also to read some Heidegger. During the month of August 1914, I sat in Marburg, smoking cigars and reading the works of Husserl, and I still know just enough about the subject to be extremely interested in the work of a disciple”. He also calls Heidegger “the greatest philosophical scholar in

⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1940). Unpublished letter, Churchill Archive, Churchill College, Cambridge University, emphasis mine

Germany”.⁶ In 1931, he claims that he is still very much concerned with the future of phenomenology, and explains that he has been reading Heidegger in a letter to Stephen Spender: “There is a philosopher named Martin Heidegger - a disciple of the great Husserl, who is really good, I think, though far from lucid - whom I have been agonising over”.⁷ Again in August of 1931, he writes to M.C. D’Arcy asking him to review Husserl’s Ideas for *The Criterion*, recalling his own studies: “In 1914 ‘Logische Untersuchungen’ provided me with distraction during some anxious weeks when I was immured in Marburg. I must say that it proved to be about the most difficult German that I have ever read, with occasional flashes of clarity. But I do think that he is a really important man”.⁸

Eliot’s work is frequently compared to Heidegger’s thought, and to later phenomenologists. This comparison is warranted. Themes of time, language, death and experience are evidenced in Eliot’s criticism and are dominant in his poetry.⁹ Only recently, however, has Husserl been taken more seriously as a significant philosophical influence on Eliot’s career. Jūratė Levina’s thesis “offers a reading of Eliot as a philosopher and poet whose creative career develops against a backdrop of phenomenological world-vision which identifies reality with experience and defines experience as the interpretative process of perception”.¹⁰ Manju Jain writes of Eliot’s philosophical work that his thinking envisages “important issues in later philosophy and hermeneutics. This is so particularly on such questions as the implications of a relativist historiography; the dismantling of the notion of a unified subject; the objectivism of the social sciences; the role and status of interpretation; the

⁶ Eliot, T. S. (2014). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1930-1931 (Vol. 5) London, Faber and Faber, p. 228

⁷ *ibid*, p. 529

⁸ *ibid*, p. 644

⁹ Those who are interested in this approach might turn to Martin Hägglund’s work.

¹⁰ Levina, J. (2011). T.S. Eliot's aesthetics of immediacy: Language and perception in Knowledge and Experience, *The Waste Land and Four Quartets* English and Related Literature. York, The University of York, p. i.

critique of foundational knowledge; and the revival of pragmatism”.¹¹ Jain does not link these impulses towards hermeneutics with the more prominent language philosophers Eliot studied, perhaps because she follows a traditional narrative about Eliot’s philosophical identity: firstly, that the public statements he made concerning which philosophers he modeled his own thought after are entirely reliable, and secondly, from a literary critical perspective, that he “advocated classicism, impersonality, order and control, and a dialogue with the past, as opposed to romanticism, a rupture with the past, and unrestrained, anarchic individualism”.¹² This is the most commonly accepted reading of Eliot’s philosophical, and often his poetic sensibilities and modernist legacy.

Rather than challenge the traditional reading of Eliot as an *impersonal* poet, I seek to provide a kind of *shadow* reading: Eliot is neither the poet of impersonality *nor* a romantic in modernist clothing. Rather, his work involves a poetic shift (part of a larger philosophical movement involving self-consciousness about the connection between the subject and language) -- from language which describes conscious experience to language which *performs* it, existentially.¹³ The impersonality and “order” of Eliotic language is counterbalanced by a concern for the quotidian, “ordinary” meanings of individual speakers, his promotion of feeling as a key criterion of the poetic method, his emphasis on process over description, and private, or “subjective” meaning over public systems of description. Eliot’s considerations of meaning and epistemology were in keeping with the central framework of the Logical Investigations, which describes how “expressions also play a great part in

¹¹ Jain, M. (1992). T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, Cambridge University Press, p. 9

¹² *ibid*, p. 10

¹³ And yet it is important, I would argue, to be cautious about easy stories regarding influence when it comes to Eliot, despite the fact that he has clear alignments with a variety of sources. One early review of Eliot’s work, saved by the Eliot estate in the Houghton collection, notes: “is it not a perfect example of muddled thinking to deduce imitation from an affinity of mind, just as the same muddled thought deduces affinity of mind from imitation? Is it not certain that such people have never worked out even this simple distinction?... To say that Mr. Eliot imitates Laforgue because they have a common faculty for unexpected juxtapositions of ideas expressed with ironic wit is as foolish as it would be to say that Mr. Eliot imitates Ausonius because both frequently quote other poets in their verse”(see Aldington, R. (1922). "The Poetry of T.S. Eliot." The Outlook., 12).

uncommunicated, interior mental life”.¹⁴ Eliot exploits the allusive, context-contingent features in his poetic work extensively.

Husserl’s philosophy of language starts with consciousness. Husserl believed that “every lived experience is a directedness-toward. Lived experience ... as Husserl says ... consists in a ‘relativity’”.¹⁵ In contrast, Russell required an external system of classification: “where the subject is not a *thing*, as in ‘red is a colour’, the judgement is primarily one of inclusion in a class”.¹⁶ Husserl argued that any given instance of representation implies a mental location, an individual, for whom representation is significant. Put simply, Russell wanted to define, Husserl wanted to understand the *moment of definition*, with an examination of conscious acts. The phenomenological Eliot is “romantic” in the sense that he sought a form which could account for the ephemeral horizons of inner evidence and beliefs, and could unite feeling and the world of objects. In his creative work, he was devoted to “the effort to transmute lead into gold, ordinary language into poetry”.¹⁷ This project was, at least in part, inspired by his encounter with the language debates.

Phenomenological philosophy is an important context for Eliot’s literary and critical development, because Eliot defines the central “function” or “criterion” of poetry *itself* to be phenomenological, and does so repeatedly. For example:

It is a function of poetry both to fix and make more conscious and precise emotions and feelings in which most people participate in their own experience, and to draw within the orbit of feeling and sense what had existed only in thought. It creates a unity of feeling out of various parts: a unity of action, which is epic or dramatic; a union (the simplest form) of sound and sense, the pure lyric; and in various forms, the union of things hitherto unconnected in experience. You will see that Sappho’s great ode, for instance, is a real advance, a development, in human consciousness; it sets down, within its verse, the unity of an experience which had previously existed only unconsciously.¹⁸

¹⁴ Husserl, Edmund. Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, Vol. p. 190

¹⁵ Lawlor, L. (2011). Studies in Continental Thought : Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy. Bloomington, IN, USA Indiana University Press, p. 67

¹⁶ Russell, Bertrand. Philosophical Papers, p. 145 **which one**

¹⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “Prose and Verse”, p. 330

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 614

What Eliot means by the unity of consciousness echoes a view which comes directly from phenomenology, and is indebted to Husserl. Franz Brentano, who was a student of Husserl, held this view too.¹⁹ For Husserl, the unity of consciousness is a central concern from his earliest work; it is witnessed in the Logical Investigations and his treatment of “forms of sensuous unity and wholes” and “forms of categorical unity and wholes”.

“We cannot allow”, Eliot argues, “Mr Russell’s supposition of a ‘consciousness’ which might merely exist for a moment and experience a sensation of red. The ‘red’ would simply be a ‘neutral entity’ which might be taken as mental or physical according to context, but where there is no context there is neither mental nor physical”.²⁰ In other words, there is no universal abstract consciousness of red -- a red without a hermeneutic gestalt. To Eliot’s mind, “It makes no difference whether a thing really is green or blue, so long as everyone behaves toward it on the belief that it is green or blue”.²¹ Belief, which is contingent on the “interior mental life” establishes the boundaries of a term’s reference. In his criticism, he will express the unity of consciousness, not external reference, as the poet’s greatest strength.²²

Although there is much to suggest a strong phenomenological influence within Eliot’s philosophical writing, only a few authors have attempted to outline the direct parallels

¹⁹ Philosophy, T. S. E. o. (2010). "The Unity of Consciousness." Retrieved 16 February, 2015 The simplest formulation can be found here: “Human consciousness usually displays a striking unity. When one experiences a noise and, say, a pain, one is not conscious of the noise and then, separately, of the pain. One is conscious of the noise and pain together, as aspects of a single conscious experience.” Husserl’s contentions (both underlined by Eliot) also entail that “*Unity is in fact a categorial predicate*” and that errors result “if no distinction is drawn between associations and relations” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 37).

²⁰ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 29

²¹ *ibid*, p. 169: This point foreshadows analytic philosophy’s much later problematization of propositional attitudes (belief clauses which indicate that one can *say* one thing and *mean* something else, important to influential thinkers such as Paul Grice).

²² Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP P2, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 380

between Eliot's work and Husserl's philosophy.²³ While established scholars of Eliot -- Donald Childs, Michael Levenson, Richard Shusterman, and Delmore Schwartz, to cite a few examples -- have occasionally alluded to connections between Eliot and Husserl or Heidegger, none have developed the relationship between the two thinkers in *historical* detail.²⁴ Eliot's poetry, especially his late poetry, seems deeply invested in certain features and themes of phenomenological philosophy. Themes of change, process, movement, and horizons of meaning dominate Eliot's description of modern poetics, wherein, for example, "the rhythm depends partly upon the transformation-changes from one image to another, so that the second image is superposed before the first has quite faded, and upon the dexterity of change of vocabulary from one image to another".²⁵ He looks for the evasive union of meaning and word: "not an image, but the indication of a fulness of meaning which is unnecessary to pursue".²⁶ This *indication*, or *orientation* of consciousness is also a central feature of Husserl's philosophy, wherein it is called *intentionality*.²⁷ Likewise, the notion that one does not have to "pursue" meaning as an *endpoint* -- a *knowable* definition -- probably also comes from Husserl's Logical Investigations, wherein: "not every act of meaning involves an act of knowing".²⁸ This notion will later find its home in Eliotic usages of occasional expression.

²³ See Kumar, J. (1968). "Consciousness and Its Correlatives: Eliot and Husserl." **26**(3). Bernadette Prochaska has also connected Husserl's conception of Time-Consciousness to T.S. Eliot's poem, *Little Gidding*. See Prochaska, B. (2000). *The Time-Consciousness of T.S. Eliot and Edmund Husserl*. A. T. Tymieniecka. Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers

²⁴ Childs, D. J. (2001). From philosophy to poetry: T.S. Eliot's study of knowledge and experience. London, The Athlone Press. Shusterman, R. M. (1999). T.S. Eliot and the Philosophy of Criticism. (1968). A Collection of Critical Essays on "The Waste Land" United States, Prentice-Hall, Inc., (1962). T.S. Eliot: A Collection of Critical Essays Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall, Inc., and so forth

²⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, "Marianne Moore: A review of *Poems*, by Marianne Moore", p. 496

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ For a basic treatment of intentionality within the context of Husserl's thought, see the IEP: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/huss-int/>

²⁸ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge p. 323

Eliot read Husserl in 1914 and his rigorous study of the German edition of Logical Investigations came at a time when he was focusing the scope of his interests. His studies bridged what would later be known as the continental-analytic divide.²⁹ Frege (followed by Russell) and Husserl would come to signify opposite poles of early twentieth century philosophical thinking. Both philosophers wanted to articulate the relationship between understanding and language, but their methods, and conclusions, diverged. As John Searle notes, “No one paid much attention to Frege except for some European mathematicians, and the young English philosopher named Bertrand Russell. The distinctive 20th-century style of doing philosophy started with Russell’s famous article, published in *Mind* in 1905, called ‘On denoting’, which applied Frege’s methods to the special problems of analysing sentences in ordinary language”.³⁰ While Russell was laying the seeds of his analytic movement at Harvard, Husserl’s work was laying the foundations for phenomenology in Germany.³¹ Eliot’s graduate reading list, we shall see, was (however quietly) philosophically and politically charged.

Introduction to Husserl

As Leonard Lawlor explains, “phenomenology is the dominant movement of continental philosophy in the twentieth century”.³² Phenomenology, for Husserl, meant “the return to the being of pure subjectivity, consciousness”.³³ Husserl’s approach to philosophical

²⁹ Humphries, R. (1999). "Analytic and Continental: The Division in Philosophy." The Monist **82**(2, Continental Philosophy: For & Against), p. 253

³⁰ Searle, J. R. (1999). "The Future of Philosophy." Philosophical Transactions: Biological Sciences **354**(1392, Millenium Issue), p. 2070

³¹ In Logical Investigations, Eliot highlights Husserl’s mention of “When we Germans speak of *the* Kaiser we of course mean the present German Kaiser” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p.221). In the margin, Eliot writes: “(Hochmut) ‘Nieder mit England’ etc.” This translates, roughly, (Pride, arrogance, hauteur), “Down with England”, etc. It seems even in this early reading that Eliot is acutely aware of the *political* stakes of German philosophy of this period.

³² Lawlor, L. (2011). Studies in Continental Thought : Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy. Bloomington, IN, USA Indiana University Press, p. 63

³³ *ibid*, p. 64

inquiry was introduced publicly in his inaugural speech at Freiburg im Breisgau on 3 May, 1917. He proposed a new centre of focus for philosophy of language: the phenomenologist would simply explore phenomena as *actually experienced* by consciousness. Conscious experience was the basis of all knowledge. In the lecture, Husserl states:

¶15. Through this exposition of the concept of "phenomenon" we obtain a preliminary conception of a general phenomenology, viz., a science of objective phenomena of every kind, the science of every kind of object, an "object" being taken purely as something having just those determinations with which it presents itself in consciousness and in just those changing modes through which it so presents itself. It would be the task of phenomenology, therefore, to investigate how something perceived, something remembered, something phantasied, something pictorially represented, something symbolized looks as such, i.e., to investigate how it looks by virtue of that bestowal of sense and of characteristics which is carried out intrinsically by the perceiving, the remembering, the phantasying, the pictorial representing, etc., itself.³⁴

Eliot too begins the groundwork for his thesis in philosophy with a detailed theory of objects, which is found in the first volume of his *Complete Prose*. In the philosophy of both Eliot and Husserl, objects are described as different depending on *how and in what context* they are perceived. Husserl criticised philosophers like Russell, who attempted to provide a picture of language which avoided examining consciousness *itself*, in the context of its varying activities:

¶44. Philosophers, as things now stand, are all too fond of offering criticism from on high instead of studying and understanding things from within. They often behave toward phenomenology as Berkeley—otherwise a brilliant philosopher and psychologist—behaved two centuries ago toward the then newly established infinitesimal calculus. He thought that he could prove, by his logically sharp but superficial criticism, this sort of mathematical analysis to be a completely groundless extravagance, a vacuous game played with empty abstractions. It is utterly beyond doubt that phenomenology, new and most fertile, will overcome all resistance and stupidity and will enjoy enormous development.³⁵

These arguments are found in different forms throughout the Logical Investigations, which Eliot's personal copy reveals he read closely, and the Ideas, which Eliot also read.³⁶

³⁴ Husserl, E. (1917). "Pure Phenomenology, Its Method and Its Field of Investigation: Inaugural Lecture at Freiburg im Breisgau." <http://lamar.colostate.edu/~rwjordan/W-INAUGFRB.HTML>

³⁵ *ibid.*

³⁶ Eliot, T.S. Marginalia is found in Husserl, Edmund (1913). Logische Untersuchungen von Edmund Husserl Aweiter Band Utersuchungen Zur Phanomenologie Und Theorie Der Erkenntnis. Halle A.D.S. ed. Max Niemeyer, Vol. I and Vol. II, in The London Library. I have had his notes in these two books translated into the 2001 English edition, for the reader's convenience.

While Russell and Husserl were tackling the same project, their *method* and *approach* were divergent. To Russell, philosophy should avoid ordinary contexts of language use, and seek out the universal and platonic: “Ordinary language is totally unsuited”, he argued, “for expressing what physics really asserts, since the words of everyday life are not sufficiently abstract”.³⁷ Husserl, on the other hand, believed that the criterion of truth correspondence was *cognitive*, and crucially -- that it was time-contingent:

Husserl does not attempt to establish an ideal language derived from axioms by means of mathematical procedures; rather, his strategy is to ‘pare out’ a critical language from the heart of normal talk... he is primarily interested in a semantical clarification of the way in which words are used within language performance... his project would be to analyze language competence based upon our intentional comportment toward objects.³⁸

Although interested in a transcendent or “pure” philosophy of science, Husserl believed the only way such a goal could be achieved would be via an examination of the “inner” workings of consciousness -- those features of meaning-making that depended on consciousness and interpretation as an activity. Eliot was aware that for Husserl, “Individual truths are... contingent”.³⁹ Several prominent Eliot critics have seen the significance of the notion of contingency as crucial to Eliot’s thought.⁴⁰

A central point in Husserl’s writing was the idea that there is more than one truth or meaning possible for a given term. Husserl decided the criterion for truth relied on the intentional orientation of the individual subject. The criteria of validity is always contingent on a *particular* point of view. One who is colour blind will have a certain experience of red, whereas one who has undergone years of training in the arts will have another. The *true* red is not necessarily “out there” in the world, waiting to find the “right” word to describe it. Instead, the conscious intentionality of the *subject in the world* is the locus of study.

³⁷ Russell, B. (1931). The Scientific Outlook London, Unwin Brothers, Ltd, p. 39

³⁸ Bernet, R., Welton, Donn, and Zavota, Gina (2005). Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers USA and Canada Routledge, p. 99-100

³⁹ (underlined by Eliot, Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 146, English edition).

⁴⁰ Kenner, H. (1965). The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 44.

Therefore, the appropriate starting place for philosophy of language, for Husserl, required acknowledging meaning within the context of an orientated consciousness, with its particular, beliefs, projections, memories, desires, and expectations. In his thesis, Eliot explicitly espouses metaphysics as *orientated -- directed*: “every idea means itself; its ideality consists in its ‘pointing toward’ its realization... The idea is, as idea, Act; and how far Act can be made an object, together with its relation to content, presentation, and object (*Inhalt, Vorstellung, Gegenstand*)”.⁴¹ Eliot probably lifts this idea of an “Act” of meaning as an idea (as something *in process*) directly from his study of Husserl, who writes: “there are acts ‘trained upon’ the character of acts in which something appears, or there are acts trained upon the empirical ego and its relation to the object”; Eliot here wrote, in a margin: “What the devil is an Act?”.⁴² In Eliot’s interpretation, an “act” of meaning constitutes ideas themselves. This places his philosophy directly alongside that of phenomenology, and somewhat apart from Bradley’s idealism.

Husserl’s philosophy offered a nuanced approach to logic which was *both* transcendental *and* intuitive: it sought a justification for metaphysics or a transcendental language by way of natural or ordinary instances of language, via an examination of the

⁴¹ Eliot, T.S. (1964). KAE, p. 56

⁴² Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 91 in English
Patterson argues that meaning in Eliot’s poems is not constant, but is rather a synthetic *act* performed by the reader (54). This line of inquiry could be very fruitful, and a comparison of Eliot’s notion of acts to Husserl’s discussion of acts.

dramas of consciousness.⁴³ Husserl's approach insists on a point of view as the starting point for his investigations: "A thing is only properly an indication if and where it in fact serves to indicate something to some thinking being".⁴⁴ As Dermot Moran explains in his introduction to the English edition of the Logical Investigations, "Husserl was not persuaded by Frege's [later Russell's] project for mathematical logic as, in general, he was ... suspicious of the purely formal turn to symbolic logic".⁴⁵ This appeal to the pre-formal or extra-formal aspect of language is also crucial to understanding Eliot's early thought.

In a compelling essay, Jūratė Levina refers to Eliot's philosophical descriptions of a "pre-articulate experiential surplus that linguistic expression fails to assimilate into the meaning it articulates [which] does not, by definition, have a name".⁴⁶ Point of view changes

⁴³ In an 1914 essay, Eliot writes: "the 'outside world' and the individual's world are constantly rearranging themselves in every new context. It is true that some of the elements seem much more stable than others, and the least stable are values, but values are not ultimately subjective, or more 'dependent upon consciousness' than anything else, and in the end the value judgment differs not at all from any other judgement. From the simple point of view, that is, the work of art simply is beautiful, and that tiger simply is terrible, and there [page six -- back page of loose leaf, still handwritten] are no 'emotions' present. I do not say that this attitude is either possible or proper in practice. It seems a frigid intellectualization of aesthetic experience, and certainly is no explanation of it; for in this reduction to physiology on the one hand and objective values on the other, the whole meaning and being of aesthetic experience seems to have vanished" (Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Finite Centres and Points of View", p. 176-177. Eliot expresses the notion that the real and the ideal are intermingled, as it were, within a subject's point of view: "I should like first to make another attempt to explain the 'primacy' of 'points of view' and the relation of object (point of view, system of terms and relations) to subject. All objects, I asserted before, are essentially public; but likewise each object exists only in relation to a subject, the development of sub. + ob. being pari passu. These two statements appear at first inconsistent. The difficulty arises, I think, from the ambiguity of the word knowledge" (Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "The Privacy of Point of View", p. 178). In a later essay, he asks: "For in the sense in which judgment is an activity, how can it be knowledge?... we actively unite an idea to reality" (Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Definition and Judgment in Bradley and his Critics", p. 185). The important point is that experience is a mixture of the abstract or ideal and the real or concrete: "What I have illustrated as occurring to the name is really a feature of all experience: there is something given, and there is always an ideal construction. Experience is through and through practical, and experience is through and through theoretical" (Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "The Validity of Artificial Distinctions", p. 187). In his marginalia, Eliot highlights Husserl's notion that "we need grounded validations in order to pass beyond what, in knowledge, is immediately and therefore trivially evident [this] ... makes the sciences possible and necessary." (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 19).

⁴⁴ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, Eliot's underlining copied, p. 184

⁴⁵ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge. Dermot Moran's Introduction, p. xliii-xliv

⁴⁶ Levina, J. (2011). T.S. Eliot's aesthetics of immediacy: Language and perception in Knowledge and Experience, The Waste Land and Four Quartets English and Related Literature. York, The University of York. **PhD**, p. vi

with time, argues the phenomenologist, and this, in turn, changes how truth is expressed: “On the one hand, Eliot says, this undermines our theories because the validity of each theory is questioned from another point of view, rather than seen to establish the truth about the world; but on the other, these theories are true only because they originate in the specific, particular viewpoint able to claim the true meaning for the reality it perceives”.⁴⁷ One is always required to process truth in relation to conscious experience.

Early analytic philosophy took issue with Husserl’s logic for a number of reasons; one of the greatest defects of the phenomenological approach, according to new realism and early analytic thought, was Husserl’s “reliance on the ability to intuitively grasp or see essences”.⁴⁸ The public rupture between a phenomenological understanding of logic and a structural-analytic understanding of logic took place in debates falling between 1910 and the early 1930’s.⁴⁹ Husserl’s doctrine of *Wesenschau*, translated roughly as “essential looking”, “experienced essence”, or “eidetic experience”, was a major source of contention between the analytic school and the phenomenological approach to logic.⁵⁰ Eliot would have been sympathetic to this notion, with its assumption that truth can be experienced intuitively. Husserl also developed procedural rules for the intuition of essences later in his career. Eliot showed interest in Husserl’s problematization of a purely descriptivist view of language: “How could propositions which breathe no word regarding reality, which merely elucidate what is inseparably asserted in certain verbal or statement-meanings of great generality, guarantee important real knowledge regarding ... the ‘essence of mental events’”.⁵¹ We could easily compare this to Eliot’s own view -- that consciousness is *at the root* of meaning, rather

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 5

⁴⁸ Livingston, P. (2002). "Husserl and Schlick on the Logical Form of Experience." *Synthese* **132**(3), p. 239

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 241

⁵⁰ *ibid*, p. 242

⁵¹ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 95, this section is highlighted by Eliot

than incidental: “Two consciousnesses must mean the same object or there can be no identity; and if the other consciousness is that of the object itself, then again some consciousness must be aware of the identity. And in either case, if there is to be any identity there for me, I must myself ultimately be aware of it.”⁵² Words *mean* because they are meaningful within a context of lived experience.

In Eliot’s published work, he insisted on point of view as inescapable:

“Consciousness [as a category] we shall find, is reducible to relations between objects, and objects we shall find to be reducible to relations between different states of consciousness; and neither point of view is more nearly ultimate than the other”.⁵³ Eliot argued that he could not accept Russell’s notion that any object “must be a *what*, and to be a *what* is to have (internal) ideal relations to other *whats*, relations which are not in time”.⁵⁴ Time, for the phenomenologist, dictates how one assesses propositional truth claims. To take the most basic example, how I speak of myself at the moment (hungry, somewhere outside of London, waiting for the train) is not an absolute -- there are very particular features of this “I” which need to be elucidated, and cannot be assumed as universal. To Eliot’s mind, the idea that a relation is outside of time *and* internal to consciousness raises odd questions. These questions follow directly from the the “unity of consciousness” thesis: “What does it mean to say that my character and the ten o’clock train, or the reputation of Herbert Spencer and his volume which lies on my table, or my table and the electrons exist at the same time?”.⁵⁵ These questions are directly in line with the position found in Husserl: “The specific acts that bestow the character of a symbol upon perceptual experiences ... are psychological events occurring

⁵² Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary” p. 170

⁵³ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 30. This could have its basis in Husserl’s contentions (both underlined by Eliot) that “*Unity is in fact a categorial predicate*” and that errors result “if no distinction is drawn between associations and relations” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 37).

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 110

⁵⁵ *ibid*.

at certain moments in time.”⁵⁶ Time as an experience of consciousness reappears as the fundamental question of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.

Eliot effectively wanted to reverse the direction of attention from a focus on form to a focus on formation; he argued that the task of metaphysics concerned the formation of synthetic judgements, rather than a fixed system of axioms: “The world, so far as it is a world at all, tends to organize itself into an articulate whole. The real is the organized.”⁵⁷ Perception and language -- experience and knowledge through categories -- are constantly borrowing from one another -- “in and out” -- like breathing. In this context, “order” means *not* something preset, but something ongoing.

Despite his extensive engagement with Husserl’s work, Eliot’s thesis does not list Husserl in its bibliography, nor is Husserl cited explicitly anywhere in the thesis. This is strange, considering that (we shall see) Eliot was reading Husserl with great care during the period leading up to the completion of his thesis and that he all but espouses phenomenology throughout his philosophical work. Looking at an original unpublished outline of Eliot’s thesis, it is clear that his interests coincide directly with the analytic and early phenomenological debates about language. Eliot’s original plan for his thesis was to consider definition and denotation -- pillars of Russell’s contribution to philosophy at the time -- in relation to consciousness and knowledge. It seems that Eliot wished to refer (probably Russell’s) take on denotation to a theory of objects which would include context and cognition, and consider *process, perception, and inference*, as well as an assessment of “act presentation”, all of which implies a very heavy influence from the early phenomenological school:

- A. The nature [crossed out replaced with] definition of Experience.
- B. The real and ideal. - Thought + Reality. Solipsism. Process + Object. Identity.
Content + Reference

⁵⁶ Bernet, R., Welton, D., and Zavota, G. (2005). Edmund Husserl: Critical Assessments of Leading Philosophers USA and Canada Routledge, p. 150

⁵⁷ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 82

- C. The nature and Connection of perception and judgment.
- D. Cognition and inference. - Denotation, Meaning, + Context
- E. The theory of objects.
- F. General theory of knowledge. - Identity. Consciousness.
- G. The nature of truth.

- A-
- B-
- C- S- M of Psychology - Act Presentation Content Reference
- Solipsism - Identity
- Structure of - Knowledge + Truth

Denotation
 Meaning
 Context⁵⁸

Eliot's unpublished elaboration of this outline further suggests a phenomenological centre of interest:

- A. The nature of experience
 - A. Reality is in some sense experience, and experience is as such real. In defining experience, however, we are apt to substitute for experience some element therein which is not itself experience. In what sense is experience definable? When we have defined it we have changed it. The intellectualist errors of pragmatism. in what sense we mean by experience feeling. Pure experience. Experience is given a very limited meaning by both pragmatists and realists... The relation of real and ideal in exp. The different aspects and the limited points of view.
 - B. on the basis of this definition of exp. and this relation of real and ideal the difference of percept and concept is one of degree. Bergson and Russell. Mediation in knowledge.
 - I. The existence of pure sensation or of pure perception. What is "given"? The element of assumption and hypothesis. What is the object in perception?
 - II. The existence of pure judgment. G.E. Moore. meaning in perception and judgment. The judgment and time. The various definitions of judgment. What is the object in judgment? objective. Meaning. [could also be Meinong]
 - III. Denotation, meaning and context in perc. and judgment.
 - Cognition + theory of objects.
 - General theory of Knowledge. Theory of truth. - Experience as partly internal + partly external. "knowledge" of it. What is feeling. I + not=I. (Solipsism)... real + ideal. Truth relative to exp. + exp. to truth. Experience as a whole.⁵⁹

From this outline and other notes, it is evident that Eliot was arguing along phenomenological lines (wherein the experience of meaning involves a kind of blending of internal and

⁵⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished notes, The Hayward Bequest, University of Cambridge, King's College. P/4: Philosophical Essays & Notes, 1913-1914. Draft of a seven-part topic outline, possibly 1914, Typed and with AMS additions by Eliot; one sheet of white paper

⁵⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1914). Elaboration of part of draft of a seven-part topic outline, possibly 1914, and possibly also related to Eliot's Bradley dissertation, Typed and with AMS additions by Eliot; one sheet of white paper. Paper, 9 items in 1 vol. The Hayward Bequest, King's College Library, Cambridge University.

external).⁶⁰ But to trace the interplay between Eliot and Husserl historically, one needs more than a rough sketch or outline of overlapping interests. The following will consider Eliot's biographical and philosophical interest in Husserl, and indicate which features of phenomenology appealed most to his own thought. I will then take a closer look at Eliot's marginalia, and describe elements of phenomenology which come to bear on Eliot's criticism and poetry.

“The Husserl Period” 1913 - 1916

It may have been Josiah Royce's seminar, attended in the academic year 1913-1914 during his graduate studies at Harvard, that introduced Eliot to Husserl. On October 28, 1913, Harry Costello, in recorded notes from the seminar writes:

The recent logician who has most thoroughly considered and analyzed the nature of meaning, namely Husserl (for example in the closing chapters of Volume II of the *Logische Untersuchungen*) finds, by arguments that seem to me at present to be quite overwhelming, that the identification of meaning with sensory context which is so frequently made, is in direct violation of the empirical facts, and does no honor to the psychology that carelessly admits it. Meaning, he says, must find its mental correlate in something of the nature of action, and this holds of the psychic character of concepts as much as it does of words. I might multiply examples.⁶¹

Here, note the use of the expressions “mental correlate” and “nature of action”.

Phenomenology emphasises the gestures thought makes concerning the objects it addresses.

In Husserl's view, “linguistic analysis is not a substitute for a fundamental analysis of consciousness... phenomenology clarifies our linguistic practice and not the other way round.”⁶² Husserl was interested in getting back to “things themselves”, and in “the domain of

⁶⁰ When Holt discusses statements made about objects in a mirror and says “It is true that in the case of mirrored space reproduction is involved, but it is a reproduction ... without change of their ‘nature’” Eliot underlines the word “nature” and writes “Isn't it now their nature to be in a mirror?” (Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 369).

⁶¹ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 44

⁶² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, Dermot Moran's Introduction, p. xxxviii

the *correlation* between objectivity and subjectivity”.⁶³ Meaning is understood in terms of psychic acts, rather than abstractions: “every psychic act intends an object”.⁶⁴

After coming across Husserl in the Royce seminar, just before the outbreak of the Great War, Eliot travelled to Germany in the summer of 1914. There, he revised “The Love Song of Saint Sebastian”.⁶⁵ Germany seemed to agree with him: “I like German food! I like German people!”⁶⁶ His time in Germany took place two years before he submitted his thesis in philosophy. It was a period of intense philosophical interest. He wrote to Conrad Aiken, saying that during his trip he was “working on my Greek, mornings, and read Logische Untersuchungen evenings”.⁶⁷ In Marburg, he read his own copy of Edmund Husserl’s Logical Investigations, in its original German, which had been published for the first time in Europe in 1900-1901.⁶⁸ Eliot’s private edition lists 1913 as its publication date, indicating that it was the most recent edition available at the time. Eliot had already encountered Husserl in lectures on logic at Harvard, as evidenced by his unpublished notes on logic from a course taken under H.T. Costello called *Philosophy 8a*. On Nov. 26, 1913, he made a note of Husserl’s understanding of “occasional expression”, writing: “Husserl also speaks of ‘occasional expression’ - ‘I’, ‘this’, ‘now’, ‘here’: these terms change their meaning constantly. They may always be restated in non occasional form”.⁶⁹ The note very likely described H.T. Costello’s

⁶³ *ibid*, p. xxiv

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. lvii

⁶⁵ Gordon, L. (1999). T.S. Eliot: An Imperfect Life New York and London, W.W. Norton & Company, p. 95-96

⁶⁶ Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 48

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 49

⁶⁸ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, Dermot Moran’s Introduction, p. xxi

⁶⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1913). Unpublished Notes on Logic. A.M.S.; [Nov]-15 Dec [1913. 15s. (15p.) Notes from H.T. Costello’s *Philosophy 8a.*, MS, Houghton Library, Harvard University. Eliot also underlines portions of Husserl’s work dealing with “occasional expressions” in the Logical Investigations, suggesting perhaps that this is a strong interest for him, or that it was a motivating topical inquiry which led him to read the Investigations in the first place. See, Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 218. This section (in the German edition) has Eliot’s underlining throughout, suggesting close attention.

opinion, since it came in the form of a lecture transcription.⁷⁰ From this note, it can be assumed that 1913 roughly marks Eliot's introduction to phenomenology.

Eliot learned that the occasional aspect of language was central to phenomenology. Bernard Bosanquet, whose work Eliot also read for his logic courses, was similarly interested in occasional expression. He wrote extensively on names as they relate to occasional or contextual instances, arguing (against Russell): "The men called John [in a case of more than one person named John] are not related to their name as 'men' to 'man' or as 'towns' to 'town', but as Salviati's glasswork and the Pentateuch to 'Mosaic', or as a human being, and a cairn in the Lake Country, to 'man'." In his private copy, Eliot highlights this.⁷¹ He shows interest in terms which *fail* to signify ideally, but defer to particular, lived contexts.

When Husserl considered fluctuating or occasional expressions, he used the following example: when one says "There are cakes" in a certain context, "we do not mean that cakes exist absolutely and in general, but that there are cakes *here* and *now* - for coffee" to which Eliot responded in the margin of the Investigations: "es sollte über-haupt Kuchen geben" translated roughly: "there should (absolutely/generally) be cake".⁷² In "Prufrock", we find: "Should I, after tea and cakes and ices, / Have the strength to force the moment to its crisis?"⁷³ In the context of the poem, the poet searches for an expression of internal meaning, anxious about being misunderstood, and continually referred back to the occasional, rather than the definite (this will be treated again in the final chapter). Prufrock's crisis was at least in part a crisis of language: a concern for what can be said to be true, what can be meant, and

⁷⁰ Spear, A. D. (2011). Husserl on Intentionality and Intentional Content. Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy. United States, Grand Valley State University. Husserl himself would emphasize that there are *two* facets of occasional expression: the constant facet and the *indicating* facet (an indexical expression always points to a context of expression, and thus to a speaker).

⁷¹ Bosanquet, B. (1911). Logic: Or The Morphology Of Knowledge. Oxford, The Clarendon Press, p. Bosanquet, B. (1911). Logic: Or The Morphology Of Knowledge. Oxford, The Clarendon Press, p. 49. Eliot's private copy is held at the Pepys Library, Cambridge

⁷² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 221

⁷³ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock", p. 15, lines 79-80

what remains unexpressed -- on the horizons of understanding (perhaps even in the realm of the unreal, or at least the not-yet real).

Eliot's copy of the Investigations (German edition) with his marginalia is held in The London Library, in two books. Both books are marked with Eliot's handwriting in the top corner, "T.S. Eliot, Marburg, 1914" and display Eliot's writing throughout, indicating that he read both volumes of the second edition. There is underlining and commentary throughout both volumes, suggesting a very close reading. The two volumes have not been addressed by contemporary scholarship of Eliot's philosophical work, though several scholars have guessed at shared themes in the work of Eliot and Husserl (among them Jitendra Kumar and Donald Childs).⁷⁴ Reading Husserl's work together with Eliot's notes highlights a direct correlation between Eliot's thinking concerning language and the hermeneutics of nascent phenomenology.

At Marburg, Eliot wrote fondly of his new German environs, describing the atmosphere in Germany as pleasant and safe: "I feel that I am quite in darkest Germany. I have talked not a word of English since my arrival" and declares that "this is as peaceful a life as I could find".⁷⁵ He expressed hopes of staying in Germany to study beyond his planned two month summer course, but was only able to stay for a fortnight.⁷⁶ Evidently, Eliot's attempt to understand Husserl's work was a project he continued once he safely returned to Oxford from Marburg. As Peter Ackroyd mentions "It can be assumed that the larger part of the [thesis]

⁷⁴ Childs, D. J. (2001). From philosophy to poetry: T.S. Eliot's study of knowledge and experience. London, The Athlone Press, and Kumar, J. (1968). "Consciousness and Its Correlatives: Eliot and Husserl." **26**(3), p.38, which draws attention to Eliot's published letter to Norbert Wiener (6 January 1915), (Letters of T.S. Eliot, Vol. 1: 79-81). Levenson, Shusterman, and Schwartz have all hinted in their own ways at a relationship between Husserl and Eliot in various places, but only by way of Hulme. Jitendra Kumar writes: "I suspect that there is much more to be quarried from this vein of inquiry concerning Husserl's influence" (p. 39). Childs also suggests that the notion of "objective correlative" comes from Husserl. Kumar draws parallels between Husserl's notions of consciousness and intentionality in Eliot's graduate thesis, comparing quotations from Husserl's work and Eliot's graduate thesis side by side. Neither of the two authors address Eliot's marginalia on Husserl.

⁷⁵ Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 53

⁷⁶ *ibid*, p. 65

work had already been written by the time he had left Oxford [by 1915]”.⁷⁷ In other words, Eliot’s “Husserl period” coincided directly with his interest in Russell’s Principia Mathematica (which he read in 1914) and his reading of Husserl’s Logical Investigations -- it also coincided with the period wherein Eliot crafted his graduate thesis. Ackroyd describes the period as a time in which Eliot, even as he was immersed in Oxford life, was still primarily focused on symbolic logic, and according to a report from his friend Brand Blanshard “Eliot said of his studies that ‘...it gave me a sense of pleasure and of power manipulating those curious little figures’”.⁷⁸ Writing to Professor James Houghton Woods from Merton College on 5 October, 1914, Eliot said: “I have been plugging away at Husserl, and find it terribly hard, but very interesting; and I like very much what I think I understand of it ... If you hear anything of German universities being open for neutrals in the spring, I hope you will let me know, as we have no communication with Germany from here. But it would greatly surprise me to hear that work there was possible”.⁷⁹ Though this plan was foiled by the war, it shows a serious attempt to come to terms with German philosophy, perhaps as a counterpoint to the overwhelmingly Anglo-American curriculum of Harvard and Oxford. Eliot’s friends testify to the dashing of Eliot’s hopes to stay in Germany.⁸⁰ His movement between England, the United States, and Germany also meant that he kept his feet in the two poles of language philosophy.

Point of View

Several of Eliot’s more “original” contributions can be read as phenomenological borrowings from Husserl’s work. In particular, his notion of “point of view” seems to be a direct borrowing from Husserl, and his emphasis on feeling as a core criterion for

⁷⁷ Ackroyd, P. (1984). T.S. Eliot. London, Hamish Hamilton Limited, p. 55

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 59

⁷⁹ Eliot, T. S. (2009). The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1898-1922 (Vol. 1) London, Faber & Faber, p. 65

⁸⁰ Aiken, C. (1971). Ushant: An Essay. New York, Oxford University Press, p. 201-202

metaphysics is a blending of Bradley's view on feeling and the phenomenal view that consciousness is the underlying unity of human experience. For Eliot, the correspondence of language to the truth is not simply a correspondence between a term and an atomic fact, meaning, or data point, but instead correspondence always entails a particular point of view (or "point of attention", as he often calls it).⁸¹ One of Eliot's early graduate notes reveals his admiration for Greek philosophy on this point, since, he argues, "The Greek wishes to say what he has in such a way that he can provoke the same feeling in you. Each thing is described with scrupulous honesty."⁸² Honest commitment *to one's point of view* -- to one's feeling, as it is evoked in time -- is the criteria of accuracy.

In Eliot and Husserl's work, the orientation of consciousness alters description. In a 1914 essay, Eliot writes:

Sensation implies an object; an object implies a world. But it is only in the course of experience that we know what the object simply is; only in the course of experience that we discover that it was to that particular object that the sensation pointed, or the experience pointed. Hence our knowledge undergoes a continual process of readjustment: we find ourselves in contact with a content which from the very beginning *points at an object of which it asserts itself to be part, but which never fully redeems its promise*. Hence the element in the experience which we shall credit to the side of the subject, and that which we may accredit to the object, remains undetermined and subject to indefinite revision at the hands of circumstance: and hence the futility of the realist's claim (sc. Dr. Nunn) on behalf of the 'objectivity' of secondary qualities. Not only secondary but tertiary qualities may be as objective as you please.⁸³

Pointing, process, objects implying sensation, and a world that "may be as objective as you please" -- these expressions alert us to Husserl's work, as summarised above. Realism is

⁸¹ As Eric Sigg points out, point of view also refers to a *shared*, transcendental point of view (since a point of view can be expressed, it can also be shared) (Sigg, E. (1989). The American T.S. Eliot: A Study of the Early Writings Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 53). Though Eliot's unique emphasis is on point of view, there is an implication that even a unique perspective can be shared, and this is why Eliot acknowledges that his view can tolerate Bradley's idealism. An idea, being bigger than individuals, can be shared using terms, but the terms expressing an idea will never fully express the idea. This is because, he argues, "An idea is not a symbol -- it does not stand in one-to-one relation with a single aspect of the world" (p. 56).

⁸² Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished *Notes on Philosophy 10*. A.M.S: 4 Oct 1911-1927, Houghton Library, Harvard University

⁸³ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary", p. 172

simply, in Eliot's thinking, *one* point of view, among many.⁸⁴ As with Husserl, it is the *directed intentionality* of a subject which qualifies or orients ("points at") the "what-ness" of the world.

Eliot's notion of "point of view" is central to his philosophy, and travels from his graduate essays into his thesis.⁸⁵ In another early essay, he writes:

Each point of view is itself a world, and in it there is no ingredient which can be set off and called mental; and on the other hand the whole of it is mental through and through. The 'mind' simply is the world, the world considered in its progress toward clearness and completion. The 'point of view' is simply this particular set of terms and relations, and is no more hidden than a chair or table. Only, it is not the abstract object, the meaning of the name, though that is in a sense present too. It is the object set in a context which may be implicit as the state of the mind's body, or explicit as memory.⁸⁶

There is an emphasis here, as with Husserl's vision of phenomenology, on inhabitation of a point of view, rather than escape from it -- a *process towards* clarity is required -- and there is an explicit blending of the mind with its object of attention. Eliot's statements concerning point of view and objects are directly aligned with Husserl's considerations of consciousness in the Logical Investigations, where we find that "The appearance of the things [in the world] does not itself appear to us, we live through it" and "*Truth is an idea, whose particular case is an actual experience in inwardly evident judgment*".⁸⁷ Eliot underlines these statements. He also underlines Husserl's statement in "Consciousness as intentional experience" that "In our *description* relation to experiencing ego is inescapable, but the experience described is not itself an experiential complex having the ego-presentation as its part"(sic.).⁸⁸ Eliot's

⁸⁴ Eliot underlines Husserl's suggestions that when a scientific thinker focuses exclusively on objective definition "He is not interested in understanding, but in concepts" and later highlights the statement: "All theoretical science consists, in its objective content, of *one* homogeneous stuff: it is an ideal fabric of *meanings*" (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 225, 226). Anybody interested in Eliot's view of objectivity would need to read the final paragraph of this chapter (p.226-227), which is highlighted by Eliot in entirety.

⁸⁵ As Manju Jain points out, "Eliot had formulated many of the opinions expressed in *Knowledge and Experience* in his graduate papers" Jain, M. (1992). T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, p. 206

⁸⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Finite Centres and Points of View", p. 174

⁸⁷ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 121

⁸⁸ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 101

marginalia suggests an interest in the phenomenological attention to the self as a located position *through which* humanity comes to terms with its world. To both Husserl and Eliot, we can never see a situation *from the outside*.⁸⁹

Throughout Eliot's work in philosophy, he repeatedly implies that point of view alters the world, bringing him very close to Husserl's theory of worldhood or worldview (and perhaps, as Levina argues, inspiring him to align himself with this theory outright via a "non-derivative affinity").⁹⁰ Against Russell's philosophical project, in another essay on objects, for instance, Eliot argues:

I repeat, then, that we do not begin in knowledge with sense-data, but that sense-data are derivative from things... it is meaningless to say that this or that is what is 'immediately given' without stating the field of objectivity with which one is concerned. Putting data together to make a chair involves an **interpretation**, a **translation** from one type to another, and is from the point of view here taken illegitimate.⁹¹

Eliot demanded that philosophy acknowledge how every individual thinker colours the world with their distinct grounding in point of view:

We are not to say that there is one real world to which the system corresponds [as would Russell], for so far as the system is complete and exact, it is the real world. But it is not the same world as that of the plowboy or the jellyfish, except for the metaphysician who is inside of his own system. This is the case because the systemiser takes into account every point of view except his own, and this does not form part of his metaphysic; it is lived and not apprehended.⁹²

In his thesis, Eliot insists:

The fixity of the reference is not the character of fixity of meaning which the words have in language, nor is its fixity due to a composition of fixities. It is not as if I took a number of sentence elements which have each an identity of reference and compounded them into a whole which has an identity by virtue of the ingredient identities ... The idea, though largely dependent for its existence upon the

⁸⁹ Eliot tries to protect himself against charges of solipsism, which are also sometimes made against Heidegger: "... each world, so far as it is, is the only world, and the others are imperfect appreciations of it. We must say that there cannot be two or more worlds. The different finite centres have identities of meaning; but the one world is not this bare identity, stripped of content" (Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Finite Centres and Points of View", p. 175).

⁹⁰ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36(3): 194-211, p. 197

⁹¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Suggestions Toward a Theory of Objects" p. 131. To this statement we might compare a statement made in the *Logical Investigations*, next to which Eliot places a checkmark (indicating approval): "The essentiality of the concept is then likewise spoken of as a possibility in a transferred sense" (Vol. 1, p. 151, English edition).

⁹² Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI "On Objects", reprinted by the editors of Eliot's complete prose as "Objects: Content, Objectivity, and Existence", p. 167

forms of its expression, must yet not be confused with these forms. The idea is *the reality which I intend*, and the identity is only the assumption of *one* world.⁹³

Eliot describes the world in terms of intentionality. This directly contradicts criticism such as that of Shusterman, who assume that the Eliot of “1916-1927” is “zealously objectivist”, and only in the 1930s, alongside a religious conversion, embraces subjectivity as central to meaning-making.⁹⁴ (Here, a longer discussion of impersonality might be warranted -- suffice it to say that there is a difference between objectivity which is conceived as a phenomenological *reflection on one’s conscious experience* and objectivity which is conceived as *alienation from one’s conscious experience*. Eliot emphasises the former, and condemns the latter).

Fixity, in the context of Eliot’s language philosophy, as in his poetry, was seen as a threat to meaning (“and do not call it fixity”).⁹⁵ If we assume that a reference is already fixed by a word, there is no longer room for the activity of interpretation. To unfix references, the poet has many possible tools in his arsenal: the use of violent contrasts, nicknames, locations untethered from time, voices abstracted from place, dialects and languages blended together, rhythms and rhymes that follow an internal logic or mood, rather than a formal rule -- memories, projections, hopes and fears -- thrown together using instinct, rather than formulae -- and the blending of verse and prose -- all of which Eliot would later employ poetically. In the original typescript of the thesis, later excised, Eliot puts his interest this way: “Now my difficulty as I have already said, is in understanding what is left (the White Queen would say ‘the dog’s temper!’) when you abstract from a mental state its reference.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 43-44, emphasis mine

⁹⁴ Shusterman, Richard (1918) “Objectivity and Subjectivity in Eliot’s Critical Theory” *Orbis Litterarum* 37(3), p. 218, p.221

⁹⁵ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p 173, line 66

⁹⁶ p. 48. The underlined section is a reference from *Alice in Wonderland*. (the White Queen would say ‘the dog’s temper!’),” alluding to chapter 9 of Lewis Carroll’s *Through the Looking-Glass* (1871), but misremembers that it was the Red Queen who says “the dog’s temper would remain.” See CP II, p. 304

The Definite Indefinite

Definition, in Eliot's philosophy of language, is described as simply another mode of interpretive practice -- a process whereby he could throw "a sudden ray of light upon what I consider the most valuable aspect".⁹⁷ He argued "we must assume that every term is susceptible of definition".⁹⁸ Definition is *assumed* rather than discovered, something to which a term is *susceptible*, rather than something to which a term aspires. In contradistinction to Russell's theory of definite descriptions, Eliot conveyed his own version of phenomenology in his early essays and thesis, writing: "no perception can involve complete falsity, inasmuch as we cannot distinguish between the false and the true object of perception... This leads to the question of denoting, meaning, and context".⁹⁹ As his original unpublished outline suggested, the theory of denotation was probably at first conceived as the climax of the thesis (this shows the significance of his attack on Russell's theory of denotation to the narrative arc of his dissertation).

Theories such as Russell's failed, in Eliot's opinion, because "you consider the judgment in a strictly typical form. But for the theory of knowledge, this restriction will not stand for a moment. Unless you formulate a definition so that it will be a purely verbal one, from which the meaning of judgment has wholly evaporated, you cannot formulate it so as to exclude perception."¹⁰⁰ Words and phenomena were constantly negotiating with one another. In his essays, he asserts: "As we substitute for entities in whose being we participate, such as must denote, we distort causality".¹⁰¹ Denotation -- the literal meaning of a specific reference

⁹⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "The Clark Lectures: Lectures on Metaphysical Poetry of the Seventeenth Century with Special Reference to Donne, Crashaw and Cowley: Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry" p. 620-621

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 621

⁹⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1913). CPI, "Degrees of Reality", p. 59

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*.

¹⁰¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Causality", reprinted by the editors as "Cause as ideal construction", p. 127

-- in Eliot's work, is secondary to other modes of language -- the evocative, the occasional, or the allusive, for instance.

In Eliot's early philosophical essays, denotation is considered in terms of distortion: "According to the account of causality here suggested, we will talk of cause + effect whenever a phenomenon or group of phenomena is thought of as lived through and not as contemplated. Whenever we desire to explain we will think of a relation which causes the appearances but as soon as we have clearly formulated it, it turns out to be itself appearance. From this point of view we are phenomenologists."¹⁰² The origin of meaning is "in the dark" -- *lived through*. Eliot purported that "we never really know the origins of our perceptions or judgments", and in the margin of the original essay wrote "Russell on Meinong".¹⁰³

Phenomenology solved a problem Eliot had with both idealism and neo-realism -- it was a "third way": it sought a justification of metaphysics by a more intuitive and immediate metric. Eliot argued that form was contingent on process, which in turn relied on a "point of attention":

The grammatical form is only a reflection of a larger action, in regard to which there is no [denotation] within the predicate itself. The original point of attention may be conceived as outside the judgment itself, and the whole judgment or perception is predicated about this point. In the assertion "the sky is blue" a process takes place during which a hypothetical point of attention is rejected and "the blue sky" substituted for it. The word sky is perhaps the bridge between two points, but the process is really continuous and unanalysable. The meaning of a judgment is not always in exact correspondence to the form of expression.¹⁰⁴

Analytic judgment *substitutes* a processes of consciousness for a fact. This replaces the actual with the artificial. Something is *lost* from the meaning in definition:

as soon as we have defined experience, we have passed from experience into theory; with our first judgments many men will agree; with our superstructure fewer, and we build a pyramid of opinion such as we sometimes see at the circus, a number of men securely on the ground, the next (fewer in

¹⁰² *ibid*, p. 128

¹⁰³ Eliot, T.S. (1913). "Degrees of Reality" p. 7 in the original, held at the Houghton Library, Harvard. Reprinted as CP I, p. 60: I read this as "Russell on meaning" in the original version.

¹⁰⁴ *ibid*, p. 61

number) less securely on the shoulders of others, and finally only the author at the dizzy top ... what seems Ultimate Reality to the builder, ultimate delusion to the critic.¹⁰⁵

The expression of meaning is an active arbitration between earth (empiricism) and sky (idealism).

To Eliot, the *intentionality* or *directedness* of consciousness determined whether or not something could be described as “real”; metaphysics always returns to point of view of its justification. On this point, he is explicit: “Hence in the logical process of a philosophic system you have a succession, or rather, one continuous substitution... Metaphysical systems are [constructed?] like a rocket and come down like a stick.”¹⁰⁶ Eliot was critical of *both* the realist *and* the idealist. This was his own view: “as philosophers, our aim is, consistency at any price. And the completely consistent philosopher would not return: he would be absorbed, if a realist, into his ultimate simples, if an idealist, into the absolute. And in either case he wouldn’t have anything to talk about.”¹⁰⁷ Abstraction is always experienced, and experience is always mediated by abstractions, because both abstraction and phenomena are interpenetrated by point of view. At this point in his essay, Eliot quotes the private language argument (as he does in the conclusion of his thesis), saying: “all significant truths are private truths... Degree of truth is degree of individuality...”.¹⁰⁸ A “fact” is what “everyone agrees to be the case”, rather than an external atomic unit.

Eliot and Husserl held remarkably similar views on definition and intuitive meaning. In his marginalia to the Logical Investigations, Eliot highlights many of these shared views. Eliot underlines Husserl’s insight that inner thoughts have an indicative mode -- they suggest meaning that may or may not be shared.¹⁰⁹ Likewise, Eliot highlights Husserl’s statement that

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p. 62

¹⁰⁶ *ibid*, p. 63

¹⁰⁷ *ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ *ibid*, p. 63

¹⁰⁹ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 188

“all expressions in *communicative* speech function as *indications*”.¹¹⁰ Husserl privileges the gestural dynamics of expression as part of the function of language. In his edition of the Logical Investigations, Eliot repeatedly underlines Husserl’s statements concerning the role of communication and meaning, particularly where emphasising inner life or intuition.¹¹¹ He notes that logic operates “not on induction, but by apodeictic inner evidence”.¹¹²

Jūratė Levina has articulated the significance of Eliot’s use of “worldview”, from a phenomenological perspective.¹¹³ Conrad Aiken uses the term “*Weltanschauung*, a consistent view” when discussing Eliot and form: “the shape of a conscious and articulated *Weltanschauung*, a consistent view”.¹¹⁴ Husserl used the term *Weltvorstellung* in the Logical Investigations, meaning “world conception”, or “world-presentation” whilst Aiken uses *Weltanschauung*, or “worldview, ideology”. The terms are synonymous in German.¹¹⁵ For Eliot, a dialogue between the world and the imagination was not only necessary, it was inescapable. In the margin of his copy of Husserl’s Logical Investigations, he wrote, next to a consideration of mental and extra-mental objects: “in and out”.¹¹⁶ The expression also appears in an unpublished translation of a poem, in a folder containing notes on hallucination and the

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 189

¹¹¹ For example: “expressions also play a great part in uncommunicated, interior mental life... In a monologue words can perform no function of indicating the existence of mental acts, since such indication would there be quite purposeless. For the acts in question are themselves experienced by us at that very moment ... These acts we shall call the *meaning-conferring acts* or the *meaning-intentions* ... the object intended in our intention, and named by its means, etc” (190, 191, 192, 193).

¹¹² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 46, 47

¹¹³ Levina, J. (2011). "Language and Perception in Knowledge and Experience, *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets*." Department of English and Related Literature, The University of York

¹¹⁴ Aiken, C. (1971). Ushant: An Essay. New York, Oxford University Press, p. 215-216 Hulme also uses the *Weltanschauung* (see Svarny, 23).

¹¹⁵ For instance, in Husserl’s Logical Investigations, Eliot highlights the following: “We are, in other words, not interested in the origins and changes of our world-presentation, but in the objective right which the world-presentation [*Weltvorstellung*] of science claims as against any other world-presentation [*Weltvorstellung*], which leads it to call *its* world the objectively true one” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 131).

¹¹⁶ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 93

imaginary in the Eastern traditions, and the “middle path” presented by Eastern mysticism, particularly in the Buddhist tradition. Eliot writes: “synthesis is characteristic of Buddhism from its very beginnings ... The synthesis wishes to keep both diversity + unity, explaining the latter by the former”.¹¹⁷ Another note highlights the rootedness of action in the mind: “All actions emanate from the essence of mind, the root of mind (alaya). This theory of alaya founded upon introspection (says Hosse)”.¹¹⁸ The following poetic fragment is then transcribed by Eliot, and presumably is an original translation of the Japanese monk and poet Kūkai. It was probably an assignment of some sort:

Introductory Verse (to the Ratna-kuncika)

Vast, vast and extremely vast
Are the rolls of yellow silk, hundreds and thousands in
number, **and in and out**;¹¹⁹
Profound, profound and very profound,
Way is pointed and way is shown, and there are hundred of ways.
What is the use to die writing and to die reading?
Unknown, Unknowable, and self does not know self...
Think, think, think, and think, yet no sign is given by a sage...
Born Born Born and Born
Still dark of the origin of birth...¹²⁰

The verse foreshadows Eliot’s “dark dark dark” of the *Four Quartets*. Here, the poet muses on the futility of what can be known, and the blindness of humanity towards its own subjectivity. The act of signification, the potential satisfaction of knowledge, reading, and writing are depicted as chimeric. In the context of Husserl’s writing on signification, the comment “in and out” takes on particular shades of meaning: what can be known fictively and what can be known to be true empirically are mingled in the mind of the knower -- in the

¹¹⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1913-1914). MS (12) Unpublished notes on Eastern philosophy, The Houghton Library, Harvard University. A.MS. and TS. (carbon copy) with A.MS. annotations; [Cambridge, Mass.] 3 Oct [1913]-1915 May [1914]. 62s.(80p.) Notes from M. Anesaki's Philosophy 24a. Includes A.MS. notes from other courses; Cambridge, Mass., 2 Oct [1913] and 10 Feb [1914], probably R. B. Perry's Philosophy 25 and J. R. Royce's Philosophy 9.

Includes his copy of Buddhist Ethics and Morality by M. Anesaki. Folder 1, back of p. 5

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, Folder 3, page 21

¹¹⁹ emphasis mine

¹²⁰ *ibid*, Folder 4

conception and interpretive framework of the one who signifies. Eliot might have lent a mystical flavor to Husserl's rumination on those constants that can be known through fiction ("it makes no essential difference to an object presented and given to consciousness whether it exists, or is fictitious, or is perhaps completely absurd").¹²¹ Eliot wants to make sure that Husserl privileges the fictional object and the "reality" of the fictional object as much as any other object (here he has more in common with Meinong). He writes, in the margin, "No! How can you reduce object to Erlebnis [psychic experience]? ... in and out". The mental and the extra-mental are involved in a dance of signification. Later, when Husserl reaffirms that fictional objects *do*, however, change phenomenological experience, Eliot's marginalia seemed more agreeable: "right because it [the intended object] does exist to that extent".¹²² The fiction and the fact blend in Eliot's vision of language, but conscious activity is always privileged. In his thesis, Eliot argues that "we are constantly developing and rectifying our perceptions by comparison with other perceptions; we are constantly on the lookout for error, and our recognition and allowances for error already nominate us as epistemologists; for this means that we have a tentative working theory of our relation to the external world... theory and practice are, we find, inextricable".¹²³

Within the context of phenomenology, perception cannot be abstracted from lived experience: "Color ... is a moment which cannot be presented apart from extension".¹²⁴ One does not "understand" experience better when the subject is removed from the equation. Eliot, likewise, is suspicious of "understanding" as a resting place. In a 1930 letter to Geoffrey Curtis, for instance, he writes: "Why should people treat verse as if it were a conundrum with an answer? When you find the answer to a conundrum it is no longer interesting.

¹²¹ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, page 99,

¹²² *ibid*, p. 99

¹²³ Eliot, T. S. (1964). Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 155

¹²⁴ Sokolowski, R. (1974). Husserlian Meditations: How Words Present Things United States, Northwestern University Press, p. 9

‘Understanding’ poetry seems to me largely to consist of coming to see that it is not necessary to ‘understand’.”¹²⁵ Poetry alludes to and enhances feeling, not formulae.¹²⁶ The process is what matters, not the “translation” of this process into a conceptual language.

Eliot describes the pre-articulate intermingling of the inhabited world of feeling with truth claims:

The world is not simply there, for metaphysics to play upon; it is itself metaphysical, and meditating upon its own nature, spins itself out of its own belly. It swarms with inchoate theories which ultimately perhaps mean the same thing - at the point where all meanings are lost. The vast majority of these theories never reach articulate expression, but are reabsorbed into practice. Considering this process from the point of view of language we may say that words, rising to the surface in the form of bubbles, distend to a greater or less size and subside. It is only at moments and within limited spheres determined by particular purposes that we attempt to think clearly and consistently, to harmonise our meanings and pursue them to the precipice of intelligibility.¹²⁷

The “point where all meanings are lost” foreshadows the “still point” of the *Four Quartets* -- it is an internal darkness -- the self unknowable to itself -- which “spins out” the world. Here, intelligibility is a “precipice”. It is precisely because there is so much left to be expressed that the poet’s work is necessary. Propositions tell only half of the story of human truth.

Eliot shares the phenomenologist’s interest in truth as a process of becoming-actual.

Hermeneutics (the study of interpretation) is central to Eliot’s approach:

Now to say that judgment is the predication of an ideal content of reality is not properly speaking a definition but an interpretation. Definition must be into *inferiora*, interpretation into *superiora*. Not in contrast with such an interpretation a true definition would be possible or desirable. Modern experimental psychology of the thought processes is ... interpretation, which philosophy essentially is, involves the use of the concept of value.¹²⁸

¹²⁵ Eliot, T. S. (2014). *The Letters of T.S. Eliot, 1930-1931 (Vol. 5)* London, Faber and Faber, p. 220

¹²⁶ Eliot highlights Husserl’s idea that “Knowledge in the narrowest sense of the word is the being inwardly evident that a certain state of affairs is or is not” (marginalia imitated, Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 18).

¹²⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p.187

¹²⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1914). “On Definition” p. 3-4 reprinted as “Definition and Judgment in Bradley and his Critics”, CPI, p. 185. Compare a section Eliot highlights in Husserl: “Language offers the investigator a widely applicable sign-system to express his thoughts, but, though no one can do without it, it represents a most imperfect aid towards strict research” (*Logical Investigations*, Vol. 1, p. 23, English edition). Or compare another section Eliot underlines: “A normative interest is naturally dominant in the case of *real (realen)* objects, as the objects of *practical* valuations” (Vol. 1, p. 37, English edition).

In another essay, Eliot says: “What we mean when we talk about will, is something meant to be internal, described from a point of view external, but really existing only for a point of view internal-external: that is, by participation”.¹²⁹ Jain notes that “Eliot’s stand on the question of interpretation is quite consistent over the years. He continued to insist upon the subjectivity of interpretation, and upon the essential fact of error in all interpretation -- of reality, of history, of literature”.¹³⁰ Eliot’s concern for the practice of interpretation led to an investment in forms of language which would maximise interpretive play. This concern would not find its home in the philosophy departments at either Harvard or Oxford.

Josiah Royce’s Seminar, 1913-1914

Josiah Royce’s seminar was an incubator for Eliot’s early views, and Eliot used the seminar to test out the opinions he later refined in his thesis. Critics such as Joseph Maddrey have outlined Royce’s influence on Eliot, and most have appropriately focused on Royce’s scientific approach to theological and anthropological inquiries as significant to Eliot’s early philosophical development.¹³¹ Although Royce was intent on “synthesizing science and religion”,¹³² his seminar was equally concerned with philosophy of language, and the stakes of Russell’s philosophical school.

Royce’s seminar was initially called a “Seminary in Comparative Methodology, 1913-1914” but was later retitled “Seminary on Scientific Methods”. It took place between 30 September, 1913 and 19 May, 1914. The Seminar met every Tuesday evening during this

¹²⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI “Cause as ideal construction”, p. 126 emphasis mine. Compare Husserl (on a page containing Eliot’s marginalia): “The task of logic is of course different from that of psychology: who would deny it? It is a technology of knowledge, but how could such a technology ignore questions of causal connection, and how could it look for ideal connections without studying natural ones?” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 43).

¹³⁰ Jain, M. (1992). T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, Cambridge University Press, T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, p.147

¹³¹ Maddrey, J. (2009). The Making of T.S. Eliot : a study of literary influences. North Carolina McFarland & Company, Inc, p. 56-57, and p.138-139, for instance

¹³² as Manju Jain puts it, Jain, M. (1992). T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years, Cambridge University Press, p. 112

period, and lasted two hours. The meetings coincided with Russell's visiting lectureship at Harvard. Secretarial notes from the seminar were published by H.T. Costello.¹³³ Royce's gatherings introduced students to the methods of logical analysis, and their potential for the scientific community.¹³⁴ From a philosophy of language perspective, Royce was probably seen, by Eliot, as a more hermeneutic alternative to Whitehead and Russell; Royce was openly critical of Russell and Whitehead's ambitions, and curious about what the "soft" sciences (sociology, religious studies) had to offer language philosophy.

Eliot was quite active in Royce's seminar, appearing among the most frequent participants in the Index of Costello's notes from the meetings. Russell's ideas were of central importance to the seminar. Eliot stood out from his peers as uniquely interested in the variability of expression. Unlike his classmates, he emphasised a need to take account of the interplay between "subjective" meaning and truth. He also stood out as the only thinker of the group in relation to whom Bradley's name was brought up, and one of only three times Husserl appeared as a focus of interest for the group was in relation to Eliot's work, underscoring the point that his views were out of line with present fashions at Harvard.

Royce, like Husserl, saw subjectivity as integral to the philosopher's understanding of language. He believed, for instance, that "the intentional acts expressed by 'Yes' and 'No' are personal and free, but mathematical-logical order is objective in its necessity; and yet the freedom and the objectivity go together... creating *is* discovering".¹³⁵ Compared to Russell's work, Royce's approach was also much more inclusive of value-based areas of research.

¹³³ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press.

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p. xiii

¹³⁵ *ibid*, p. xv

Costello notes, of Royce's thought: "Events have values. To determine objective value is very difficult".¹³⁶ Royce believed in the world as a community of interpretation.¹³⁷

Although his fellow seminar participants were often critical of Eliot's contributions, Royce's seminar supported the convergence of incompatible theories. Lenzen described the exchanges of Royce's circle during this period as unique in this respect -- the circle, led by Royce, managed to stimulate interdisciplinary dialogue during the period of Russell's lectureship:

The period was one in which two sets of sworn blood brothers, the New and the Critical Realists, met and vowed they would cooperate. And then, like ships that pass in the night, each went in his separate way into a separate region of outer darkness. Philosophical cooperation we got, if ever, in a Seminar like Royce's, the clash of opposites under the guidance of a shrewd master who was the first among equals. When we who were trained in such a school went riding into the visiting professor that spring, Professor Demos tells us that we horrified the younger students, that Bertrand Arthur William Russell should be treated just like an ordinary man. But Royce and Russell were big enough to take it and like it.¹³⁸

The hand-written, slapdash style of the manuscripts Eliot wrote for the seminar (which are kept in the Hayward Bequest collection at King's College, Cambridge) testify to the rough, incomplete edges of Eliot's thinking at the time. Yet even within this innovative and interdisciplinary space, Eliot was seen as an outlier -- described as somewhat "beneath" the analytic method. Lenzen noted of Eliot: "We had another student in the group in 1913-14, whom none of us thought of as a genius. I spelt his name 'Elliot' instead of 'Eliot' in my early notes, and knew him later as Tom Eliot from St. Louis".¹³⁹ Eliot had few philosophical allies in the circle, aside from perhaps Royce himself, who seemed sympathetic to his eccentric views about language and interpretation.

Russell arrived at Harvard the year the seminar took place. Costello explains: "In the spring Bertrand Russell arrived at Harvard after delay -- I gave the preparatory lectures in his

¹³⁶ *ibid*, p. 21

¹³⁷ *ibid*, p. xvii

¹³⁸ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p.194

¹³⁹ *ibid*, p. 193

logic course. Russell never visited the Seminar, but Royce commented from time to time”.¹⁴⁰

Concerning Eliot’s investment in the debates of the time, Costello recalls:

his year’s work circled around this question of the truth of interpretations. He had been reading Francis Herbert Bradley, and said no simple statement was absolutely true. Brogan, of course, had to intervene to inquire if Eliot thought that last statement true? The argument waxed hot, and finally Eliot told Brogan, ‘You can’t understand me. To understand my point of view, you have to believe it first.’ Royce intervened to say that a simple statement might be definitely true or false, except for the fact that we can never make a simple statement.¹⁴¹

It is clear from these notes and others that Eliot’s interest in interpretation was looking for a philosophical home at Harvard, and did not find one.

In his first seminar presentation, Eliot’s view was at odds with Costello’s, one of the leading figures of the seminar. Eliot’s paper on Comparative Religion focused on the way “savages” interpret their own rituals. In his paper, titled “The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual”, he argued that “no ‘scientific’ definition of religion is possible” because a scientific description is a description from an “outside” point of view, with its own forms of faith and bias.¹⁴² In other words, religious phenomena cannot be “described” scientifically without a genuine loss of meaning, because an “objective” interpretation of religion is a located one -- it is an interpretation from within a different point of view.¹⁴³ His concern was the “interpretation of meaning”.¹⁴⁴ Eliot’s phenomenological approach, witnessed in the seminar’s notes, is interpreted by Christopher Ricks to be both Eliot’s unique contribution *and* the foundational approach to description which would alter his poetic vision of language.¹⁴⁵ I would only disagree in that Eliot’s views on interpretation were not necessarily original.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 190

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 193-194

¹⁴² Eliot, T.S. (1913). CPI, “The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual”, p. 106

¹⁴³ He asks “what is a religious phenomenon, for example, which has not a religious meaning for the participants? And yet how are we to define this meaning? What in short, is the scientific status of a description which is the description of the meaning of other agents, and, in the case of religious and other social phenomena, a meaning which hovers between the social and the individual?” *ibid*, p. 112.

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*.

¹⁴⁵ Ricks, C. (1988). *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 110-111

In the seminar, Eliot explored the difference between scientific description and intentional or individual acts of meaning and point of view. He extended this investigation to consider its consequences for religious belief: “how far is it description and ... how far interpretation? Can you treat religion as a form of social behavior, and what is behavior? [The] Primitive mind’s interpretation of its behavior is part of its behavior”.¹⁴⁶ He argues for an understanding of belief which could account for the intention and interpretation of the believer, and against the scientific understanding of description, with its assumed neutrality: “What seemed to one generation fact is from the point of view of the next a rejected interpretation. And an interpretation as such is neither true nor false; but truth and falsity are relative to a level of interpretation”.¹⁴⁷ Here again, he appropriated a phenomenological approach, arguing one “[m]ust understand from within, otherwise behavior is mechanism ... What is a scientific description which is descriptive of the meaning of other individuals? When does it go over into interpretation?”¹⁴⁸

This inquiry flew in the face of Russell’s program. Against Eliot’s notion of degrees of truth, Costello says:

I am in agreement with Mr. B. Russell. According to Russell, such a proposition as was discussed last time, the proposition ‘Mr. Eliot reads a paper’ asserts one description of another description and is, in so far, neither true nor false. It is equivalent to the statement, ‘If X is what answers to the name Mr. Eliot, X read a paper, and there is only one such X.’ ...Here we have again a propositional function, this time dealing with a class of one... There are difficulties to this opinion. But in any case there is no judgment here which is true, yet only partially true.¹⁴⁹

Costello refers Eliot to Husserl (the second time this happens in the seminar):

One more remark I might add, and that is to call attention to the very important distinction, which Husserl and others have elaborated in some detail, between the ambiguous and the indefinite. If I say ‘Someone read a paper,’ my statement will remain true even though I later learn it was Mr. Eliot who read the paper... Such expressions, including most ordinary language, may thus be taken as being

¹⁴⁶ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 72-73

¹⁴⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1913). CPI, “The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual”, p. 109

¹⁴⁸ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 75

¹⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 80-81

definitely indefinite, without their being ambiguous. This way of taking the matter is, I think, in some ways preferable to Russell's extreme extension of the notion of propositional function, because enabling us to say statements are true or false, and a complete account would probably combine the two, but neither way of viewing the matter needs the notion of partial truth.¹⁵⁰

Against Costello, Eliot insisted that truth was a matter of degree -- a contention that grew from his reading of The New Realism. In a margin next to "Who to-day would dare infer from the nature of knowledge the number of the planets in our solar system? Yet is it any the less foolhardy for the philosopher, basing his opinions solely upon his theory of knowledge, to deduce the nature of space and time...?", in The New Realism, Eliot writes "A question of degree".¹⁵¹ The definitely indefinite, as will be seen in later chapters, came to play a large role in Eliot's poetics, where he would often obscure the referent to which his seemingly definite statements might apply.

Reintroduced to Husserl in the seminar, Eliot may have been motivated to read the Logical Investigations in depth over the following summer, but he may already have been reading it, as the work comes up in the lectures on logic (connected to occasional expression and indeterminate reference). Eliot holds onto his notion of the centrality of belief, refusing to accept the framework assumed by the seminar's participants. Variability and variety of context would prove significant to the language of his early poetry. In "Prufrock", for example, the object of reference -- "Prufrock" (the "referent" or "what" of the poem) remains masked. The person is simply persona -- the context shifts from place to place. Without a definite description, the reader is left only with the consciousness of the poem -- the *activity itself*. The phenomenological approach to language complements theories such as those promoted by Hugh Kenner concerning Eliot's poetic method, which would involve "a possible zone of consciousness where these materials can maintain a vague

¹⁵⁰ *ibid*, emphasis mine, p. 81

¹⁵¹ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy, p. 77

congruity”.¹⁵² Eliot attributes a kind of infinite regress to the process of interpretation; this is highlighted with a definite reference is excluded or prevented from being disclosed. This too stands in contrast to the other participants in the Royce seminar. In the seminar, Eliot argues that: “No interpretation helps another. Is there no essential distinction between a social statement in language which asks for interpretation and something not intended as a sign?”¹⁵³

The phenomenological tendencies in Eliot are unpopular among his peers. A student named Troland swiftly rejoins, referring the group back to Russell’s central assumption: “Interpretation is bad description”.¹⁵⁴ The fragile origin of meaning -- with its horizon that slopes ever-inward -- was not relinquished by Eliot’s philosophy of language. Eliot is faced with a group of thinkers who are only interested in truth and falsity in their absolute forms. Royce attempts to develop Eliot’s ideas, and offers reading advice, but does not appear to agree with Eliot’s conclusions concerning degrees of truth.¹⁵⁵ He asks Eliot to consider ways in which interpretation could lend itself to logical analysis. Eliot remains stubborn.

Unswayed, at the next meeting, Eliot reiterates the centrality of interpretation to truth.¹⁵⁶ He says he does not buy into the idea that any statement can be altered or translated into a truth claim unproblematically.¹⁵⁷ He insists that there was “no sharp difference between interpretation of symbols and of facts. No sharp difference between expression and communication”.¹⁵⁸ Eliot wants to ensure that some internality remains as part of the picture

¹⁵² Kenner, H. (1965). The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 40

¹⁵³ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 76-77

¹⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 77

¹⁵⁵ Summarised in the notes: “Professor Royce, in commenting on the paper, said that an interpretation could, in everyday life, be tested by asking questions until mutual understanding was attained, but there were certainly difficulties involved in interpreting the social mind” (78).

¹⁵⁶ *ibid*, p. 84-85

¹⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 82

¹⁵⁸ *ibid*.

concerning how language works. Royce immediately identifies Eliot as a phenomenologist, and attempts to redirect his interests towards Royce's own research: "Phenomenology of religion is science of religious expressions, without paying *much* attention to the meaning".¹⁵⁹ Eliot persists in arguing that the speaker's meaning is of central significance to any case of expression, and that he is not swayed from his concern for the unity of meaning and truth: "Description considered as expression cannot be handled on our level of truth and error the way we can handle expressions merely. When we have two interpreting each other, we have three points of view and great complexity. What is the status of a fact which includes a belief or a meaning?... I see that there are facts, but I am not sure what the facts are".¹⁶⁰

In the second part of the year, Eliot writes a paper on description and definition for the seminar, and cuts to the heart of his disagreement with the current popular approach to the question of meaning. The essay presents the view that "Description, unless otiose, is always more than description, for it involves a change of point of view; and explanation never really explains, because it involves the maintenance of one point of view (or act of will, so to speak) and this maintenance is impossible".¹⁶¹ Again assuming a phenomenological perspective, with its central focus on "acts" of consciousness, he claims that "any phenomenon is not simply that phenomenon, but enters into various irreducible fields of explanation. I mean of course that there is ultimately no such thing as 'matter of fact'".¹⁶² This claim conveys an even more radical rejection of Russell's atomism and theory of correspondence than he had previously sustained.¹⁶³ Eliot focuses on the *process* of description and explanation, rather than the content of the statement as-true or as-false. Description has, he maintains, no final, objective

¹⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 83

¹⁶⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, "Description and Explanation", p. 122

¹⁶² *ibid.*, p. 4

¹⁶³ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p.107-109

resting place: “A description alters”.¹⁶⁴ Restated: “The act of describing brings alteration of the object described”.¹⁶⁵ The claim made in the essay is:

The hypothetical limiting case of description would be pure contemplation which does not alter its object, and that for a finite consciousness is out of the question. To have significant description, you must average data in a new whole, in an order which was not strictly given in the data as data. Take any simple object you will, give an account of it, and you will find that you have given a valuation and an interpretation... explanation is explanation comprehended by a point of view.¹⁶⁶

Insisting on the finitude of consciousness, Eliot refuses to accept that the expression of perfect objectivity is possible.

Eliot’s work in the seminar also confronts Russell and the new realists on the grounds of their conception of external “sense-data”: “when we explain things as bundles of sense-data we are simply substituting one group of objects for another. Now this sort of substitution may easily lead to error”.¹⁶⁷ His starting point is phenomenological: “I do not think” he argues, “that we begin (in knowledge) with ‘sense - data’, but that sense-data are derivative from things”.¹⁶⁸ Eliot reiterates that the philosopher should start with the observation of objects, not an assumption of static sense data: “The point is that qua object there is no difference of reality or unreality between one object and another, and the distinction is merely practical”.¹⁶⁹ Like Husserl, Eliot rejects the treatment of consciousness *as an object among others*. In the seminar notes, Eliot’s opinion is recorded this way:

“[Somebody] sense[s] a red spot ... but then can we study it as related to that mind? ... Self

¹⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 119

¹⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 121

¹⁶⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1913). CPI, “Description and Explanation”, p. 124-125

¹⁶⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1914). The Hayward Bequest, P/4: Philosophical Essays & Notes, 1913-1914: Unpublished paper on “Classification of types of objects”. A paper read in Josiah Royce’s seminar on May 5th, 1914; summarised in Costello: 1963: pages 173-177 (where the paper is called ‘Classification of Gegenstände höherer Ordnung, different types of objects’). The material in this paper was elaborated by Eliot in the third chapter of his doctoral dissertation. Autograph MS in pencil on five leaves of yellow paper, numbered by Eliot 1-5. Formerly numbered 32-36, p. 1

¹⁶⁸ *ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). The Hayward Bequest, P/4: Philosophical Essays & Notes, 1913-1914: Unpublished paper on “Classification of types of objects”. Autograph MS in pencil on five leaves of yellow paper, numbered by Eliot 1-5. Formerly numbered 32-36, p. 1-2

and its objects form one whole... Color is a relation between myself and object but not separate, and makes up both”.¹⁷⁰ Eliot confronts the idea that consciousness is neutral: “No consciousness as an object: no such thing ... Any philosophy which tries to interpret one type of object in terms of others is metaphysics and not description”.¹⁷¹ Like Husserl, Eliot wants a metaphysics “founded on *things*”.¹⁷² That is, he wants to examine “things themselves” -- as experienced by consciousness.

Challenged to support how mental events can be physical by the seminar participants, Eliot reasserts that “For me the emotion is real”.¹⁷³ Eliot revisits the status of interior life and meaning, this time emphasising emotion. Later, he repeats this point, saying “emotion must be known”.¹⁷⁴ Though not primarily public, emotion is nevertheless *real*. Eliot wants a form of language that aims at the metaphysical, but is grounded in the phenomenal. Central to this defense of “inner life” or “inner meaning” is a defense of *feeling* as a criterion of truth.

In the Margins

The interpretation of Eliot’s marginalia is, by nature of the material, somewhat speculative, but is offered to support the argument that Eliot’s reading of Husserl significantly complements his early philosophy. The majority of Eliot’s notes within Husserl’s Logical Investigations appear in chapters dealing with expression, meaning, symbolic representation, and consciousness. Eliot’s work on Husserl shows a close attention to phenomenological theories of symbolic representation and linguistic expression. In his copy of the Logical Investigations, he highlights statements showing Husserl’s reticence to consider language as a

¹⁷⁰ Costello, H. T. (1963). Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 174

¹⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 175

¹⁷² *ibid*.

¹⁷³ *ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*, p. 176

perfect system, and the challenges created by “ordinary language” theory for logicians:

“Language offers the investigator a widely applicable sign-system to express his thoughts, but, though no one can do without it, it represents a most imperfect aid”.¹⁷⁵ The section on “Expression and Meaning” provokes Eliot’s densest marginalia. The notations suggest that he agrees with the subject-centrality of Husserl’s philosophy of language and is in sympathy with Husserl’s critique of materialist-empirical theories of language. At the same time, Eliot’s notes suggest phenomenology *does not go far enough* in staking a claim for the “inner” *reality*. In Husserl’s discussion of how meaning gets “translated” from one form to another, he considers that “the predicates ‘is’, ‘is not’, ‘is true’, ‘is false’ modify meaning. They do not express properties of the apparent subject, but of the corresponding subject-meaning. ‘That $2+2=5$ is false’ means that the thought is a false thought, the proposition is a false proposition”. In the margin Eliot wonders: “But is there any such *Gedanke* [thought]? i.e. exactly what is implied in ‘thinking’ that $2+2=5$? Is it ‘thought’?” (this interest reappears almost without alteration in his essay on the validity of artificial distinction, as has been shown in the first chapter -- “ $2+2=4$. But is this a truth at all?”).¹⁷⁶

Eliot highlights Husserl’s criticism of the empiricist John Locke. Husserl holds that “He [Locke] forgets that mental existence is real existence”. In the margin, Eliot commented “Ambiguous - Does this mean that the psychic is real, or that what we call ‘psychical’ is really real?”¹⁷⁷ Eliot questions to what extent “internal” states can be granted ontological significance. He highlights several different discussions of “internal” or inner mode of evidence, as in the statement: “Empiricism altogether misunderstands the relation between the ideal and the real: it likewise misunderstands the relation between truth and inner evidence ... inner evidence is rather nothing but the ‘experience’ of truth ... *Truth is an Idea, whose*

¹⁷⁵ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 23. Also see Eliot, T.S. “The Validity of Artificial Distinction”

¹⁷⁶ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 65

¹⁷⁷ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 255

particular case is an actual experience in the inwardly evident judgment".¹⁷⁸ In Eliot's thesis, this claim is stated in only slightly different terms: "All significant truths are private truths."¹⁷⁹ Eliot is also interested in Husserl's assertions concerning intuitive understanding of meaning, underlining, for instance, the claim that "meanings have to be present in meaning-intentions that can come into a certain relation to intuition".¹⁸⁰

In his marginalia, in keeping with the concerns of this period, Eliot queries Husserl's commitment to the ontological significance of inner life. To Husserl's contention that "one does not and ought not point to the opposition between the mental and the extra-mental, but to the opposition between what is presented, in the sense of merely *meant*, and what is *true*, in the sense of corresponding to such a meaning", Eliot responds: "How is 'blos Gemeintem' [meant, intended] meant here?"¹⁸¹ This statement looks almost identical to Eliot's view, as recorded in the seminar's notes: "Distinction between interpretation and a fact, a point of attention which has only one aspect or a definite aspect which places it in a system. When have I a fact? ... Truth and falsity are relative to a level of interpretation".¹⁸² Similarly, it recalls his distinction concerning truth that might be "not intended as a sign".

It seems clear that Eliot's agreement with Husserl rests in the phenomenological treatment of consciousness and intuition as central to linguistic representation, but that he is sometimes unsure about the precise status of the "inner" meaning in Husserl's conception of logic. Judging from his justification of the inner life in his own thesis and essays, the question Eliot has for Husserl might be paraphrased this way: "what significance do we give to intention, interpretation, mental activity, or hermeneutic struggle, in our philosophy of

¹⁷⁸ Outlining copied, Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 120-121

¹⁷⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1964). Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 165

¹⁸⁰ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 79

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 255

¹⁸² Costello, H. T. (1963). *Josiah Royce's Seminar, 1913-1914: as recorded in the notebooks of Harry T. Costello*. New Brunswick New Jersey Rutgers University Press, p. 74

language?” Husserl offered Eliot a strong argument in support of attending to these features of language. Eliot underlines Husserl’s criticism of empiricist or materialist notions of language, highlighting: “[representation] rather meant [for the empiricists] that *the sign did the duty for the thing signified*”.¹⁸³ Eliot responds in the margin: “Not the representation of a number of objects by one, but of the objects by a sign”. This comment might be better understood in the context of Eliot’s course in logic at Harvard.

Eliot had already learned the significance of the number one to Frege and Russell from his logic course:

number one is a thing... Number one seems to have individuality. How to get $1 + 1 = 2$? But one number one. Arithmetic rests on the fundamental nature of thought (content of thought rather than act). Everywhere the same. Thinking in numbers is not peculiar. It is thinking like all other thinking, controlled by some law. Can work with arithmetic without thinking only after thought has developed the number. Fundamental nature of number.¹⁸⁴

To Frege, the fundamental goal of an ideal language is linked to the assumption that a number can “stand for” all instances of a phenomenon. For example, the number one can stand for one goat, one apple, or one petal, and in each case it highlights the character of oneness. The only problem, then, is how to account for plurality. “One”, in this context, is a way of exemplifying the manner whereby a symbol corresponded to a phenomena. The term “one” stands for cases of one person, one table, or one lemon. What is important is not the sensory item, but its ideal description, which “captures” a certain “oneness” about the state of affairs. Similarly, a

¹⁸³ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 282

¹⁸⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1913). The Hayward Bequest, Harvard University. Unpublished *Notes from Bertrand Russell and H.T. Costello’s Philosophy 21*, p. 1. It would be interesting to know whether Eliot read *Philosophy of Arithmetic* in his 1913 logic course or not. As far as I know, he did not, but according to Robert Sokolowski Husserl’s theory of Arithmetic in this text would be relevant here.

word's meaning might be divorced from context by treating it as a symbolic abstraction.¹⁸⁵ In a marginal note, Eliot attends to the redirecting of philosophical attention -- from numerical value to semantic value. That is, as Husserl states (and Eliot underlines): "signs in the sense of indications (notes, marks, etc.) *do not express* anything, unless they happen to fulfill a significant as well as an indicative function".¹⁸⁶ To Husserl, the representative, "mirroring" quality of symbols is only *one* of the ways language operates. Eliot took note of Husserl's contention that all signification is nevertheless rooted in "thinking being".¹⁸⁷

In notes from Russell's Harvard lectures, Eliot holds that for an ideal language to work, (according to Frege): "Psychology must be gotten rid of. Psychical imagery must be gotten rid of ... a no. cannot be made up of no. ones. There is only one. An individual. One is a proper name... Words have no meaning except in props. [propositions] and we need define them only in use"¹⁸⁸ Eliot may have had all this in mind -- the reductionist approach of Frege's logic, and its need to reduce words to symbols -- when scribbling his annotation in Husserl's Logical Investigations.

The approach of the phenomenologist is different -- "not the representation of a number of objects by one" -- that is, not a logic that abandoned time-contingent experiences of objects -- "but of the objects by a sign" -- by a *gesture towards* something permanent. The

¹⁸⁵ In this manner, a formula can "represent" light using the words "warmth" and "lucidity", but these terms are only useful if they can convey a timeless feature about light. In contrast, words like "wavelength" can attribute a constant property to the physical phenomena. In this line of thinking, rigorous analytic philosophy helps to show human thinkers where the form of their language leads them down the path to absurdity. Perhaps Eliot's comment is describing a move *away* from the idea that words "stand for" states of affairs as numbers do, emphasizing the special character of signs -- the phenomenologist emphasizes "Not the representation of a number of objects by one, but of the objects by a sign". This is one possible interpretation of the comment. Sokolowski notes that "phenomenological analysis goes awry essentially by taking a moment for an independent part or for the whole. It takes an abstractum for a concretum. It then forgets that its object by its very nature requires supplements ... such a wayward procedure takes abstract signitive intentions as equivalent to intuitions of concrete things, and leads to controversies about words instead of analyses of what is given" (Sokolowski on Husserl, 16).

¹⁸⁶ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 183

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 184

¹⁸⁸ Eliot, T.S. The Hayward Bequest, Harvard University. *Notes from Bertrand Russell and H.T. Costello's Philosophy 21*, p. 2-6, 20.

object takes priority over the symbol: it is more important to be *true to the object* than it is to use the right symbol. Here, we note that what “object” means is “object of consciousness”. This liberal definition would include the half-objects of the unreal -- of memories, for instance. This is probably the densest formulation of Husserl’s modernist dictum: “back to the things themselves!” which became a battle cry for so many twentieth century artists.¹⁸⁹

Eliot would support Husserl’s assertion that “a word becomes general by being made the sign, not of an abstract general idea, but of several particular ideas, *any one of which it indifferently suggests to the mind*”.¹⁹⁰ In other words, a word *itself* does not provide the philosopher an absolute singular correspondence. Careful interpretation of a word’s context of use is a prerequisite to establishing truth. The question Eliot entertained (among others) during his Husserl Period was: does a word give us a precisely-bounded, timeless description of a state of affairs? When we hear the word “red”, for instance, is the meaning of this word understood to be the designation of some timeless feature of experience, which is simply “pictured” in the minds of each speaker? On this point, Eliot appears to agree with Husserl’s method, putting checkmarks throughout his discussion of complex and simple expressions, and putting a checkmark beside Husserl’s description of “expressions that are unclosed, incomplete and requiring completion”.¹⁹¹ Eliotic poetry, as we will see, would rely heavily on the evasive properties of language, which evoke different significances to different speakers.

Based on an examination of Eliot’s notes, essays, and the points of interest found in his marginalia, I would argue that his emphasis on the justification of meaning via intentionality, point of view, and interpretation is lifted from a close reading of Husserl. Consider, for instance, a section containing Eliot’s underlining: “an essentially single concept runs continuously: in all cases, whether we intuit in perceptual, fancying or remembering

¹⁸⁹ One has only to consider the first statement of the Imagist’s position, for instance: “Direct treatment of the ‘thing’, whether subjective or objective” to see the weight carried by this philosophical reorientation.

¹⁹⁰ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 284

¹⁹¹ Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 57

fashion, or whether we think in empirical and logico-mathematical forms, an intending, or reference (Vermeinen) is present, that aims at an object, a consciousness is present that is the consciousness of this object".¹⁹² In parallel to this statement, the conclusion to Eliot's thesis argues: "in asking what the object is we merely turn in a circle. The object is not its qualities, for these are simply enjoyed with respect to the object; the object as such, it transpires, is merely the point of *attention*; that which an electron, a Balkan league, my table, whiteness, have in common as objects is just the *moment of objectivity*. The objecthood of an object, it appears, is the fact that we intend it as an object: it is the attending that makes the object".¹⁹³ As Sokolowski explains, "'Objectifying acts' is the name given by Husserl to the most fundamental kind of intentional consciousness. His treatment of objectifying acts is preceded by a long and difficult section [of the Logical Investigations], Chapters 3 and 4, dealing with 'presentation'".¹⁹⁴ Of the many places where Eliot highlights Husserl's notions of intentionality, a significant comment concerns the relationship between intention and experience (which I read as directly related to Eliot's thesis). Eliot highlights Husserl's statement that "'Experience' must be understood in the phenomenological sense ... The qualifying adjective 'intentional' names the essence common to the class of experiences we wish to mark off, the peculiarity of *intending*, of referring to what is objective, in the presentative or other analogous fashion".¹⁹⁵

According to Husserl, the idea (promoted by Russell) that names stand in a timeless and *singular* correspondence relation to sense data is flawed. He opposes "the common materialism that seeks to assure us that tones really are air-vibrations, excitations of the acoustic nerve, etc. Here, too, theoretical hypotheses which explain the given genetically, are

¹⁹² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 275

¹⁹³ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 157-158

¹⁹⁴ Sokolowski, R. (1971). "The Structure and Content of Husserl's Logical Investigations." Inquiry (14), p. 325

¹⁹⁵ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 101

substituted for the given”.¹⁹⁶ Rather, Husserl argues, humans have an intuitive understanding of the contents of their expressions, which changes with time to suit different speakers. In the margin next to these statements, Eliot writes “Good”.¹⁹⁷

Eliot supports Husserl’s attempt to locate expression in individuated consciousness, but wants phenomenology to go further to affirm the intuitive way words change in contexts of interpretation. Words, both Eliot and Husserl argue, have different meanings from different points of view.¹⁹⁸ Eliot almost never wants to treat words as simple symbols existing “outside” the mind.¹⁹⁹ Like Husserl, however, who argued that “Linguistic analysis is not a substitute for a fundamental analysis of consciousness”, Eliot privileges the position of the speaker.²⁰⁰ To Eliot, words exist *crucially* in the mind of the feeling, thinking subject.²⁰¹

Eliot’s divergences from Husserl’s thought, where they appear, suggest that Eliot wants Husserl to do *more* to emphasise “internal” truth, and the foundational character of feeling for expression.²⁰² Throughout his work, Eliot was resistant to any downplaying of “inner” meaning.²⁰³ Rather, he wishes to *unify*, or even *combine* the external and the internal

¹⁹⁶ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 304, English edition

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, p. 302-307

¹⁹⁸ Eliot is aware (and underlines in Husserl’s work) that: “several expressions may have the same meaning but different objects, and again that they may have different meanings but the same objects” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 197).

¹⁹⁹ We might compare this to Husserl’s view (underlined by Eliot) that “What ‘meaning’ is, is a matter as immediately given to us as is the nature of colour and sound. It cannot be further defined, it is ultimate in description” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 287). Eliot underlines Husserl’s notes concerning the non-independence (the non-analytic nature) of colour throughout Volume 2 of the *Logical Investigations*.

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, p. xxxviii

²⁰¹ This point is made clear by Eliot’s essay “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, which both emphasises the necessity of metaphysics and the artifice of universal truth claims.

²⁰² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 83

²⁰³ Elsewhere, Eliot finds Husserl’s distinction between “the relation of the appearing person” and “*The relation of the thing’s appearance* (‘qua’ experience)” unsatisfactory, writing in a margin: “This is all wrong, there is no Beziehung [relation/relationship] in either case” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 84 in English edition).

to a high degree, much as Heidegger would.²⁰⁴ In his thesis, Eliot argues: “the moment we speak of ‘having a sensation’ we have stepped into a theory of knowledge, have posited a self and consequently an external world; *it is still sensation*, however, in that it is rather a feeling of a peculiar relation than a characterization of either subject or object” (emphasis mine).²⁰⁵ We can compare this statement to a statement made by Husserl in the *Logical Investigations*, and underlined by Eliot: “Sensations plainly only become presented objects in psychological reflection”.²⁰⁶

In another statement affiliated with Husserl, Eliot writes that “Science deals only with objects; psychology, in the sense of rational or faculty psychology, may deal with half-objects, and metaphysics alone with the subject, or point of view”.²⁰⁷ In the same vein, Husserl argues: “all genuine, and, in particular, all scientific knowledge, rests on inner evidence: as far as such evidence extends, the concept of knowledge extends also... The essence of science therefore involves unity of the foundational connections [or metaphysics]”.²⁰⁸ Defining metaphysics as the expression of collective contexts of meaning (as opposed to an absolute system) was a radical move for Eliot’s time. Both Eliot and

²⁰⁴ He agrees with Husserl where this seems to occur. For instance, he places a checkmark next to Husserl’s notion that phenomenal contents “may as readily belong to outer as to inner sense, according to the nature of its foundational contents” (Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 38). This may explain Eliot’s gravitation towards Bradley. He writes, for instance, in his essay “Leibniz’s Monads and Bradley’s Finite Centres”: “internal and external are thus not adjectives applied to different contents within the same world; they are different points of view” (573). Further, “if two points of view are irreconcilable, yet on the other hand neither would exist without the other, and they melt into each other by a process which we cannot grasp” (575).

²⁰⁵ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 67

²⁰⁶ Husserl, Edmund. Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 214

²⁰⁷ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 143: “What do we mean when we say that two people see ‘the same’ object? We think loosely that the identity consists in the fact that when one looks at the object from the same angle as the other, the two images before the two minds are the same” -- Eliot’s notion of Point of View will be further discussed, and will be linked to Husserl’s phenomenology

²⁰⁸ Eliot also attends to Husserl’s notions of worldhood, underlining, for instance, “note that this world is not the same for everyone, but only so ‘on the whole’; it is the same only to an extent which affords a sufficient practical guarantee for our common presentations and actions”. See Husserl, Edmund, *Logical Investigations*, p. 18.

Husserl insist that transcendent or immaterial features of understanding (such as, for instance, the ideas of science) rest on point of view.²⁰⁹

It is striking how much overlap can be found, rhetorically, between the Logical Investigations and Eliot's early work. It is clear that he eagerly wrestled with Husserl's notions of consciousness during the same period he was writing his thesis, and that he shared Husserl's view that the mind's orientations altered experience and linguistic choice.²¹⁰ Several of these texts suggest personal investment in the stakes of the concepts presented. For instance, when Husserl describes the human subject as "myself as an empirical person, a thing" Eliot underlines the phrase "myself as an empirical person" and writes "what the devil does this mean?"²¹¹ Many of his comments are conversational rather than transcriptive, and many of them consist of exclamation marks, check marks and question marks.²¹² Seeing the emotive quality of his marginalia, one gets the impression that Eliot was *actively searching* for something within Husserl's work.

Eliot's philosophy of language, following Meinong and Husserl, interested itself with meanings whose reference appealed to inner life or the activity of consciousness, rather than external "facts". A fictional character, for example, "is imperfectly real because it is

²⁰⁹ Husserl, Edmund. Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 130

²¹⁰ What might be true of Eliot's philosophy is often said to be true of his poetry, particularly during its early development. It is said, for instance, that "the poems of 1910-1912 were the first and unmistakable signs of Eliot's genius; some aspects of them were to develop throughout his poetic career while others remained undeveloped. They also contain characteristics that have frequently troubled critics. One of them concerns Eliot's use of literary sources, for which he is still sometimes accused of plagiarism" (Bergonzi, 22).

²¹¹ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 84

²¹² For example, Eliot places an exclamation mark next to Husserl's gesture towards further study: "A profounder and more penetrating analysis could here lay bare a wealth of descriptive differences..." (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 16).

imperfectly ideal. And the round square, so far as it is idea (and I do not mean image) is also real. It is not unreal, for there is no reality to which it should correspond and does not”.²¹³

Words, in this view, play with borders of sense and reference. The method whereby a poet might *allude specifically* to an emotion or intuition, could involve, for instance, a yoking together of references not normally associated to be relevant to one another. This technique will be discussed in the context of “metaphysical poetry” in the following chapter. William Skaff points out that in looking at Eliot’s work “we notice immediately how much further Eliot has gone than his Metaphysical predecessors to unite disparate experience”.²¹⁴ Continuity and identity is found, in Eliot’s work, through repetition and leitmotif, not through universal definition.

Eliot’s philosophical view of language is that “the notion of idea as symbol is quite inadequate. You cannot so isolate existence and meaning, in the case of ideas. And to say that an idea is an identical reference is only partially true”.²¹⁵ An ideal, totalising, or systematically consistent symbolic language, for Eliot, is an aspiration which remains necessarily *impossible*: “the goal of language is in this sense unattainable, for it is simply that of a complete vocabulary of concepts, each independent of the rest; and all of which, by their various combinations, would give complete and final knowledge -- which would, of course, be knowledge without a knower”.²¹⁶ Characteristically, Eliot signals a deep respect for Russell’s ambition, but considers the notion of ideal language to be founded on assumptions about the nature of language which are inaccurate, since language cannot exist apart from a

²¹³ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 55. Compare: Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume One*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 100. Eliot puts a checkmark next to Husserl’s notion of a round square, and underlines his contention that the idea of a “round square” does have meaning, but that it is an “indirect idea” -- he underlines “though the meaning itself exists” (Husserl, E. (2001). *Logical Investigations: Volume Two*. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 61, English edition). One might consider Husserl’s emphasis on the mediated phenomena’s presupposition of immediacy on p. 31 of the *Logical Investigations*, Vol. 2.

²¹⁴ Skaff, W. (1986). *The Philosophy of T.S. Eliot: From Skepticism to a Surrealist Poetic: 1909-1927*, University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 169

²¹⁵ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 56

²¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 46

subject -- apart from what Husserl would call “mental acts” of meaning formation. In this view, meaning is always aiming, but never arriving at, a final system. When Husserl discusses the way words are combined, Eliot underlined as follows: “we can plainly vary our procedure at will, and combine different forms of combination in our construction, always within legally allowed limits, and so conceive an infinity of complex form legally engendered”.²¹⁷ Eliot in his philosophical writing holds that formal description is always, in some sense, a receding horizon, engaging shades of consciousness. This theme is also performed throughout his poetry: “I made this, I have forgotten / And remember...Made this unknowing, half conscious, unknown, my own... This form... Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me / Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken, / The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships”.²¹⁸ In his thesis, he explains: “the object is not *bestimmt* [definite, determined, certain]; it fluctuates as occasion demands, and as elements in it are treated as real or as ideal, but as the terms are analysed into relations, it appears finally that nothing is in time except time itself. This point of view, however, is of course only a limit, and is never reached... the object varies with the context”.²¹⁹ For all Eliot’s philosophical and literary inconsistencies, his insistence on the incomplete essence of language would reappear in the famous epitaph in East Coker: “In my beginning is my end. In my end is my beginning.”

Conclusion:

Conrad Aiken describes how later in life, Eliot would perform his vision poetically: “there was no avoiding it, no evading it: the vision might remain for a long time unvoiced, but it was lodged there, it burned there, slowly, surely, it clarified there, and in the end it would stammer itself into speech; and in order that it might do so, everything else would be swept

²¹⁷ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 70

²¹⁸ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Marina”, p. 109-110, lines 23-24,27-32

²¹⁹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 102, 103

aside ... everything, and finally one's heart itself, went into that alchemist's alembic."²²⁰ Aiken suggests that Eliot was successful *precisely* because he had been self-conscious about the form as a young man, and because of his reflections on philosophical form.²²¹

In his graduate thesis, Eliot used a poetic example to highlight what he thought was missing from his contemporary philosophical models. The poet, he argued, lives in a unique world -- a world characterized by the *struggle to actualize meaning*. He wrote that:

When the poet says *I lived with shadows for my company* she is announcing at once the defect and the superiority of the world she lived in. The defect, in that it was vaguer, less of an idea, than the world of others; the superiority, in that the shadows pointed toward a reality, which, if realized, would have been in some respects, a higher type of reality than the ordinary world -- compared to which the ordinary world would be less real, and which the ordinary world might be said to 'mean'.²²²

The process of articulation, according to Eliot, unifies private meaning with public language and, in turn, re-imagines the world. Ideas too involve a wrestling with one's own interpretation of words. The priority of process -- with movement and motion -- would become a lifelong obsession.

The similarities between Eliot's notion of point of view and Husserl's phenomenology are unmistakable. Eliot writes "The presentation, I shall argue, is identical with the object from the point of view of the experiencing subject".²²³ Stated in Husserl's terms, this conclusion is the same one found in the Logical Investigations, namely, that "any phenomenological description proper is to be performed from a first person point of view, so

²²⁰ Aiken, C. (1971). Ushant: An Essay. New York, Oxford University Press, p. 185-186 (This he says of the Eliot prior to *Portrait d'une Femme*). In other words, Eliot's early vision of the formal aspects of poetry began during his "philosophical" period of interest.

²²¹ *ibid*, p. 231. Gertrude Patterson contends that Eliot's project was shared by poets in France and England: "What Eliot along with contemporary poets in France and Pound in England were attempting to do, was to transcend the limitations of words themselves in poetry; to break down the singleness of meaning of words in order to explore a richer multiplicity of meaning through them" (13-14). "The initial task of the poet is therefore to render the language of his own time more exact for the immediate observations which he makes of 'new objects'" (14). Patterson describes Eliot's goal as a quest to find a place where words based on immediate experience intersect with a timeless aspect (14). Intersections between these attempts and the phenomenological approach are unmistakable.

²²² Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 55-56

²²³ *ibid*, p. 61

as to ensure that the respective item is described exactly as is experienced, or intended, by the subject”.²²⁴ Throughout his philosophy, and later in his literary criticism, Eliot emphasises the contribution of individual conscious acts of meaning to an “ideal” or “pure” language.

In contrast to Russell and the new realists’ view of consciousness as a static *object of science*, which Eliot had highlighted in his early logic studies: “A consciousness is a group of (neutral) entities to which a nervous system, both at one moment and in the course of its life history, responds with a specific response”, Eliot, like Husserl, develops an interest in consciousness as a lived, active experience -- an experience which undergoes a high degree of eccentric variabilities over time.²²⁵ This leads him to an interest in the way the expression of meaning works in the here and now -- in the dance between the truth-drive (metaphysics) and phenomenal fluctuations and occasional references.

Eliot the ironist and the satirical wit is complicated by Eliot the poet-philosopher, who wanted to unite truth with meaning, and promoted forms of language that are subtler, less rigid, and less singularly descriptive. He wanted a form of language that would *live* -- which would present readers with a vivid experience of consciousness. From an early age, Eliot experimented with literary devices which would allow language to “breathe”. In his literary criticism, he would argue for a complex negotiation between the ideal languages of metaphysics and a language uncovered “within the flux” of consciousness.

²²⁴ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/husserl/>

²²⁵ Holt, E. B., et. al (1912). *The New Realism: Coöperative Studies in Philosophy*. New York, The Macmillan Company, p. 373

Chapter Three: A Comment on F.H. Bradley

“The very greatest poets set before you real men talking, carry you on in real events moving.”

(T.S. Eliot Selected Essays)

Eliot appreciated Bradley’s “solemn banter”, but did not adopt idealism wholesale.¹ This interlude explains why the work of F.H. Bradley does not feature more prominently in this thesis. Eliot’s interest in Bradley has eclipsed the totality of his serious philosophical concerns, the broader philosophical context of the language debates, and Eliot’s own “original” philosophical contribution and inheritances within the context of these debates. The central figures of the debates -- Russell, Frege, Meinong, Bosanquet, Husserl, Brentano, Wittgenstein, Moore, and others -- have been largely overlooked in both early and contemporary Eliot scholarship, though Eliot was responding to these thinkers directly in his work. Eliot’s choice of Bradley was philosophically political, and his reading of British idealism appears to have involved a curious intermingling of Bradley’s conceptual apparatus with the distinctly phenomenological themes discussed in the previous chapter. Crucially, Eliot rejects some of the key features of idealism.

In The Margins:

It is not enough to say *that* Eliot read Bradley, but we might also note *how* he read Bradley. Curiously, the marginal writings in Eliot’s private copies of Appearance and Reality and Essays on Truth and Reality -- unavailable to the public until very recently -- are somewhat sparse.² Until Chapter IV of Appearance and Reality, there is practically no notation whatsoever, and Eliot’s writing becomes denser after he notes the relevance of Bradley for new realism.³ In fact, there are almost no notes in the entire first book of the

¹ Eliot, T. S. (1975). Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot. London, Faber & Faber Limited, emphasis mine, p.198

² Apart from the editors of The Complete Prose, I am the only person who has looked at this material since it was given to the Pepys collection from the Eliot estate.

³ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., p. 225

work, apart from cross-references to articles. Only two Chapters, Chapters XXIV on “Degrees of Truth and Reality” and Chapter XXVI “The Absolute And Its Appearances” have dense marginalia. The Chapter on “Degrees Of Truth And Reality” was probably the source of his support for degrees of truth in the Royce seminars, and contains the most notes.⁴ This section is also the section dealing directly with a theory of truth and falsity which confronted new realism. In proportion to the number of pages, there is less underlining, “x”ing, checkmarks and the like in Appearance and Reality than in his copy of The New Realism. I state this simply to suggest that Eliot may not have read this book *as actively* as the other two, and it appears that he read it *in reaction* to the framework of new realism, as will be discussed. Eliot borrows a few features of Bradley’s terminology directly. Importantly, though, when read against the marginalia in The New Realism, it appears the entire thrust of Eliot’s interest in Bradley was to adopt precisely those aspects of idealist thought which came into direct conflict with the new realists’ framework.

What Eliot appears to have been looking for in Bradley is similar to what he sought in Husserl -- a defense of “inner life” and “inner meaning”. This is shown by his notation in the chapter “The This And The Mine” -- one of the first notes he makes in Bradley’s work. In a footnote, Eliot underlines “to observe a feeling is, to some extent, always to alter it” and writes in a margin “Cf. Neo-Realism on introspection”.⁵ In other words, Eliot was drawn to Bradley’s defense of introspective activity *because it directly contradicted* new realism’s rejection of introspection. Bradley claims that “No abstraction (whatever its origin) is in the end defensible. The truth asserted is not, and cannot be, taken as real by itself. The background is ignored because it is assumed to make no difference, and the mass of conditions, abstracted from and left out, is treated as immaterial”. Eliot, in a margin, says that

⁴ *ibid*, p. 359

⁵ *ibid*, p. 232

the point is “for Mr. Russell”.⁶ Most of his underlining has to do with the internal and the pre-articulate unity of experience, and the way this might be directed towards Russell and new realism. I present only a few of many examples, for lack of space. Where he questions Bradley, likewise, is when Bradley most resembles Russell. For example, when Bradley writes that “existence, on the whole, must correspond with our ideas”, Eliot underlines the word “correspond” and writes, in a margin: “in what sense? This is ambiguous”.⁷

Bradley chooses not to treat the mind as an “object amongst other objects”, and Eliot would have been sympathetic with this approach. In the conclusion of his preface, Bradley says (and Eliot underlines): “The one self-knowledge worth having is to know one’s mind.”⁸ In Chapter IX, “The Meanings of Self”, he underlines “in every man there are elements in the internal felt core which are never made objects”.⁹ To take another example, Eliot highlights: “We perceive, on reflection, that to be real, or even barely to exist, must be to fall within sentience. Sentient experience, in short, is reality, and what is not this is not real.”¹⁰ Eliot underlines the claim that “Memory is plainly a construction from the ground of the present”.¹¹ He highlights: “Outside of finite experience there is neither a natural world nor any other world at all”.¹²

However, when Bradley begins to show sympathy with the notion of the world is *external* to human consciousness, Eliot resists. In response to: “for the finite content is necessarily determined from the outside; its external relations ... penetrate its essence, and so carry that beyond its own being”, Eliot writes: “Is this external in the... or is this not merely a

⁶ *ibid*, p. 540

⁷ *ibid*, p. 550

⁸ *ibid*, p. xv

⁹ *ibid*, p. 76

¹⁰ *ibid*, underlining copied, p. 144

¹¹ *ibid*, p. 257

¹² *ibid*, p. 279

spatial metaphor? For how could 'external relations' 'penetrate its essence'?"¹³ The rest of Eliot's underlining in Bradley's work concerns the idea of feeling and the idealist notion of the Absolute. The former appeals to Eliot, and the latter does not. For this reason, it is fair to say that Eliot is not a British idealist. This material will be treated shortly.

Introduction

Traditionally, scholarship has seen F.H. Bradley as Eliot's single most significant philosophical inheritance -- a key to understanding his own philosophical views on form -- particularly those positions found in his criticism. It is often argued, for example, that "Bradley profoundly influenced both the shape and the content of Eliot's work" and that Eliot was drawn to "Bradley's Absolute as a complete inventory of all experiences that have ever existed or will ever exist."¹⁴ As we will see, Eliot explicitly rejects Bradley's abstract notion of the Absolute as a way of resolving subject-object dualism. Though it is true that Eliot revolted against such dualism, and that this revolt altered his literary criticism and his views on form, it is much more straightforward to see Eliot's own "original" philosophical views in terms of a drama of consciousness which is *blended into* the world of objects -- as a horizon of meaning and interpretation that is ever-aspiring towards truth, rather than as a transcendental, abstract negative "totality". This thesis disagrees with the claim that "In spite of the closest personal and intellectual involvement with a formidable Neo-Realist (Russell), he explicitly endorsed [Bradley's ideas]... ideas which remained to color all of his subsequent work, including *Four Quartets*."¹⁵ Eliot may have endorsed his own interpretation of Bradley's ideas, but this endorsement does not imply a direct adaptation of Bradley's thought.

By focusing on Eliot's phenomenology, critics may avoid an early problem for Eliot research: "we now prefer to accuse Eliot of incoherence rather than assume that his seemingly

¹³ *ibid*, underlining copied, p. 459

¹⁴ Cowan, L., Ed. (1990). *T.S. Eliot: Man and Poet*. Orono, Maine, The National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, Brooker, Spears Jewel. "T.S. Eliot and the Revolt Against Dualism", p. 304, 307

¹⁵ *ibid*, p. 319

incompatible statements conceal an underlying consistency of thought”.¹⁶ When Eliot “dissolves the rigid boundary between consciousness and external reality”, he explicitly does not replace this boundary with Bradley’s Absolute, or indeed with anything resembling British idealism.¹⁷ However, critics have rightly noted that those philosophical aspects of Eliot’s work already suggested as of significance to his early intellectual development (the relationship between thought and feeling, point of view, the unity of consciousness, and so on) are aspects which make up a kind of consistent substratum that undergirds his critical and creative work.¹⁸ Thus, if we read Eliot as interpreting Bradley phenomenologically, we can take seriously the notion of “feeling” as immediate experience that is subjective, in the sense that it is *here, now* (“the real world for us now, not from the point of view of some further developed mind tracing its ancestors and the world they lived in”)¹⁹ but also *reflective*, and we do not have to worry about, as Schwartz puts it, his “slippery use of the term ‘feeling.’ At certain times... synonymous with [pre-dualistic] ‘immediate experience... at other times, [referring] to the purely subjective state’”.²⁰ If we read Eliot’s views on feeling as a phenomenological interpretation of Bradley, the contradiction is dissolved. Feeling can be both pre-dualistic *and* subjective. The world *is* what is here, now, and transcendence and metaphysics are established, or rather *aimed at* or *developed through* a reflection on consciousness *as experienced, in actual process*. One does not have to step “outside” oneself to posit some hypothetical “original totality”.²¹ In Eliot’s own view, such a step is untenable.

¹⁶ *ibid*, Schwartz, Sanford. “Beyond the ‘Objective Correlative’”, p. 321

¹⁷ *ibid*, Brooker, Spears Jewel. “T.S. Eliot and the Revolt Against Dualism”, p. 323

¹⁸ *ibid*, Schwartz, Sanford. “Beyond the ‘Objective Correlative’”, p. 322

¹⁹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 145

²⁰ Cowan, L., Ed. (1990). *T.S. Eliot: Man and Poet*. Orono, Maine, The National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, Brooker, Spears Jewel. “T.S. Eliot and the Revolt Against Dualism”, Schwartz, Sanford. “Beyond the ‘Objective Correlative’”, p. 322

²¹ *ibid*.

Brooker correctly outlines Eliot's "original" contribution as "his position, stated at the opening of his last chapter, that every theory depends on adopting some point of view, and that every point of view is no more than one point of view".²² But this is an *interpretation* of Bradley, and a radical one. And, I would argue, it is an explicitly phenomenological interpretation of Bradley -- one with its feet firmly planted in the "now" of experience. In fact, each of the central features of Eliot's thought, which Brooker argues directly come from Bradley, are those features most aligned with phenomenology, and those features of his thought which appear to be most "original" are also those which agree with phenomenology.²³ So, for example, Eliot's depiction of immediate experience, "in which the viewer is so absorbed that he has no consciousness of self or subject, on the one side, and painting or object, on the other", is straightforwardly phenomenological, and is not an original or "new" philosophical position.²⁴

Eliot's discussion of Bradley was at least partly strategic. Eliot first wanted to write on Meinong, (the philosopher from whom Russell departed), then Bradley (the philosopher most directly opposed to Russell as a contemporary). By selecting Bradley for the final title of his thesis, Eliot knowingly aligned his focus with a philosopher whose school of thought was on its way to the grave, but who still had a reputation which might directly rival that of Russell. "If Bradley's philosophy is today a little out of fashion", Eliot writes, "we must remark that what has superseded it, what is now in favour, is, for the most part, crude and raw and provincial in its turn...".²⁵ Eliot attempted to counterbalance new realism with a theory of language and knowledge that he saw as less dogmatically literalist -- more accepting of a blending between self and world. His interest in wisdom literature, described, for example, in

²² *ibid*, Brooker, Spears Jewel. "T.S. Eliot and the Revolt Against Dualism", p. 310

²³ (see p. 311-312 and p. 317-318 for an outline of these points)

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 314

²⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1932). *Essays Ancient and Modern*. USA, Quinn & Boden Company, Inc., Rahway, N.J. p. 49

the work of Cleo McNelly Kearns, was born of a similar impulse.²⁶ Eliot describes Bradley as: “older, more patient, more supple and more wise” than the philosophers of new realism.²⁷

In the war between wisdom and literalism, Eliot took the side of wisdom:

“Philosophy without wisdom is vain; and in the greater philosophers we are usually aware of that wisdom which for the sake of emphasis and in the most accurate and profound sense could be called even worldly wisdom”.²⁸ Eliot perceived Bradley’s *style* as a form of “wisdom” *primarily* because it rejected the literalism of Russell and the new realists. His style was *difficult*. The rejection of literalism and his subsequent embrace of phenomenal aspects of would be integral to Eliot’s poetics. As M.A.R. Habib explains, “Part of Eliot’s own poetic technique ... consists in denying a word any purity of meaning, in making ‘literal’ meaning impossible and forcing the reader to respond to language as a sensuous, material entity”.²⁹ In Habib’s words: “to deny the literal status of language ... to reopen its connections with past and future, to redeem the myth and metaphor at its heart which have been repressed in recent history”.³⁰ To do this, however, the young Eliot had to confront Russell’s work by leveraging the work of other philosophers.

Bradley avoided the urge to systematise (a style which was both eccentric, difficult to discuss, and difficult to reconcile to Eliot’s contemporary philosophical milieu, which partially explains the disappearance of Bradley’s work from the 21st century western

²⁶ Cowan, L., Ed. (1990). *T.S. Eliot: Man and Poet*. Orono, Maine, The National Poetry Foundation, University of Maine, Kearns, C.M. “Doctrine and Wisdom in Four Quartets”, p. 209

²⁷ Eliot, T. S. (1932). *Essays Ancient and Modern*. USA, Quinn & Boden Company, Inc., Rahway, N.J. p. 50

²⁸ *ibid*, p. 58

²⁹ Habib, M. A. R. (1999). *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 149.

³⁰ *ibid*, p. 16

canon).³¹ Eliot's interest in Bradley seems to have been an interest in *what is possible* for philosophical style, and in general for the future "style" of philosophy. He writes: "Bradley was fighting for a European and ripened and wise philosophy, against an insular and immature and cranky one".³² Eliot discusses Bradley's work in terms of oppositional disciplinary politics, which suggests that he was aware of the beginning of early 20th century institutional divisions.

Eliot saw himself as fighting for the underdog, Bradley, against the popular new philosopher-king Russell, and his new realist following. This becomes particularly clear when one attends to Eliot's lesser-known writings and letters. He repeatedly compares Russell's work unfavourably with Bradley's. For example, the following statement probably refers to the triumph of new realism: "We fight for lost causes because we know that our defeat and dismay may be the preface to our successors' victory, though the victory itself will be temporary; we fight rather to keep something alive than in the expectation that anything will triumph".³³

Bradley as phenomenologist

Scholarship often aligns Eliot's philosophical thought with Bradley's idealism. For example: "Modern critical theory, it is generally agreed, is founded on the work of I.A. Richards and T.S. Eliot who produced the basic perspectives for reorienting criticism towards a new object, new methodological forms, and new epistemological structure". Eliot's critical contribution, in this assessment, is called "idealism", in a loose sense.³⁴ But Eliot's own philosophy was not a version of idealism. As Jane Mallinson and others explain, Eliot's

³¹ For example, even the *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* describes Bradley's work on logic by saying that "the absence of formulae (theorems, axioms, rules of inference) from Bradley's book is intrinsic to it, expressing an opposition (shared by Mill) to the formalization of reasoning *in principle*, as detaching inference from the practical acquisition of scientific knowledge." <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/bradley/#Logic>

³² Eliot, T. S. (1932). *Essays Ancient and Modern*. USA, Quinn & Boden Company, Inc., Rahway, N.J, p. 48

³³ *ibid*, p. 49

³⁴ Fekete, J. (1977). *The Critical Twilight* London, Henley and Boston, Routledge & Kegan Paul, p. 19

divergence from Bradley is significant -- both in his philosophy of language and in his literary criticism. One of his crucial points of divergence, as Mallinson notes, is his conception of point of view, discussed as phenomenological in the preceding chapter.³⁵ Eliot's philosophy turned *inward* for a criterion of truth.

Eliot's divergences are indicated by his marginal notations. When, in Appearance and Reality, Bradley writes: "The more appearance, in being corrected, is transmuted and destroyed, the less reality can such an appearance contain; or, to put it otherwise, the less genuinely does it represent the Real." Eliot, in a margin, responds: "On the other hand, if it is not (wholly) real, what is it? ... One thing may be less real than another for a particular point of view, but how can it be less real absolutely? Such a statement has no meaning. If less genuine, then more false, + if false, what is it?"³⁶ When Bradley writes: "The dollar, merely thought of or imagined, is comparatively abstract and void of properties." Eliot underlines "comparatively abstract" and responds: "Only from a certain point of view. Absolutely of course one dollar is just as [reality based?] as the other. The absolute point of view is paradoxical."³⁷ Similarly, When Bradley says that "In a complete philosophy the whole world of appearance would be set out as progress", Eliot responds: "This seems to be a relapse into idealism".³⁸ The idealist aspect of Bradley is not accepted by Eliot. When Bradley writes: "contingency is of course always a matter of degree" Eliot writes in a margin "and of finite point of view". Eliot's concept of point of view is, as it were, added to Bradley's ideas about truth.³⁹

³⁵ Mallinson, J. (2002). T.S. Eliot's Interpretation of F.H. Bradley. Dordrecht, Boston and London, Kluwer Academic Publishers

³⁶ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., p. 375-376

³⁷ *ibid*, p. 380

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 498

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 583

It appears that Eliot interpreted Bradley via his study of Husserl. This point is overlooked by nearly all of Eliot's established critics.⁴⁰ Likewise, Eliot's own positive philosophy, which Kearns brilliantly elucidates -- those elements perceived to constitute Eliot's original contribution to the field -- is portrayed quite apart from phenomenology, despite obvious linkages: "Eliot's attempt obliged him first to return for a closer look at the way in which we evolve and handle the distinctions between subject and object and then to elaborate two technical terms of his own, 'half-object' and 'point of view'".⁴¹ William Skaff claims that "only in Bradley's system did Eliot find the potential for a statement of skepticism sufficiently rigorous to suit his penchant for logical precision, and sufficiently thorough to sweep away the philosophical assumptions of the nineteenth century".⁴² Skaff does not include Husserl in his treatment of Eliot's philosophy, but interprets his work on "point of view" as part of the idealist framework.⁴³ Husserl is also altogether missing from Piers Gray's critical analysis. Gray claims: "irony animates Eliot's poetry; and in order to understand it we must proceed straightaway to consider its first full expression, under the pressure of Bradley's thought, in Knowledge and Experience".⁴⁴

M.A.R. Habib picks up on many of the phenomenological features of Eliot's work, without tracing his alignments to the school. He perceives that Eliot believes:

"Consciousness and the world, or subject and object, are artificial ideal constructions", that "Virtually all of Eliot's aesthetics are couched in terms of the connections between emotions

⁴⁰ Cleo McNelly Kearns, for instance, writes: "For both Bradley and Eliot, immediate experience could not really be *thought*, it could only be thought *about*" but neglects to connect this insight concerning the orientation of consciousness to phenomenology. McNelly Kearns, C. (1987). T.S. Eliot and Indic Traditions. New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 122

⁴¹ McNelly Kearns, C. (1987). T.S. Eliot and Indic Traditions. New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 123

⁴² Skaff, W. (1986). The Philosophy of T.S. Eliot: From Skepticism to a Surrealist Poetic: 1909-1927, University of Pennsylvania Press, p. 10

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 18

⁴⁴ Gray, P. (1982). T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development, 1909-1912. Sussex and New Jersey, The Harvester Press, p. 143, 148

and objects”, that “Eliot had argued in his dissertation that truth is ‘private’ ... For Eliot... [this] does not imply a solipsistic withdrawal into subjectivity but rather an emphasis on a sensuous apprehension of experience which is authentic in that its elements are not preordered by received categories of thought”, and that “at its deepest level, Eliot’s problem with realism goes back to its incoherent treatment of the connection between universals and particulars, and, ultimately, of time itself”.⁴⁵ Though accurate, these insights into Eliot’s own philosophy of language are not interpreted through his work in phenomenology.⁴⁶ Eliot’s phenomenology, as opposed to his idealist features, goes a long way towards explaining his turn away from Henri Bergson -- for instance, his rejection of “Bergson’s claim that consciousness and matter are essentially different”.⁴⁷ It explains why he maintained that “part of the poet’s task is to objectify states of consciousness, but there is a continuity between the conscious state and the objects used to express it”.⁴⁸ But because Bradley has featured so centrally as Eliot’s philosophical progenitor, studies explicitly linking Eliot’s work to phenomenology are rare and only recently have made a serious reappearance in the work of, for instance, D.H. Griffiths and W.D. Melaney.

Eliot’s discussion of point of view, seen as Eliot’s “original contribution” to Bradley, is probably just an integration of the central project of phenomenology. In Eliot’s thesis he argues: “We have found that reality is in a sense dependent upon thought, upon a relative point of view, for its existence; for ultimately the world is completely real or completely ideal, and ideality and reality turn out to be the same... *we must examine the various moments of the process of apprehending an object*”.⁴⁹ Here, Eliot interprets Bradley as a phenomenologist;

⁴⁵ Habib, M. A. R. (1999). *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 180, 192, 201

⁴⁶ *ibid*, p. 152

⁴⁷ *ibid*, p. 42-47

⁴⁸ *ibid*, p. 47

⁴⁹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, emphasis mine, p.57

despite noticing that Bradley “does not himself commit to the assertion that non-relational experience is impossible”, he writes (or interprets): “it is implicit in his position”.⁵⁰ This claim is phenomenological -- phenomenology, after all, is “the study of structures of consciousness as experienced from the first-person point of view”.⁵¹ Even as Eliot admires Bradley’s notion of feeling as the pre-dualistic state of being, he adds to this a phenomenological flavour: “feeling itself simply *is*; it is experienced as a moment of identity between self and world”.⁵² In other words, feeling is not so much a category, but a lived experience with a certain amount of time-contingent variability. Habib’s prescient conception of Eliot’s major contribution to twentieth century poetry -- his description of Eliot’s stated goal “to retract the contradictions of the ‘objective’ world into human subjectivity, to see the mutual extremes of unity and diversity as characterising not the world itself but the point of view taken towards the world” -- finds its context in a reading of Eliot as a phenomenologist, rather than as an idealist.⁵³

In Eliot’s thesis, Bradley’s philosophy was publicly staged against Russell’s view that logical language creates universally true descriptions of the real world. Bradley argues against this understanding of language: “since it is admitted that you can analyse a whole into terms and relations, you could not do that unless the relations were really separate. Whether Mr. Russell maintains that every possible distinction has separate reality, I do not know. But that this is the conclusion which must follow, appears to me to be obvious”.⁵⁴ In addressing Russell’s work, Bradley insisted that unity and complexity exist *in the world* prior to signification. This was built into his notion of feeling. In his 1909 article “On Truth and

⁵⁰ *ibid.*

⁵¹ <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/phenomenology/>

⁵² McNelly Kearns, C. (1987). *T.S. Eliot and Indic Traditions*. New York, Cambridge University Press, p. 124

⁵³ Habib, M. A. R. (1999). *The Early T.S. Eliot and Western Philosophy*. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, p. 14-15

⁵⁴ Bradley, F. H. (1914). *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Oxford The Clarendon Press, p. 296

Coherence”, he explained that: “And why, I ask, for the intelligence must there be *datum* without interpretation any more than interpretation without *datum*?”⁵⁵ Facts as data are a threat to Bradley’s view of an ideal language. Bradley presupposes an underlying unity between various types of human judgement. His concern is that the new-fangled popularity of analysis as a mode of dealing with language will overshadow the other aspects of judgment (synthetic judgment, for instance, which combines various aspects of experience to make a new whole: “Analysis and synthesis I take in the end to be two aspects of one principle ... every analysis proceeds from and on the basis of unity. The ‘And’, we have already seen, is nothing but a form of oneness”).⁵⁶ To Bradley, and consequently the young T.S. Eliot, abstractions are (Eliot and Husserl might say “always”) located in a perceiving subject. Bradley charges Russell with “indefensible abstraction” when it comes to the treatment of propositions that are said to be free from any conceivable error or change.⁵⁷

Eliot’s philosophical thinking borrows several of Bradley’s central tenets -- or rather, Bradley’s philosophy overlaps with phenomenological philosophy in ways Eliot would have supported. Hugh Kenner claims that Eliot is unproblematically idealist in his positive philosophy because “It would be surprising if this transient closeness of identification between himself and the English philosopher had not left an ineradicable stain on his mind; and it is precisely as a stain, imparting colour to all else that passes through, that Bradley is most discernible in Eliot’s poetic sensibility”.⁵⁸ However, Eliot adopts some of Bradley’s vocabulary, and seems to articulate agreements with Bradley’s style, Eliot’s explicit

⁵⁵ Bradley, F. H. (1909). "On Truth and Coherence." *Mind* 18(71), p. 330

⁵⁶ Bradley, F. H. (1914). *Essays on Truth and Reality*. Oxford The Clarendon Press , p. 300

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 396

⁵⁸ Kenner, H. (1965). *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 39

philosophical work also radically departs from several of Bradley's epistemological views, especially concerning the Absolute.⁵⁹

Eliot appreciated Bradley's attempt to reconcile the partial with the Absolute, but, as if echoing his 1910 poem "Spleen", he himself stopped "on the doorstep of the Absolute".⁶⁰ Several critics who have allowed themselves a more direct appreciation of Eliot's own views have noticed that Eliot rejects Bradley's notion of the Absolute. Donald Childs notices that "[Eliot] seeks a truth closer to home -- not a transcendental truth in keeping of 'the dead', but an immanent truth 'among the living' -- 'No other time than now, no other place but here'".⁶¹ It is clear that Eliot does not insist, as Bradley did, on an Absolute towards which metaphysics aims, nor does he seem very interested in it. He believed that idealism, realism, and "subjectivism" were simply different ways of understanding phenomena, which were subject to change and point of view. Hugh Kenner considers Bradley *as* a "phenomenologist", but this is probably due to the phenomenological themes discernable in *Eliot's interpretation of Bradley's idealism* (Kenner cites "Bradley's phenomenology" -- a rather convenient conflation of two different schools of thought).⁶² As with other major critical theorists, he neglects to include Husserl in his interpretation of Eliot's work.

Unlike Eliot's work, Bradley's theories capitalised on distinctions between things that are known as true and things that are unknown, between the internal and the external, and

⁵⁹ In terms of his ethics, however, more might be said of Eliot's inheritance from Bradley. During the 1920s, Eliot read Bradley's *Ethical Studies*, and his private copy contains many more checkmarks than found in *Appearance and Reality*. Here too, though, his instincts appear to be similar. For instance, he underlines: "To explain the origin of a man is to utterly annihilate him" (Bradley, F. H. (1927). *Ethical Studies*. Oxford, The Clarendon Press, p. 20) When Bradley argues that "The vulgar are convinced that a gulf divides them from the material world; they believe their being to lie beyond the sphere of mere physical laws" (*ibid*, p. 25) -- highlights and puts a very large checkmark.

⁶⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1967). *Poems Written In Early Youth*. London Faber & Faber, "Spleen", p. 32, line 16

⁶¹ Childs, D. J. (1997). *T.S. Eliot: Mystic, Son & Lover*. Great Britain the Athlone Press LTD, p. 86-87

⁶² Kenner, H. (1965). *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 49

between ideas and experience.⁶³ The fact that Eliot conflates these categories purposefully -- both in his philosophy and in his mature poetics -- further distances him from idealism as a school of thought. Eliot did, however, borrow Bradley's notion that feeling, in the sense of a unity between the self and the world, underpinned all of experience -- he affirmed the idea that thought and feeling were in some way united. The precise nuance of this insight needs explicating.

The Absolute

Bradley defines the Absolute in Hegelian terms: "the Absolute that is at once with the knower and behind him".⁶⁴ Eliot rejects the Absolute -- a keystone of idealism. In a previously unpublished 1913 essay, he calls Bradley's notion of the Absolute "pathetic" and "desperate".⁶⁵ Eliot, like Bradley, elevates impersonality as a virtue -- but impersonality is hardly the same thing as the belief in a totalizing negative system which encapsulates all Reality and guarantees truth. As an idealist, Bradley postulates a continual striving *away* from the pre-articulate depths of Feeling, and towards truth, which is guaranteed by the Absolute. Eliot's premise, in contrast, is that truth and being are commensurate.

Bradley argues that the Absolute enfolds all reality, and thus (Eliot highlights) "Nature in this sense is not dependent on the fancies of the individual, and yet it has no content but what is relative to particular minds".⁶⁶ Of the Absolute, Bradley says (and Eliot notes): "apart from this foundation, in the end, we are left without a solid criterion of worth or of truth or reality... I would venture to press upon any intelligent worshipper of the Un-

⁶³ Bradley, F. H. (1925). Appearance and Reality: A Metaphysical Essay London George Allen & Unwin Ltd, p. 128, 132, 163

⁶⁴ Bradley, F. H. (1909). "On Truth and Coherence." Mind 18(71), p. 342

⁶⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1912-1913). CP I: "Report on the Relation of Kant's Criticism to Agnosticism", p. 42: "His Absolute is ... desperate. Ultimate truth remains inaccessible; and it only remains for Mr. Joachim to shatter what little Bradley has left standing, by urging upon us that we have no right to affirm (though he still affirms it!) that there is truth at all. If it is, what is it?"

⁶⁶ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., p. 278

known”.⁶⁷ Eliot writes, in a margin: “Absolute truth cannot be treated in the same class with finite truth”.⁶⁸ There are moments when Bradley veers towards a phenomenological view of the world (which would place the criterion of truth or knowledge within what is *here and now*) but he always pulls back, at the last minute, and finds solace in the Absolute, abstract, totalizing negativity which encapsulates all “appearance”. In his marginalia, Eliot takes note of places where he seems to suggest a unity between experience and “the world” -- he notes that for Bradley, “Everything, my self included, is essential to, and is inseparable from, the Absolute. And again, it is only in feeling that I can directly encounter Reality”.⁶⁹ But reality is explicitly not existential: “Existence is not reality”.⁷⁰ To this, Eliot responds in a margin: “But this means that both idea and existence are falsified.”

Meaning:

Bradley’s description of the Absolute as a curious sort of negative totality, is paradoxically that which guarantees truth. This has implications for his views on meaning, which favour ideas as the guarantors of truth and fact. Eliot is aware of the radical places Bradley’s scepticism takes him -- his is a decidedly negative ontology, which Eliot mimics but does not adopt. In response to Bradley’s description of truth and fact, which states: “To possess more the character of reality, and to contain within oneself a greater amount of the real, are two expressions for the same thing”, Eliot writes: “Does not the judgment change when its meaning changes?”.⁷¹ Eliot is not sure about Bradley’s relativising of *meaning* -- though he seems sympathetic to Bradley’s relativising of *truth* or *fact*. Again, when Bradley writes: “the principle on which false appearance can be converted into truth we have already set forth... The method consists, as we saw, in supplementation and in re-arrangement... A

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 551

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 545

⁶⁹ *ibid*, Eliot’s underlining copied, p. 526

⁷⁰ *ibid*, p. 400

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 365

total error would mean the attribution of a content to Reality, which, even when redistributed and dissolved, could still not be assimilated.” Eliot responds: “But in this case is it not transmuted by the law of internal relations?”⁷² In keeping with his other notes, such as those in Husserl’s Logical Investigations, Eliot appears to be defending internality and subjectivity. In response to: “The truth and the fact, which, to be converted into the Absolute, would require less re-arrangement and addition, is more real and truer”, to take another example, Eliot writes: “But absolutely, is one rearrangement any less or greater than another? What is your criterion of greater and less? Is it not relative to your present situation, which is itself indefinable”⁷³ This is a crucial difference between Eliot and Bradley -- the *present situation* is what matters to Eliot. In other words, Bradley does not go far enough in defending experience -- *actual, lived, conscious experience, with all its oddities* -- as the means by which humans express meaning. In contrast, “Every idea” Bradley says, “it is certain, possesses a sensible side or aspect... [but] to describe the various existences of ideas, as psychical events, is for the most part a task falling outside metaphysics.”⁷⁴ To the second half of the statement, Eliot responds: “Yet surely an existential part of the idea. Every idea implies a larger whole of wh. it is an attribute. But then it is no longer meaning, no longer itself. Hence truth (relative) is reached only by [illegible. Looks like “interpretation”]”⁷⁵ Truth defers to *meaning*, not to ideal categories.

Misled by Occasion

There are other places where Bradley’s interests diverge from Eliot’s, particularly as concerns language. In Chapter XIX: “The This And The Mine”, Bradley describes occasional references as misleading. He writes “When we turn from mere ideas to sensation, we

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ *ibid*, p. 364

⁷⁴ *ibid*, p. 397-398

⁷⁵ *ibid*, p. 398

experience in the ‘this’ a revelation of freshness and life. And that revelation, if misleading, is never quite untrue. We may, for the present, take ‘this’ as the positive feeling of direct experience”.⁷⁶ Bradley’s concern, however, is not occasional expression for its own sake, but whether or not “the ‘this’ is incompatible with our Absolute”.⁷⁷ Eliot, as has been discussed, is drawn to occasional experience -- this, here, now -- as a means of expressing experience.

Eliot believed that the poet’s task was to find language that would invite readers to feel as the poet felt.⁷⁸ The expression of truth is seen as a form of life -- it is in dialogue with located awareness. Eliot describes *writing* poetry as a struggle “which alone constitutes life for a poet ... to transmute his personal and private agonies into something rich and strange, something universal and impersonal”.⁷⁹ Poetry is not a substitute for philosophy, in Eliot’s view -- it has a special purpose, and this purpose is phenomenological, not idealist:

this function [of poetry] is not intellectual but emotional, it cannot be defined adequately in intellectual terms... What I have said could be expressed more exactly, but at much more length, in philosophical language: it would enter into the department of philosophy which might be called the Theory of Belief (which is not psychology but philosophy, or phenomenology proper) -- the department in which Meinong and Husserl have made some pioneer investigation; the different meanings which belief has in different minds according to the activity for which they are oriented.⁸⁰

⁷⁶ *ibid*, Eliot’s underlining copied, p. 225

⁷⁷ *ibid*, Eliot’s underlining copied, p. 226

⁷⁸ In some respects, Eliot’s conception of impersonality is also bound up with early 20th century philosophy, with its scientific vision of language. Eliot writes that the biographical details and historical contexts “for the appreciation of poetry ... can only lead us to the door: we must find our own way in” (On Poetry and Poets, 130). Although one must analyse or critique poetry without too much attention to personality, in Eliot’s view one must both *read and write* poetry in a personal, rather than an abstract, or indifferent manner: “if in literary criticism, we place all the emphasis upon *understanding*, we are in danger of slipping from understanding to mere explanation. We are in danger even of pursuing criticism as if it was a science, which it never can be. If, on the other hand, we over-emphasize *enjoyment*, we will tend to fall into the subjective and impressionistic, and our enjoyment will profit us no more than mere amusement and pastime ... to-day it seems to me that we need to be more on guard against the purely explanatory” (On Poetry and Poets, 131). As concerns reading criticism of his own poetry, Eliot writes that “It was as if someone had taken a machine to pieces and left me with the task of reassembling the parts. I suspect, in fact, that a good deal of the value of an interpretation is -- that it should be my own interpretation. There are many things, perhaps, to know about this poem, or that, many facts about which scholars can instruct me which will help me to avoid definite misunderstanding; but a valid interpretation, I believe, must be at the same time an interpretation of my own feelings when I read it” (On Poetry and Poets, 127).

⁷⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 137

⁸⁰ *ibid*, p. 137-138

Eliot aligns his notion of the unity of thought and feeling, which he sees as the function of poetry, explicitly with the phenomenological programme, and with his own search for a nuanced understanding of meaning across a range of points of view.

Feeling

In Eliot's private copy of Bradley's Essays on Truth and Reality, there are almost no annotations, save for a few highlighted sections dealing with feeling. In Chapter VI, "On Our Knowledge of Immediate Experience", Eliot highlights Bradley's claim that "there is an immediate feeling, a knowing and a being in one, with which knowledge begins; and, though this in a manner is transcended, it nevertheless remains throughout as the present foundation of my known world".⁸¹ Unsurprisingly, it is the idea that feeling is grounded in present experience which seems to interest Eliot most, though in his thesis he gives no indication that he can accept *transcendence of feeling* as an essential part of knowledge (as Bradley argues). He highlights: "[Feeling] is not a stage which shows itself at the beginning and then disappears, but it remains at the bottom throughout as fundamental".⁸² He notices that to Bradley, feeling can be apprehended directly, and unites, in some sense, objects and the perceiving subject, highlighting:

In any emotion one part of that emotion consists already of objects, of perceptions and ideas before my mind. And, the whole emotion being one, the special group of feeling is united with these objects before my mind, united with them integrally and directly though not objectively... There are features in feeling (this is the point) which already in a sense belong to and are one with their object, since the emotion contains and unites both its aspects".⁸³

The notion that feeling is what binds subjects to objects is taken up by Eliot in his philosophical work.

Bradley's depiction of feeling changes throughout Appearance and Reality, and presents itself in several aspects. Eliot highlights the more succinct of his usages of the term:

⁸¹ Bradley, F. H. (1914). Essays on Truth and Reality. London Oxford University Press., p. 159-160

⁸² *ibid*, p. 161

⁸³ *ibid*, p. 169

“feeling [is] a term which we must take in two senses”.⁸⁴ The second sense of “feeling”, double highlighted by Eliot, is “present at any stage of mental life, in so far as that is only present and simply is”.⁸⁵ At the same time, feeling is described as “The felt background, from which the theoretic object stands out, is supposed in no way to contribute to its being. But even at the stage of perception or sensation, this hypothesis breaks down. And, when we advance to reflective thinking, such a position clearly is untenable”.⁸⁶ Eliot highlights this, and references the notion of a “felt background” in his thesis, but gives it a slight twist: “we are led to the conclusion that the only independent reality is immediate experience or feeling. And we have seen that to think of feeling as subjective, as the mere adjective of a subject, is only a common prejudice... *I am my feeling*”.⁸⁷ One is *constituted* by the feeling of oneness with one’s world. This is the phenomenological move -- not to speak of a world “out there” -- one *is* the world: “we find ourselves as conscious souls in a world of objects”.⁸⁸

There are other statements Bradley makes about feeling which do not seem to align so easily with Eliot’s thought. For instance, Bradley writes (and Eliot highlights): “By an attempt to fall back upon mere feeling below relations nothing would be gained. For with the loss of the relations, and with the persistence of the unity, even the appearance of independence on the part of the diversity is gone. And again feeling is self-transcendent, and is perfected mainly by way of relations ... above them”.⁸⁹ In his thesis, Eliot argues almost the opposite case, and calls feeling a “positive non-distinguished non-relational whole”, admitting

⁸⁴ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., p. 458

⁸⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 461

⁸⁷ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 31

⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., p. 617, highlighting copied

that Bradley himself probably would not accept his view.⁹⁰ Feeling for Eliot, in other words, constitutes reality itself, and would not be “perfected by way of relations”. He would probably, then, reject Bradley’s view (which he highlights) that: “Feeling ... must be taken as a sort of confusion, and as a nebula which would grow distinct on closer scrutiny”.⁹¹ Eliot underlines the aspects of feeling he prefers -- the idea of feeling as part of the experience of unity, which is “immediate and not relational.”⁹² He does not appear to think one should *transcend* feeling, so much as *transform* it into something others can access, through language.

Eliot argues *imperfectly* along Bradleyan lines: “Feeling, thought, and volition ... are the material of existence, and there is no other material, actual or possible... what I repudiate is the separation of feeling from the felt, or of the desired from desire, or what is thought from thinking”.⁹³ Eliot believes, as Bradley does, that feeling unites with thought, and is expressed in language.⁹⁴ However, he takes a more radical position when he says, “In feeling the subject and the object are one”.⁹⁵ Feeling, according to Eliot, is a phenomenological experience, whereby what is “inside” and what is “outside” in any given moment come together in time (as Childs would say, *here, now*). Eliot notes that for Bradley, while “to find reality, we must betake ourselves to feeling”,⁹⁶ at the same time, the idealist would insist that: “To remain within the presented is neither defensible nor possible. We are compelled alike by necessity

⁹⁰ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 31

⁹¹ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., p. 473

⁹² *ibid*, p. 582

⁹³ *ibid*, p. 144, 146

⁹⁴ *ibid*, p. 20-21

⁹⁵ *ibid*, p. 21

⁹⁶ Bradley, F. H. (1908). Appearance and Reality. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., p. 250

and logic to transcend it".⁹⁷ Eliot does not demand this transcendence, arguing instead for a *transformation* of the internal landscape into shared experience.

Eliot's notion of feeling, though similar to Bradley's in one sense, diverges from idealism in another. Bradley holds that "The experience the stream of feeling is made of does not involve the reality either of the perceiving self or of the perceived object. Self and not-self are to be conceived as the result of arrangement of feeling's content into two distinct groups".⁹⁸ To Bradley, feeling is not "really us". Eliot takes note of this: He underlines: "We may confuse the feeling which we study with the feeling which we are. Attempting, so far as we can, to make an object of some (past) psychical whole, we may unawares seek there every feature which we now are and feel".⁹⁹ Here, it seems Bradley is intent on describing feeling as an abstract category, rather than something that is *real*.

If Eliot's view of feeling is only partially influenced by Bradley, we can agree with Edward Lobb, who argues that Eliot's "relation to Bradley, though it may have been philosophically decisive, is, in terms of literary significance, slight".¹⁰⁰ Eliot's interpretation of feeling is phenomenologically flavoured. It is not just that the act of feeling is a sublated category from which object and subject can be abstracted -- feeling is also a criterion of lived experience -- an experience that can be *replicated* in expression. Eliot's aim is not to replace this underlying feeling, ultimately, with an absolute description; he writes: "We are not here concerned with the absolute objective criterion for the permanence and independence of any special class of objects; it is enough if we can make clear that we have no immediate

⁹⁷ *ibid*, Eliot's underlining copied, p. 251

⁹⁸ Basile, P. (2004). "Why Did Bradley Matter to Whitehead?" *Bradley Studies* **10**(1&2), p. 17-18

⁹⁹ Bradley, F. H. (1908). *Appearance and Reality*. London, Swan Sonnenschein & Co., Lim., Eliot's underlining copied, p. 232

¹⁰⁰ Lobb, E. (1981). *T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition* London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, p. 160

distinction between object and feeling”.¹⁰¹ Rather, Eliot seeks the transformation of feeling into shared significance.

Other Divergences

Of the literary critics who have worked on the relationship between Eliot and Bradley (such as Richard Wollheim), Jane Mallinson and Rebecca Beasley stand out for their ability to articulate the significant *differences* between Eliot’s young philosophy and Bradley’s idealism. These differences become even more significant as Eliot matures, and as the philosophical balance of power shifts in Europe and America. As Beasley notes, “While Eliot’s dissertation accepted certain aspects of Bradley’s philosophy, it was also critical of some of its most important concepts”.¹⁰² The crux of Eliot’s own contribution to the language is: “Any separation we claim between reality and unreality is relative, that is, it depends on our point of view”.¹⁰³ Mallinson notices that critics have often overstated similarities between the philosophies of Eliot and Bradley because there has been an assumption from the start that Eliot’s early *focus on* and *interest* in Bradley, and the adoption of a certain style or rhetorical framework, presuppose shared, or even identical, philosophical beliefs throughout his life. Mallinson beautifully summarises Eliot’s divergence from Bradley: “while Bradley is concerned with a consistent metaphysical system, in his dissertation Eliot refuses to speculate beyond the confines of what can actually be known”.¹⁰⁴ Despite his defense of metaphysics as-such, it is Eliot’s interest in the phenomenal world, in the transient modes of consciousness, that remains with him in his criticism and poetry. Put differently: “Eliot is

¹⁰¹ Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 22, 25

¹⁰² Beasley, R. (2007). Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound. London and New York, Routledge, p. 43

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 44

¹⁰⁴ Mallinson, J. (2002). T.S. Eliot's Interpretation of F.H. Bradley. Dodrecht, Boston and London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 8

content if the theory of mind which he describes works for us now in this world of appearances".¹⁰⁵

Bradley provided Eliot with an alternative to the "crude and raw and provincial" option of materialism. Eliot writes: "in an unbalanced or uncultured philosophy words have a way of changing their meaning ... or else they are made, in a most ruthless and piratical manner, to walk the plank ... but Bradley, like Aristotle, is distinguished by his scrupulous respect for words, that their meaning should be neither vague nor exaggerated; and the tendency of his labours is to bring British philosophy closer to the Greek tradition".¹⁰⁶ Bradley's style appealed to Eliot's sensibilities, but Eliot was not an idealist.

Eliot's positive philosophy might be described as a phenomenological interpretation of Bradley's work. As Gray puts it: "He is attempting to satisfy the demand for the Absolute, here and now".¹⁰⁷ Eliot's thesis, if it can be read as Bradleyan, must be read as a "radicalized version" of Bradley's thinking.¹⁰⁸ Bradley's idealism is also, we must note, unreconcilable to phenomenology in important respects; the phenomenologist posits no ultimate stopping place for theory as a first principle. Phenomenology helps account for the peculiarity of Eliot's early metaphysical instincts -- with their source in the human subject and its lack of final stopping places.

Eliot's attention to thought and feeling united in poetic expression, and his insistence on the grounding of language in finitude, represents an under-appreciated feature of his poetic approach. Following a classical line of thought, Frank Kermode describes Eliot as "a critic ... early committed to external authority against the inner voice; to the surrender of self to

¹⁰⁵ *ibid*, p.12

¹⁰⁶ Eliot, T.S. *Essays Ancient and Modern*, p. 61

¹⁰⁷ Gray, P. (1982). T.S. Eliot's Intellectual and Poetic Development, 1909-1912. Sussex and New Jersey, The Harvester Press, p. 183

¹⁰⁸ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." Journal of Modern Literature 36(3), p.197

something greater; to permanence as the opposite and measure of change; to the intemporal as opposed to merely sequential time and history...".¹⁰⁹ This is the more established reading of Eliot's poetic style, which is used to locate Eliot's work within the rubric of "modernism" more generally. This reading sees the primary philosophical influence Eliot carries from his early studies to his later work as that of idealism. Although Eliot has much to say about impersonality and self-surrender within poetry and literature, his criticism and philosophy affirm the uniqueness of feeling available to each individual author, and often describes the value of time-contingent consciousness, interpretation, and point of view as pertaining to meaning. Eliot's more nuanced points concerning thought, feeling, truth, and language are sometimes overlooked because of his strong statements concerning impersonality in his more popular critical essays, such as his affirmation of order and tradition in "Tradition and the Individual Talent" and "Hamlet".

Intentionality

As Jane Mallinson points out, the concept of intentionality marks another significant deviation from Bradley's work. Intentionality, in the phenomenological sense, refers to the tendency of the mind to be *directed* towards objects. As discussed previously, this means that any object seen is seen *in a particular way*, conditioned by the mind which represents it. Eliot's concern for *how the mind intends* runs throughout his early writing.¹¹⁰ Intentionality is an activity of thought -- *the way in which* the mind orients itself when representing something -- including believing, perceiving, remembering, desiring, and so forth. These acts condition meaning. Eliot's use of the notion of intentional activity is almost certainly derived from his studies of "acts" in Husserl's work.¹¹¹ As previously noted, Eliot wrestles with Husserl's

¹⁰⁹ Kermodé, Frank. *Introduction to Eliot, T. S.* (1975). Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot. London, Faber & Faber Limited, p. 19

¹¹⁰ See, for instance, Eliot, T.S. CPI, p. 273, 312, 321, 340, and so on

¹¹¹ Jane Mallinson notes that for Eliot "Intention is an activity ... Eliot cannot accept Bradley's view" Mallinson, J. (2002). T.S. Eliot's Interpretation of F.H. Bradley. Dordrecht, Boston and London, Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 18, 14, 38

concept of an “act” of intention in the Logical Investigations. Mallinson describes Eliot’s philosophical - poetic temperament as a “celebration of the fusion of language and thought, which while not asserting that something is true, makes that truth more fully real to us”.¹¹² Eliot sought to *evoke* the inner world out of which the poem is born -- to stir, in the reader, associations of sensibility which would “mirror” *not* the external world, but the internal one (with its memories, desires, expectations, and so on).

Eliot’s interest in intentionality could drastically alter approaches to readings of his poetics. If we approach the poem *not* with attention to meaning as-referential to a set of truths or facts, but with attention to meaning as-associative -- as an expression of a drama of consciousness which is *reenacted* in the reading, we will ask different questions of the poem. We will stop asking “what is it” that is meant, and will ask “which associative complexes are highlighted by this term?” “What emotion is found in this poem?” “What *ideas* are being entertained or complicated by this poem -- how?” These are *empathetic* readings of Eliot’s poetry -- readings which assume that the reader’s experience of the poem is *very much like* entering the conscious lifeworld of another person (or people). What motivates or worries the actors in this drama? How are their objects framed by their expectations, desires, or memories? By not taking for granted the problem of meaning, critics can ask questions which might illuminate the “philosophy of the poem”.¹¹³

To discuss Eliot’s notion of intentionality using a classical phenomenological framework is to diverge from Eliot’s oft-cited discussion of personality in “Tradition and the

¹¹² *ibid*, p. 42

¹¹³ In his address, “Scylla and Charybdis”, we find that the philosophy of a poem only attributes to certain types of poets -- those who have philosophical training: “the phrase ‘the philosophy of the poem’ is not equally applicable to every kind of poem. It is most relevant to the poems of those poets who, if they had not been poets, might have been philosophers. That includes poets who, if they had turned to poetry, might have achieved only a very modest place as philosophers. Among these latter, I do not disguise the fact that I include myself”. Eliot, T. S. (1952). "Scylla and Charybdis " Agenda: An Anthology (The First Four Decades 1959-1993), p. 295

Individual Talent”.¹¹⁴ That is, it is necessary to provide a counter-interpretation to the standard New Critical reading of Eliot’s view concerning intention. New Criticism had a distinct reading of intention, which attempted to use Eliot’s critical writings as a standard bearer for the “Death of the Author” in literature. W.K. Wimsatt and M.C. Beardsley’s now-famous article, “The Intentional Fallacy”, argued against searches for authorial intention in literary criticism. In the article, the authors write:

The question of ‘allusiveness,’ ... as acutely posed by the poetry of Eliot, is certainly one where a false judgment is likely to involve the intentional fallacy. The frequency and depth of literary allusion in the poetry of Eliot and others has driven so many in pursuit of full meanings ... to suppose that we do not know what a poet means unless we have traced him in his reading -- a supposition redolent with intentional implications.¹¹⁵

Though the authors admit that Eliot himself justifies some of his poetry in terms of intention, they insist that his work is best read without reference to “the author” as-such. In other words, Eliot’s comments about “personality” are mapped onto a philosophy which argues against the author’s *meaning* as being relevant to critical readings of poetry.

If Eliot’s statements concerning intention being *altered by consciousness* draw any inspiration from phenomenology, it is necessary to first understand what Husserl would have thought about intentionality. Husserl’s interest in the Logical Investigations was “the clarification of the *meaning* of a linguistic expression”.¹¹⁶ Meaning is an *act* of interpretation, not simply a “thing” that is taken for granted as pre-determinately defined. Husserl, like Eliot, starts with objects (rather than data).¹¹⁷ The question he asks in the Investigations is, *how* does a name designate an object? His answer involves the admission that an object is named under

¹¹⁴ Peter Lamarque, to take one of many examples, traces the intentional fallacy itself directly to this essay, in (2006). Literary Theory and Criticism: An Oxford Guide, Oxford University Press, p. 178

¹¹⁵ Wimsatt Jr., W. K. a. B., M.C. (1946). "The Intentional Fallacy." The Sewanee Review 54(3), p.482

¹¹⁶ Welton, D. (2003). The New Husserl: A Critical Reader United States, Indiana University Press, p. 261

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 262

different aspects in different situations.¹¹⁸ Thus, expressions are framed under different cognitive conditions.¹¹⁹

Intentionality, then, is more primordial than definition. It is the character that qualifies all our language acts. The open-endedness of Husserl's theory of intentionality in the Logical Investigations has come under scrutiny, since the theory essentially allows that an object's givenness cannot always be thematized by a single meaning of an expression.¹²⁰ Similarly, the double-sidedness of Husserl's use of the term "object" (to indicate both that which is a state of affairs and that which is expressed in a sentence) has been criticised. It is not clear, philosophers argue, whether Husserl gives a precise formula for *how* the object's "real meaning" is deduced, since he relies heavily on an open-ended notion of intentionality to animate objects.¹²¹ However, it is clear that by directing the philosopher's attention away from the object as-category.

To Husserl, the *Erlebnis* (roughly, experience) of a subject is always object-directed. That is -- there is no thinking without *thinking about*.¹²² Put differently, "categorical intuition is reducible to a kind of inner seeing".¹²³ Griffiths notes: "Certainly in reading Husserl in Marburg Eliot would have found a philosophical ally developing a theory of the intentional nature of consciousness, the idea that conscious experience is always an experience of something, structured such that it is always intent on something beyond itself".¹²⁴ Throughout Eliot's critical work, a similar notion of intentionality, which diverges significantly from

¹¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 263

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p. 284

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p. 264

¹²¹ *ibid*, p. 265

¹²² *ibid*, p. 266

¹²³ Welton, D. (2003). The New Husserl: A Critical Reader United States, Indiana University Press, p. 275

¹²⁴ Griffiths, D. H. (2012). 'A Raid on the inarticulate': exploring authenticity, ereignis and dwelling in Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot, The University of Auckland. **PhD**, p. 16

Bradley's idealism, is espoused. Expression exists in a context of use, and is *orientated* towards experience -- the inner world reaches outwards, in a manner of speaking.

In 1919 (shortly after completing his philosophical work) Eliot argues for the *affectivity* of poetry as significant to the creation of a poem: "Speech must be used to a particular effect".¹²⁵ The poet reaches at an unknown child, born in particular cognitive circumstances.¹²⁶ Before writing a poem, *one does not yet know* what one means. The meaning is revealed in the process. The work of the poet is to articulate feelings that have not yet been given form -- the feeling is specific, but undisclosed. In an unpublished address to the Women's Alliance on December 1, 1932, Eliot argues: "We can only use our strongest and deepest feelings [to write good poetry] and we often do not know what those are".¹²⁷ Of the poet, Eliot remarks: "He does not know what he has to say until he has said it, and in the effort to say it he is not concerned with making other people understand anything. He is not concerned, at this stage, with other people at all: only with finding the right words or, anyhow, the least wrong words".¹²⁸ The sensibility of the poet is an attention to the as-yet-undefined, but what he reaches at is specific to his particular conscious lifeworld.

It is clear that Eliot sustains a positive assessment of intentionality in his literary criticism (if by intentionality we mean an orientation that conditions meaning), and that the artist's attention to meaning plays a central role in the creation of a work of art. The New Critic would argue that the author's meaning and intent are wholly inaccessible to readers. Eliot describes a symbiotic relationship between reader and author at times, and intentionality seems central to this relationship. He argues, for instance:

One can explain a poem by investigating what it is made of and the causes that brought it about; and explanation may be a necessary preparation for understanding. But to understand a poem it is also

¹²⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p. 42

¹²⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1957). *On Poetry and Poets*. New York Farrar, Straus and Giroux, p. 106-107

¹²⁷ Eliot, T.S. Hou B MS Am 1691, p. 16

¹²⁸Eliot, T. S. (1957). *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 107

necessary, and I should say in most instances still more necessary, that we should endeavor to grasp what the poetry is aiming to be; one might say -- though it is long since I have employed such terms with any assurance -- endeavoring to grasp its entelechy.¹²⁹

“Entelechy” is an Aristotelian term which gestures towards “possibility” “potentiality” and “potency” -- it crops up again in Leibniz’s notions of the monad -- notions Eliot found compelling in his early work.¹³⁰ How can we grasp what a poem is *aiming to be* unless we also have some direct relationship with its *intentionality* -- that is, the beliefs, desires, moods, memories, and so forth, the poem expresses? Eliot believes that the *genuine poet* can pass the following test: “Has this poet something to say, a little different from what anyone has said before, and has he found, not only a different way of saying it, but *the* different way of saying it which expresses the difference in what he is saying?”¹³¹ The consciousness which creates the poem is not a matter of indifference to literary criticism.

Conclusion

Although Eliot appreciates Bradley’s style, and champions him against other philosophies of his day polemically, there are significant divergences between Eliot’s view of language and meaning, and those presented by Bradley’s philosophy. His notion of feeling is intimately connected to Bradley’s work. However, his ideas about point of view, the Absolute, Meaning, and Intentionality are distinct from British idealism. Taking account of Eliot’s other philosophical interests opens up an avenue for new questions about the way modernist poetics encounters the problem of language -- for example, the way it legitimises *empathetic* rather than categorical readings of his poetry.

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p. 122

¹³⁰ Here some forthcoming work from Joseph Shear (Christ Church, Oxford) on “horizontality” in the work of Husserl might be helpful. Dr. Shear has been helpful in articulating this concept and helping to refine my own reading of Husserl, and any scholar with an interest in phenomenological horizons of meaning in poetry might find this work illuminating.

¹³¹ Eliot, T. S. (1957). *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 48

Chapter Four: Before the taking of a toast and tea: Critical Themes

“For the *idea* behind a poem will always be less than the *meaning* of the poem... In a poem, one does not altogether know what it is that one has to say, until one has said it; for what one intends to say is altered in the course of making poetry of it...”

(T.S. Eliot “*Scylla and Charybdis*”)

When Eliot made the transition from philosopher to poet and critic, he integrated key philosophical insights into his theory of poetic language. In the mid 1920s, critical versions of his early philosophy regarding point of view (as something grounded in the conscious “now” of experience), pre-stratified feeling (as that which unites subject and object), and an attention to meaning as a process or activity, are all ascertainable. His literary criticism, with its vision of language, is indebted to his early anti-descriptivism and his phenomenological reading of idealist metaphysics.

The clearest connection between Eliot’s early philosophical work and the model of poetic form he espouses can be found in lectures given at Cambridge in 1926, developed out of an earlier train of thought. The Clark Lectures offer a synthesis and summary of the core theory of language that had motivated Eliot from the beginning of his career. This chapter will examine this critical moment of Eliot’s philosophical and poetic development in closer detail, and also trace some of his central philosophical notions forward as they appear in early and then later critical essays.

The Metaphysical Poets

Commissioned in 1925, and delivered a year later, Eliot’s Clark Lectures attempt to refocus his contemporaries on seventeenth century poetry and to discard what he saw as negative residual effects of the Romantic poets. These lectures underscore a clear and consistent programme for modern poetry -- an approach which is also explicitly philosophical: “it is the function of the metaphysical poet to transform thought into feeling and feeling into thought, as it is the function of other poets to fix and stabilise emotions as

they exist. What I am insisting on is the role of the artist in the development and maintenance of the mind”.¹ As is well-known, Eliot was overtly critical of Romantic poetry, while simultaneously smuggling in elements of the Romantic into his own work. Ostensively, Eliot wanted to return to a pre-Romantic style, arguing: “Romanticism is a short cut to the strangeness without the reality, and it leads its disciples only back upon themselves”.² In the lectures, Eliot did not mince words in his critique of Romanticism. Because of Romantic poetry, he writes, “the development of English literature was retarded”.³ He explains: “I have long felt that the poetry of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, even much of that of inferior inspiration, possesses an elegance and a dignity absent from the popular and pretentious verse of the Romantic Poets and their successors”.⁴ In Elizabethan verse, in contrast, Eliot found “this progress in adaptation, a development from monotony to variety, a progressive refinement in the perception of the variations of feeling, and a progressive elaboration of the means of expressing these variations”.⁵ The philosophical register -- those themes already discussed in previous chapters -- is here translated into the literary. Eliot forwards his own ideals of poetic technique as “an improvement in language”.⁶ In the lectures, Eliot gathers together his favourite poets and defines them as “metaphysical”. This oddly philosophical defense of a poetic metaphysics harkens back to his concern for the “death” of metaphysics as promoted by thinkers like Russell, and transposes itself into literary discourse, where it seems Eliot felt more freedom to espouse a view of language he found compelling.

¹ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture VIII: The Nineteenth Century: Summary and Comparison”, p. 749

² Eliot, T.S. (1919). CP II: “A Romantic Aristocrat”, p. 30

³ Eliot, T.S. (1919). CP II: “The Romantic Generation, If It Existed”, p. 79

⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1924). CP II: “Preface: Homage to John Dryden”, p. 546

⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1919). CP II: “‘Rhetoric’ and Poetic Drama”, p. 89

⁶ *ibid*, p. 84.

Eliot sought to articulate what he saw as the common features of the “School of Donne”. The lectures “analytically” outline the method of the metaphysical poets.⁷ Eliot “confess[es] freely to having started from this experience: from having read in the three periods, and having thought of them all as ‘metaphysical,’ separately; and of having collocated them when I was obliged to consider the poetry of the seventeenth century. And the natural result follows. Any definition, such as mine, must be one as much imposed upon the material as derived from it”.⁸ Samuel Johnson’s eighteenth century use of the term “metaphysical poets” undoubtedly centered Eliot’s thoughts on the subject.⁹ Eliot’s notion of metaphysics mimics Johnson’s notion of “wit, abstracted from its effects upon the hearer”, described as “a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike”. This, Johnson said, was the key feature of metaphysical poetry. Eliot says that Donne’s metaphysics rests in his use of “violent contrast”.¹⁰ Similarly, Johnson argues that in metaphysical poetry, “The most heterogeneous ideas are yoked by violence together; nature and art are ransacked for illustrations, comparisons, and allusions; their learning instructs and their subtlety surprises”.

Unlike Johnson, who describes the reader of metaphysical poetry as “seldom pleased”, and who argues that the metaphysical poets “were not successful in representing or moving the affections”, Eliot admires the techniques employed by the British lyric poets of the seventeenth century. Of the “metaphysical” period, Eliot writes that the virtue of the poetic method was “something permanently valuable, which subsequently disappeared, but

⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry”, p. 612

⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture VIII: The Nineteenth Century: Summary and Comparison”, p. 752

⁹ Johnson, S. (1916). *Metaphysical Poets. English Prose, Selections with Critical Introductions by Various Writers and General Introductions to Each Period* H. Craik. New York, The Macmillan Company 4. Accessed online: <http://www.bartleby.com/209/775.html> 06/06/2015

¹⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture II: Donne and the Middle Ages”, p. 639, and (1921) “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 376

ought not to have disappeared”.¹¹ Curiously, he uses German to define the sense of metaphysics he is after: He seeks to include poets “we can agree to be *echt metaphysisch*” (“really metaphysical”).¹²

The sense in which these poets *are* “really metaphysical”, however, requires some elaboration. In the lectures, Eliot argues that there are “essentially two ways in which poetry can add to human experience. One is by perceiving and recording accurately the world ... the other by extending the frontiers of this world”.¹³ The “accurate representation” might be compared to the correspondence theory of truth Eliot heavily critiqued in his early philosophy. The doorway to what might be “beyond physical” or transcendent in a poem is located unequivocally within human consciousness and phenomenal experience. Eliot uses the analogy of the ladder: “A new and wider and loftier world ... must be built upon a solid foundation of the old tangible world; it will not descend like Jacob’s ladder”.¹⁴ This is certainly not an idealist framework for poetry.

As in Eliot’s philosophical work on language, articulating a metaphysical or transcendental truth involves pursuing horizons of meaning within the active consciousness: he admires the way the metaphysical poets mimic the process and activity of thought -- the “play of suggested ideas” -- and calls Donne “the great ruler of that borderland of fading and change”.¹⁵ When he outlines Donne’s own philosophy, the residue of his philosophy is unmistakable: “The idea you observe ... [developed] in the direction of the external reality which it intends; it is not a fancy, and it is not detached from the external facts”.¹⁶ Here too, poetry that is overtly descriptive and literalist is derided. Both the vocabulary and the content

¹¹ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 378-379

¹² Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry”, p. 613

¹³ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture III: Donne and the *Trecento*”, p. 649

¹⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture IV: The Conceit in Donne”, p. 675

¹⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture II: Donne and the Middle Ages”, p. 640

of Eliot's views on Donne recall the terms of his early work, wherein the objects of experience were altered by observational "point of attention": the idea is *directed, mingled* with phenomenal reality by an act of consciousness.

Eliot bemoans the loss of the "original" philosophical registers or contributions of poets from literature: "What happens to a poet who has an original philosophy? Does he not become the victim of those who want their philosophy cheap and without thought, and is he not, like Blake, perpetually a riddle to those who seriously would estimate his greatness as a poet?".¹⁷ The Clark Lectures reassert Eliot's philosophical concern for the phenomenal combination of feeling -- something pre-logical -- with thought -- something public, shared, understood. Of the various poetic methods possible, Eliot, later in life, continued to argue that "the essential is that each expresses, in perfect language, some permanent human impulse... What every poet starts from is his own emotions".¹⁸ Good poetry, in Eliot's view, modifies emotion by thought and thought by emotion.¹⁹

To combine feeling and thought, the poet uses what is perceived or sensed by the mind in the present moment. Eliot champions "a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne", and points to the future of literary culture more generally: "The most awful state of society that could be imagined would be that in which a maximum condition of sensibility was co-existent with a maximum attainment of thought -- and no emotions uniting the two".²⁰ Here, emotion is not the ephemeral *personal* emotion he derides elsewhere, but rather the means by which unity between a person's thinking and their experienced reality is established. The idea must be clothed in flesh, and emotion is the bridge between the two. Without the bridge, literalism on

¹⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1926), CP II, "Lecture VIII: The Nineteenth Century: Summary and Comparison", *ibid*, p. 751

¹⁸ P/33 'Poetical and Prosaic Use of Words' [Lecture] Typescript, uncorrected, 20 pp. Delivered at Reading University, 1943. Paper, bound with (p. 4) p.137

¹⁹Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry", p. 615

²⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture VIII: The Nineteenth Century", p. 749

the one hand, and maudlinism on the other, would reign supreme. Thus, the poet ought not *describe* an emotion (“I felt x, y, z”), but *express it* as part of conscious experience. He promotes Laforgue because “Here is a poet genuinely occupied with the relation of feeling and thought, not, like Browning and Meredith, playing with their mechanical combinations”.²¹ Seventeenth century poetry involves a “yoking together of the dissimilar”.²²

The way feeling and thought can harmonise in the poem is by an expression of time-contingency or flux. The poem mimics the process of thought by using rapid assimilations and successions of images:

the emotion, the feeling, does not simply stop at one point, and verbiage begin; rather, it is never verbiage because there is always some emotion or feeling present. We watch a strange kaleidoscope of feeling; with suggested images, suggested conceits, the feeling is always melting, changing, into another feeling; we get a kind of unity in flux, which is Donne. There is no structure of thought, but every thought is felt, every image has a peculiar feel to it.²³

We should note here that “feeling” and “emotion” are used interchangeably -- the terms are thus not used with perfect philosophical consistency, but the argument remains. Eliot derides sentimentalism and wishes for something “deeper”. He argues the poet combines feeling and thought by fusing metaphysical and phenomenal reality, and by refusing to give the reader any tidy definition of this experience. Such ideal poetry “clothes the abstract, for a moment, with all the painful delight of flesh”.²⁴ He outlines specific ways that thought and poetry fuse. One “type” of fusion, he says, occurs when a philosophical thought is expressed within the poem.²⁵ What he appears to mean by this is that a line of philosophy can be used directly in a poem (as, for instance, he uses a line from Husserl’s *Ideas* in “Coriolan”, discussed in the following chapter). Another type of emotional thought appears, as it does in Donne’s work,

²¹ *ibid*, p. 746

²² *ibid*, p. 748

²³ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture V: Donne’s Longer Poems”, p. 692

²⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture I: Introduction: On the Definition of Metaphysical Poetry”, p. 617

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 616

when an idea is expressed *directly, sensually*, using an illustration.²⁶ A poem such as Donne's "The Flea", which is as much a commentary on the "fusion and identification of souls in sexual love" does not need to *state* its idea, it *performs* the moment the mind seizes upon its object of representation.²⁷

Eliot's close attention to the language debates in contemporary philosophy are also echoed in his description of the philosophical revolution which shaped Donne's poetic work: "The revolution was immense. Instead of ideas as meanings, as references to an outside world, you have suddenly a new world coming into existence, inside your own mind and therefore by the usual implication inside your own head".²⁸ This appeal to consciousness essentially casts Donne as a phenomenologist. Donne dresses his ideas in the physical -- *as experienced by a mind here and now* -- not as an arrangement of bloodless categories. Eliot's own phenomenological philosophy of the interdependence between the mind and its objects reappears alongside these views:

to turn the attention to the mind in this way is to create, for the objects alter by being observed. To contemplate an idea, because it is my idea, to observe its emotional infusion, to play with it, instead of using it as a plain and simple meaning, brings often curious and beautiful things to light, though it lends itself, this petting and teasing of one's mental offspring, to extremities of torturing of language.²⁹

Here again, Eliot reasserts his characteristic respect for the process of interpretive activity, which plays "at the borders" of conventional meaning, and infuses thought with the subjective.

Eliot thinks that the loss of the "metaphysical" or metaphorical leap in poetry -- the leap which yokes ideas to things "is something which happened to the mind of England between the time of Donne or Lord Herbert of Cherbury and the time of Tennyson and Browning; it is the difference between the intellectual poet and the reflective poet. Tennyson

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ *ibid.*

²⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture II: Donne and the Middle Ages", p. 635

²⁹ *ibid.*

and Browning are poets, and they think; but they do not feel their thought as immediately as the odour of a rose.”³⁰

In keeping with his views on feeling and thought, Eliot appeals to the “sensibility” of his readership. The fight of the early seventeenth century, to Eliot’s mind -- a battle to combine thought and feeling -- ought to be taken up again by 20th century poets:

The poets of the seventeenth century, the successors of the dramatists of the sixteenth, possessed a mechanism of sensibility which could devour any kind of experience... In the [late] seventeenth century a dissociation of sensibility set in ... while the language became more refined, the feeling became more crude ... the poets revolted against the ratiocinative, the descriptive; they thought and felt by fits, unbalance; they reflected ... there are traces of a struggle towards unification of sensibility. But Keats and Shelley died, and Tennyson and Browning ruminated.³¹

Eliot attempts to pick up the theoretical torch where the late seventeenth century left off -- in a move to bind thought and feeling, rather than succumb to sentimentalism or alienate consciousness with pure abstractions. Meaning, in the poet’s work, resists the descriptive modality and is found in the phenomenal -- the reflective sensory moment signified in the word -- the point of attention made clear *in the moment*, recalling Eliot’s early thought: “The subject, like the object, is a construction in time. It is by the intersection of knowing and activity that we get real objects and real subjects”.³² In Eliot’s thinking, the metaphysical poets developed “the consciousness of the meaning of the word”.³³ What is “the word” in this context? Eliot asserts: “the word is not merely the noise, as in the lyric, not merely the meaning, as in philosophical poetry; the word is interesting for its own meaning, as well as for what the writer means to mean by it”.³⁴ Put differently, language appeals, for its meanings, to an associative context, and to a writer’s own intuitions about a word. This, it seems Eliot is

³⁰ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 380

³¹ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 380

³² Eliot, T.S. (1914). “Object and Point of View”, p. 2, published as CPI, “The Privacy of Points of View”, p. 179

³³ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture IV: The Conceit in Donne”, p. 677

³⁴ *ibid.*

suggesting, might be something very private -- something on the horizon of conventional meaning.

As in his philosophy of language, Eliot's vision of the ideal poetry is stubbornly anti-descriptivist: "In the best of the erotic verse of Dante, Guinizelli, Cavalcanti and Cino you will find ... no descriptions of the object, no attempt to express the emotions and sensations for their own sake, but solely an attempt to suggest the beauty and dignity of the object contemplated by stating the effect of that beauty and dignity upon the lover in contemplation".³⁵ He admires the use of harsh contrast in metaphysical poetry, which produces the "feel" of the idea, and creates "an harmony of dissonances".³⁶ Eliot calls the use of harsh contrasts in metaphysical poetry a reaction against vagueness: "in the best of the metaphysical poetry there is exactness; the object of feeling is always definite. And this is perhaps one of the healthier reasons why their poetry is popular today; by a healthy reaction against vagueness".³⁷ The *feeling* is made definite (distinct), but not predefined. He praises "the emotional equivalent of thought, a rarified, but perfectly definite world".³⁸ The *world* and *feeling* are definite, the *word* is suggestive, allusive, evocative.

According to Eliot, metaphysical poetry also requires the poet to pay special attention to the passage of time, which in turn requires a kind of dialogue between metaphysical conceits and phenomenal experience. In his Clark Lectures, Eliot describes the ideal expression of poetic meaning in terms of flux and change. "Donne" Eliot writes "is always transferring his attention from the idea to the figure, and from the figure to an idea suggested by the figure".³⁹ Wherever the object of attention and the idea are combined, Eliot is pleased; variability and flexibility are prized. Definite indefiniteness is again given

³⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture III: Donne and the Trecento", p. 655

³⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture IV: The Conceit in Donne", p. 670

³⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture II: Donne and the Middle Ages", p. 736

³⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, "Lecture V: Donne's Longer Poems", p. 696

³⁹ *ibid*, p. 691

precedence; Eliot notices the way Donne's words subvert clear referential description, in favor of a specific kind of obscurity: "how often we feel that there is something else, some preoccupation, in Donne's mind, besides what he is talking about ... this bewildering obscurity is part of the attraction of Donne's mind, and is perhaps what gives the peculiar emotional colour to his every idea, and causes the variety and dispersion of his intellectual curiosity".⁴⁰ Feeling, meanwhile, is concentrated, focused, but indefinite: "the feeling I get from [Donne's poem, "Progress of the Soul"] is one I cannot define, and cannot connect with the explicit meaning. I am quite unable to catch the drift of this history of the metamorphosis of the soul which inhabits at one moment or another an apple, a fish, a whale and a monkey".⁴¹ Objects shift and change, reference refuses to solidify, yet meaning or metaphysics is achieved: "But what a meditation! It has no philosophy, no structure or unity, no 'central idea,' no real beginning or end; but it is the most metaphysical of all Donne's metaphysical poems".⁴²

Eliot is interested in meaning that is non-singular: "I have always been impressed, and once discussed in a paper, by the sense of a 'double world' in the tragedies of Chapman".⁴³ He appreciates the unification, in a poem, of seemingly irreconcilable themes. The interpretive *range* allowed by this technique is also admired: Donne's method is to integrate a broader range of association. "The feeling" in this case "is as it were shocked into existence by the suddenness of this; and having evoked it, Donne passes on again. He seems determined to exhaust every possibility of thought and of feeling that can be associated with" a theme.⁴⁴ Out of transience and movement -- out of the shift from one object or symbol to another, a kind of *gestalt* is created. The *gestalt* is more meaningful, more *pregnant* with

⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 693

⁴¹ *ibid*.

⁴² *ibid*, p. 694

⁴³ *ibid*, p. 695

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 697

potentiality, in his view, than the definite description. Eliot admires the use of repetition of metaphysical terms, particularly when they appeal to the phenomenal or physical. For example, a term like “Death” in Donne’s work, is described as “deliberate overstimulation, exploitation of the *nerves*”.⁴⁵ Repetition of metaphysical themes alongside phenomenal events is used heavily throughout Eliot’s work, and perhaps most evident in *Four Quartets*. Here too, meaning is complex, rather than singular -- intuitive or intentional, rather than objective: “Meanings are twisted, likenesses are forced, but always to produce a deliberate pleasure”. This, he says, is a “deliberate method”.⁴⁶ He applauds conceits that are “fused beyond analysis” -- purposefully indefinite.⁴⁷

Thought, Feeling, and Intuitive Expression

Eliot considers the expression or experience of a pre-articulate unity of thought and feeling to be *a central function of poetry*. To his thinking, poetry creates a world.⁴⁸ The creation of meaning is a *process -- an activity*. Citing Dante, he writes that “he merely made use of [philosophy], or a fusion took place between his initial emotional impulses and a theory, for the purpose of making poetry. The poet makes poetry, the metaphysician makes metaphysics, the bee makes honey, the spider secretes a filament, you can hardly say that any of these agents believes: he merely does”.⁴⁹ To Heidegger, for whom being is connected to *dwelling* and *making*, the bee would take on special philosophical significance. The orientated lifeworld of a bee is a central example in Heidegger’s explication of phenomenological philosophy. Heidegger writes, for instance, that “It is said that the bee not only notices the

⁴⁵ *ibid*, p. 699

⁴⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1926). CP II, “Lecture VI: Crashaw”, p. 713

⁴⁷ *ibid*, 716

⁴⁸ Likewise, Eliot is interested in poetry that constructs a character “partly by negative definition, built up by a great number of observations. We cannot isolate him from the environment in which we find him; it may be an environment which is or can be universalized; nevertheless it, and the figure in it, consists of very many observed particular facts, the actual world. Without this world the figure dissolves. The ruling faculty is a critical perception, a commentary upon experienced feeling and sensation” (*Selected Essays*, “Ben Jonson”, p. 152).

⁴⁹ *ibid*, p. 138

direction in which it stands to the sun and keeps to this angle, but also notices the distance traversed by its flight path”.⁵⁰ The phenomenological function of poetry, to Eliot, is likewise a kind of orientated in-dwelling of a world -- an activity which privileges feeling. One inhabits a poem from within.

Eliot’s phenomenological notion of the “thinking” feeling in poetry falls just shy of presenting itself as the kind of “systematic philosophy” Eliot liked to avoid. Throughout his critical oeuvre, Eliot highlights the emotional-conceptual hybridity of poetry and literature. He praises Lancelot Andrewes because his criticism shows “Intellect and sensibility were in harmony”.⁵¹ He writes that Andrewes, like an ideal phenomenological poet, “is wholly in his subject, unaware of anything else, that his emotion grows as he penetrates more deeply into his subject ... Andrewes’ emotion is purely contemplative ... it is wholly evoked by the object of his contemplation, to which it is adequate; his emotions wholly contained in and explained by its object”.⁵² Poems are compared to “human passions”.⁵³ Dante, meanwhile: “expresses the recrudescence of an ancient passion in a new emotion, in a new situations, which comprehends, enlarges, and gives a meaning to it”; Eliot cites the “*personal* intensity” of Dante’s poetry as a great virtue of his work.⁵⁴ Shakespeare’s key achievement is that he is able “to make the English language capable of expressing the most subtle thought or the most refined shades of feeling”.⁵⁵ He admires Jonson because he presents characters in a rich world of their own, a world in which one can at times *believe* that the emotion is real: “the life of the

⁵⁰ Heidegger, M. (1995). The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude Bloomington, Indiana Indiana University Press, p. 245 Connections between Eliot and Heidegger are many and various, and suggest fruitful further study might be made of Eliot’s work as compared to later phenomenological thinkers (one might easily compare Eliot’s thinking on fiction, for instance, to Jean-Paul Sartre’s conceptions in his 1940 book, *L’Imaginaire*).

⁵¹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 345

⁵² *ibid*, p. 351

⁵³ *ibid*.

⁵⁴ *ibid*, p. 262, 263

⁵⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1957). On Poetry and Poets, p. 56

character is inseparable from the life of the drama. This is not dependence upon a background, or upon a substratum of fact. The emotional effect is single and simple”.⁵⁶ Shakespeare was gifted with “a greater range of emotion, and emotion deeper and more obscure”.⁵⁷ Blank verse during Shakespeare’s time “was more highly developed ... it became the vehicle of more varied and more intense feeling than it has ever conveyed since”.⁵⁸ He cites Coleridge’s notion of imagination, quoting him as championing a combination of “opposite or discordant qualities” and combining emotion and freshness with familiarity and reason.⁵⁹ Emotion or feeling -- the unity between subject and object -- appears to be of central concern to poetic drama, poetry proper, criticism and the reading public.⁶⁰

Just as emotional depth and precision of poetics is seen as a virtue in poetry and literature, a superficiality, inaccuracy, or avoidance of feeling is criticised as a defect. This mirrors Eliot’s distrust of superficial expressions of feeling in his philosophy. In his philosophy, Eliot criticised the term “sensation” as simply a “stunted and degenerate feeling”.⁶¹ The “fundamental error of form” in Tennyson’s work, is that “the real feelings of Tennyson, profound and tumultuous as they are, never arrive at expression”.⁶² Eliot writes that “Tennyson’s feelings ... were honest; but they were usually a good way below the surface”.⁶³ He succeeds when he is “economical of words ... [expressing] a universal emotion

⁵⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p.153

⁵⁷ *ibid*, p. 158

⁵⁸ *ibid*, p. 118

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 298

⁶⁰ Concerning poetic drama, Eliot writes: “The poetic drama must have an emotional unity, let the emotion be whatever you like. It must have a dominant tone; and if this be strong enough, the most heterogeneous emotions may be made to reinforce it” (Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, “Philip Massinger”, p. 252). Concerning the reading of poetry, he says that emotion is transferred, even though it is received in a slightly refined form, free from personal contingencies: “the end of the enjoyment of poetry is a pure contemplation from which all the accidents of personal emotion are removed” (Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II: “The Perfect Critic”, p. 262).

⁶¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CP I, “The Privacy of Points of View”, p. 179

⁶² Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 332

⁶³ *ibid*, p. 336

related to a particular place”.⁶⁴ Milton’s verse was “cruder, because [it was] less capable of expressing complicated, subtle, and surprising emotions”.⁶⁵ Eliot is particularly hard on Milton for his corrosive effect on the English language, holding that a division of thought and feeling in Milton’s work is to blame. Eliot describes the “division, in Milton, between the philosopher or theologian and the poet” as “repellent”.⁶⁶ He calls “the disappearance of all the personal and real emotions” in Massinger’s work “corrupt”.⁶⁷ He dislikes the “mistiness of the feeling and the vagueness of its object” in the work of William Morris. Emotion, in other words, should not be vague in poetry -- feeling should not be generalist. Rather, emotion should be precise and present. But what sort of precision is requested?

Exactly what this “act” of making an emotion or emotional unity explicit or precise entails is not often discussed by Eliot’s critics, though several notice that the philosophical theme is important to his writing.⁶⁸ The accurate representation of emotion, as the phenomenological function of poetry, is a kind of *science* to Eliot.⁶⁹ Eliot argues that “The poet’s ‘emotion’ must always be in such close relation to objects that when he sets the objects before you, you ‘get’ the emotion. He must appeal to your senses. The emotion is the resultant activity of the combination of what are ultimately sense-data”.⁷⁰ The term “sense-data” is borrowed from Russell’s philosophy, where it implies discretely identifiable bits of empirical or external information and relevant descriptions, such as the colour red, but here it is given to mean something entirely different; Eliot’s usage concerns the expression of emotion, which is

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 333

⁶⁵ *ibid*, p. 119

⁶⁶ *ibid*, p. 263

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 213

⁶⁸ Geoffrey B. Williams, for instance, (1991). The Reason in a Storm: A Study of the use of Ambiguity in the Writings of T.S. Eliot. Lanham, New York, and London, University Press of America, p.5

⁶⁹ Eliot says: “to say that poetry is a science is in the first place to say that poetry is a serious study, a life-time’s work” (Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, “Modern Tendencies in Poetry”, p. 213).

⁷⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 15

a *sensed* unity between self and world. This expression of pre-articulate, intuitive unity is the primary job of the poet. Dante displayed “the utmost power of the poet ... our enjoyment of the poetry makes us want to understand the meaning ... a complete scale of the *depths* and *heights* of human emotion ... extensions of the ordinarily very limited human range”.⁷¹ Eliot’s interest in words is an interest in the *mortal shadows* and *shades* of meaning.⁷² The shadow-senses, sounds, and impressions of words relate us to language, and recreate the felt unity between self and world.

Feeling is important to Eliot because it can articulate something transcendental or metaphysical, but still rests firmly in the particularity of human consciousness, thus resisting empiricist aims to categorise. “Feeling is something very real indeed metaphysically” he claims.⁷³ Elsewhere, he adds:

It is in feeling that we find immediate experience, if anywhere, but feeling is far from being the same as the sensation with which the psychologist has made us familiar; it is not feeling as the feeling of this or that particular sense, an articulate sensation the existence of which presupposes a whole world. Professor Holt indeed reduces it to ‘nervous shock’. Very well. But nervous shock is not sensation or sense-datum. It is simply (as thus used) the psychologist’s term for what we have called immediate experience.⁷⁴

Here, Eliot once again describes feeling as *immediate experience itself* -- existing in the present, disagreeing with the new realists.

Eliot’s debt to Husserl can be traced through his description of the purpose and function of feeling in literary language. Eliot was familiar, for instance, with Husserl’s notion that the artist “follows the inner activity of his harmoniously trained powers, in his judgment his finely formed artistic taste and feeling”.⁷⁵ In this context, Husserl uses the examples of a chemist and astronomer (as does Eliot’s essay “Modern Tendencies in Poetry” and related

⁷¹ *ibid*, p. 268

⁷² Eliot, T.S. CPP, “The Waste Land”, p. line 26

⁷³ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CP I, “The Privacy of Points of View”, p. 179

⁷⁴ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CP I, “Objects: Real, Unreal, Ideal, and Imaginary”, p. 172

⁷⁵ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p.18

essays such as “Tradition and the Individual Talent”).⁷⁶ Husserl writes, for example, (and Eliot highlights): “A group of isolated bits of chemical knowledge would certainly not justify talk of chemistry”.⁷⁷ In other words, it is an examination of the *actions and interactions* of the mind that justify metaphysics, not an examination of categories. Eliot also highlights “The essence of science therefore involves unity of the foundational connections: not only isolated pieces of knowledge, but their grounded validations themselves, and together with these, the higher interweaving of such validations that we call theories, must achieve systematic unity”.⁷⁸ Just as the phenomenological philosopher must do the interpretive work of creating general principles of thought by weaving together or uniting various phenomena, and the chemist must create general principles to describe chemical processes and combinations, the poet’s task is to craft feeling from a combination of the passing impulses of individual emotions -- to allude to the deeper unity or metaphysical reality through the busy activity of weaving impressions together.

Adopting scientific language to discuss how a poet turns feeling into significant expression, Eliot writes: “the mature poet ... possesses a variety of feelings to make use of. But in the operation upon them, he is not particularly interested in them because they are *his feelings*; it is only as he is able to regard these feelings as existing apart from him, just as apart as the chemical from the chemist, that he can work them into art... without this cold and scientific observation he could never have given his feelings their permanent intensity”.⁷⁹

What the poet attempts to articulate in the poetic form is not an idea of a feeling, but an *actual* feeling re-worked and rendered as permanent.⁸⁰ So, for instance, one starts from perceptions

⁷⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, “Modern Tendencies in Poetry”, p. 212-225 and Eliot, T. S. (1921). “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, found in Selected Essays, p. 18

⁷⁷ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 18

⁷⁸ *ibid.*

⁷⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, “Modern Tendencies in Poetry”, p. 214

⁸⁰ Eliot, T. S. (1957). On Poetry and Poets, p. 106-107

of a present moment (impressions, voices, memories) and *works up to* some broader meaning or significance.

Fleeting emotions which contribute to poetic expression are the “raw material” of the poem -- not “described” or “turned loose” in the poem, but transfigured into something new.⁸¹ Far from wishing to *eradicate* feeling Eliot, in his thesis, takes pains to refute the idea that feeling is simply “subjective” because it cannot always be understood by those who might not have attended it. He appeals to physical phenomena: “it is no more ‘subjective’, because some persons have never experienced it ... We can explain it by its relations; by its effect upon the heart-beat, its toxic alterations of the system, by its effects in conduct and social intercourse”.⁸² Feeling can be represented, because, in keeping with his broader philosophy of language, and as Eliot later argues in his criticism, it is a reality -- it is *perceived by consciousness*: “Not only all knowledge, but all feeling, is in perception”.⁸³ It is the poet’s duty to express this as directly as possible, which means *not* through description, but through *depiction*: “Some writers appear to believe that emotions gain in intensity through being inarticulate. Perhaps the emotions are not significant enough to endure full daylight”.⁸⁴ Significant emotions can be made public: “very few [poets] know when there is an expression of *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet.”⁸⁵ Eliot outlines the sort of emotions expressed by poetry:

The emotion in ... poetry will be a very complex thing, but not with the complexity of the emotions of people who have very complex or unusual emotions in life... The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all... It is a concentration, and a new thing resulting from the

⁸¹ Eliot, T. S. (1975). Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot. London, Faber & Faber Limited, “Ulysses, Order Myth”, p. 177 Eliot’s more commonly-referenced “flight from emotion” in “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, is a dismissal of *personality*, but not of *lived experiences*. In “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, emotion is derided as that which expresses personae, not the production of a unity between subject and object.

⁸² Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 23

⁸³ Eliot, T. S. (1975). Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot. London, Faber & Faber Limited, “Ulysses, Order Myth”, p. 55

⁸⁴ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 42

⁸⁵ *ibid*, “Tradition and the Individual Talent”, p. 22

concentration, of a very great number of experiences which to the practical and active person would not seem to be experiences at all; it is a concentration which does not happen consciously or of deliberation.⁸⁶

Concentration and attention to the underlying unity of consciousness with the present heighten or elevate emotion towards something more permanent and timeless. The making explicit of feeling (in the philosophical sense) *is the purpose and aim* of poetry, In Eliot's opinion: "A philosophical theory which has entered into poetry is established, for its truth or falsity in one sense ceases to matter, and its truth in another sense is proved. The [metaphysical] poets in question have, like other poets, various faults. But they were, at best, engaged in the task of trying to find the verbal equivalent for states of mind and feeling."⁸⁷

It is compelling that Eliot combines terms like "logic" and "analytic" often in his literary criticism, with varying implications. Speaking of Jonson's work, Eliot muses:

It is so very conscious and deliberate that we must look with eyes alert to the whole before we apprehend the significance of any part. We cannot call a man's work superficial when it is the creation of a world; a man cannot be accused of dealing superficially with the world which he himself has created; the superficial *is* the world. Jonson's characters conform to the logic of the emotions of their world. They are not fancy, because they have a logic of their own; and this logic illuminates the actual world, because it gives us a new point of view from which to inspect it.⁸⁸

The notion of logic and intuition as crucially fused, and an emphasis on the *reality* of the fictional, via a defense of point of view, are presented.

Rather than espouse the effusive confessional emotion of the Romantic poet, Eliot champions emotional thinking when conveyed by the objects of consciousness -- as, in other words, phenomenological. His lesser-known work is particularly revealing when it comes to the centrality of feeling for his philosophy of language, and later, for his poetic method. In an unpublished essay he explains:

the first quality of the poet is...to be conscious of the emotions which he observes in himself and in others; and as his business is with speech, to know how much, and what, emotion any word or sequence of words will communicate. It should be, therefore, that the right practice of poetry, and the

⁸⁶ *ibid*, p. 21

⁸⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, "The Metaphysical Poets", p. 381

⁸⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p. 156

right study and appreciation of it, ought to be of assistance in the criticism of thought which lies between these abstract poles of the “poetical” and the “prosaic” which I have talked about.⁸⁹

In the thesis, feeling was explicitly not described as “subjective”: “For whom will my feeling be subjective? For the dispassionate observer, who seeing the same object without the same feeling, subtracts my feeling from the object ... In other words, what is subjective is the whole world”.⁹⁰ Eliot insists “on the validity of the continuous transition by which feeling becomes object and object becomes feeling ... we have no immediate distinction between object and feeling”.⁹¹ Similarly, Husserl writes: “Many experiences commonly classed as ‘feelings’ have an undeniable, real relation to something objective. This is the case, e.g., when we are pleased by a melody, displeased at a shrill blast, etc. etc. It seems obvious, in general, that every joy or sorrow, that is joy or sorrow *about* something we think of, is a directed act”.⁹² Eliot highlights this very passage in his marginalia. He adopts Husserl’s description of feeling as “not merely seen in its thinglike content and context ... our classification is oriented to the concretely complex, and that the total character of such unities may at one time seem to depend on sensational features (e.g. pleasure on urge-sensations), at another on act-intentions which rest on these”.⁹³ For both Eliot and Husserl, feeling alters objects themselves. Eliot shares Husserl’s interest in feeling that is ascertained as *in* the world as present to consciousness.

Eliot’s elaboration of the outline to his thesis made clear that the concept of feeling is central to his philosophy; he supports the notion that expression of feeling relies on intuitions

⁸⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1943). P/33 ‘Poetical and Prosaic Use of Words’ [Lecture]. Unpublished typescript, uncorrected, 20 pp. Delivered at Reading University, 1943. The Hayward Bequest, King’s College Library, Cambridge University, p. 19

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p. 24

⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 25

⁹² Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 107

⁹³ *ibid*, p. 111

about those feelings, because, as he put it “I *am* my feeling”.⁹⁴ The original thesis outline lumps feeling into epistemology: “General theory of Knowledge. Theory of truth. - Experience as partly internal + partly external. ‘knowledge’ of it. What is feeling.”⁹⁵ Eliot’s original unpublished notes include a crossed out section that seems to put Ideas and Feelings on the same level:

Ideas If you regard ideas as “things” you get into the same sort of difficulties as you regard relations as things. Has to be taken as a sort of relation between things.

Feelings So far as we are conscious of it it is simply a relation between things - Consciousness does not exist as an object for science.⁹⁶

Feeling is translated through objects selected (uniting the interior and exterior world) -- this is true for both Eliot’s philosophy and for his poetry.

Feeling is to the poet as universal forms of expression are to the analytic philosopher -- the primary mode of investigation and interest. In “Edgar Poe et La France”, Eliot resurfaces his early phenomenology, explicitly linking consciousness to language and feeling. The essay, originally prepared as an address, was delivered at Aix en Provence in 1949, and was the basis of the more well-known essay “From Poe to Valéry.” The address was given eight years after confessing his debt to phenomenology. In the essay, Eliot writes:

All poetry, I believe, starts from the emotions experienced by human beings in their relations to themselves, to each other, and to the world about them; it is therefore concerned also with thought and action, out of which emotion arises, and which emotion brings about. But, at however primitive a stage of expression and appreciation, the function of poetry can never be simply to create a reverberation or similitude of these emotions in the audience of the poet... In the earliest poetry, or in

⁹⁴ Eliot, T. S. KAE, Faber & Faber, p. 31

⁹⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1913-1914). Unpublished notes in The Hayward Bequest, Harvard University. P/4: Philosophical Essays & Notes, 1913-1914. i. Elaboration of part of item h. [where h = Draft of a seven-part topic outline, possibly 1914, and possibly also related to Eliot’s Bradley dissertation, Typed and with AMS additions by Eliot; one sheet of white paper], Paper, 9 items in 1 vol.

⁹⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1914). Unpublished piece of “Classification of Types of Objects”, The Hayward Bequest, King’s College, Cambridge, P/4: Philosophical Essays & Notes, 1913-1914: Paper on ‘Classification of types of objects’ A paper read in Josiah Royce’s seminar on May 5th, 1914; summarised in Costello: 1963: pages 173-177 (where the paper is called ‘Classification of Gegenstände hörer Ordnung, different types of objects’). The material in this paper was elaborated by Eliot in the third chapter of his doctoral dissertation. Autograph MS in pencil on five leaves of yellow paper, numbered by Eliot 1-5. Formerly numbered 32-36, p. 3

the most rudimentary enjoyment of poetry, attention of the listener is directed towards the subject matter; the effect of the poetic art is felt, without the listener being conscious of this art.⁹⁷

Feeling is here, as in other places, described as connecting author and reader, and this connection is *directed and active*. It is difficult to analyse -- something just *under* the awareness, but still crucial to thinking. Phenomenologically speaking, emotion is *in* the poem itself, as an activity. Eliot stages the philosophical problems of his early work as *the* fundamental problem for the poet, urging: “the important poet is the poet who recognises, and successfully solves, the problem of expression at the stage of self-consciousness, in the process of history, at which he finds himself and his contemporary audience”.⁹⁸ Whether Eliot’s poetic language and philosophy of language were fused “at a high temperature” -- whether Eliot “solved” the problems of language, to his own satisfaction, the original questions Eliot addressed in his philosophy of language were clearly a lifelong concern.

Although always aiming at a refinement of poetic methods, Eliot admitted that the obsession with “pure” poetry, like Russell’s drive for a perfect or more logical language, was ultimately unattainable. Poetry exists on the horizon of meaning, and this horizon is always receding towards new horizons -- twentieth century poetry was aimed, Eliot thought, at a drama of consciousness, which is *unified and diverse*:

Now this process of increasing self-consciousness - or, we may say, in other terms, of increasing consciousness of language - has as its theoretical goal what it seems to me we may call la poésie pure. I believe it to be a goal which poetry can never reach, because to reach it would mean to put an end to poetry altogether... Subject-matter must, I think, remain important: but its importance in modern poetry has changed in kind... the subject is within the poem. A poem may, in fact, now have several subjects within it, each of which can be stated in other words... For the work of the poet may have been, to put together several subjects, with no relationship between them that can be intellectually formulated; and from their union there appears, not another “subject”, but the poem.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ This is quoted from the unpublished transcript held at the King’s College archive: The Hayward Bequest, ‘Edgar Poe et La France’ (Text in English). Address delivered at Aix en Provence on receiving Hon. D. es L. (carbon copy so marked in pencil), pp. 16 (of 24 pp.) TS (TSE); both copies corrected, top with a few additional corrections to those on carbon. It was subsequently published as *La Table Ronde*, #12 (December 1948), pp. 1973-1992; trans. Henri Fluchère. Gallup, D 84, says: “A translation of the lecture delivered at Aix in April, 1948, upon which From Poe to Valéry is based.”

⁹⁸ *ibid*, p. 18

⁹⁹ *ibid*, p. 18-19

The poem is a kind of person or intricate organism -- living, shifting, and irreducible.

Significantly, Eliot notes in the essay that “purity” does not mean purity of diction, but rather how accurately the poem depicts the inner landscape.¹⁰⁰ The phenomenologist’s quest -- for *direct* knowledge of human consciousness (for, as Husserl would call it, “pure phenomenology”), is therefore in line with Eliot’s mature poetic vision. He explains this vision by saying: “we must judge poetry, from this point of view of purity, in relation to the work of purification of material that has gone into it. More, and more important, subject-matter has been transmuted, and it is in this respect that subject-matter in poetry remains always of capital importance”.¹⁰¹

In the poets Eliot most admires -- particularly in the metaphysical poets, Eliot finds a combination of philosophy (or thoughts and ideas) and feeling (or subjectivity). He writes: “What we find when we read Lucretius or Dante is that the poet has effected a fusion between that philosophy and his natural feelings, so that the philosophy becomes real, and the feelings become elevated, intensified and dignified.”¹⁰² He admires Dante for his combination of the two. He concludes that although poetry cannot “prove” truth empirically (in a correspondence relationship): “it can ... create a variety of wholes composed of intellectual and emotional constituents, justifying the emotion by the thought and the thought by the emotion: it proves successively, or fails to prove, that certain worlds of thought and feeling are possible. It provides intellectual sanction for feeling, and esthetic sanction for thought.”¹⁰³ Once again a major motif of Eliot’s early philosophy is reestablished as significant to literary criticism -- as a “solution” to the empiricist notions of language that he distrusted. Poetry is described as an active manifestation of thought *and* feeling; poetry works with philosophy, in

¹⁰⁰ *ibid*, p. 19-20

¹⁰¹ *ibid*, p. 20

¹⁰² Eliot, T. S. (1930). "Poetry and Propaganda." *The Bookman*, p. 601

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 602

Eliot's view, but it discovers places where philosophy cannot go. Poetry is the "middle way" between the intellect and emotion. It is a life-form and an active "thinking" that is more truthful to the reality of consciousness than a stagnant system of previously proven axioms.

Point of View

In keeping with his interest in *living, active* signification, Eliot maintains that the "half-truths" of literary language are lifeforms that are experienced as a reality, and this is what elevates the status of literary discourse: "we should not be transported into an artificial world; on the contrary, our own sordid, dreary daily world would be suddenly illuminated and transfigured."¹⁰⁴ The notion of "point of view" -- originally seen as a form of *focused attention*, is attributed to both Eliot's ideal reader and his ideal poet. In a reading public Eliot seeks "trained sensibility or subtlety of feeling -- that is, concentrated attention".¹⁰⁵ Focused feeling can be both expressed and received. In his literary criticism, the notion of "point of view" is described as the original contribution of the artist. He says that every writer produces "particular tones which his verse and no other's is capable of rendering".¹⁰⁶ Shakespeare succeeds in being universally relevant because he has "more of these tones than anyone else".¹⁰⁷ Point of view is also a critical metric used to account for literary failure; John Heywood is criticised, for example, because Eliot claims "there is no vision, none of the artist's power to give undefinable unity to the most variable materials".¹⁰⁸

As with other central features of Eliot's positive philosophy, it appears that Eliot's notion of point of view exhibits lineage from his early interests. Eliot opposes "point of view" to "formulae" in his literary writing about language, recalling his early philosophical essays. Of Ben Jonson, for instance, Eliot writes that it is "in the end of no value to discuss Jonson's

¹⁰⁴ Eliot, T. S. (1957). *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 87

¹⁰⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1920). CP II, "Modern Tendencies in Poetry", p. 212

¹⁰⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p. 119

¹⁰⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *ibid.*, p. 175

theory and practice unless we recognize and seize this point of view, which escapes the formulae, and which is what makes his plays worth reading”.¹⁰⁹ In order to understand an author, one has to enter the creative world of the poems and dramas themselves. What is sought is described as a “kind of power” that “comes from below the intellect”.¹¹⁰ One might describe this as an intuitive unity between the author and his worldview, or, in Husserl’s terms (underlined in the marginalia), the “sense-giving-act-character -- which differs entirely according as our interest [and] plays on the sensible sign or object presented through it... [in which] meaning consists”.¹¹¹ A point of view is active and contextualised by the individual’s particular interests and insights. One does not “look at” or “analyse” a point of view, but rather *sees through* it.

In his criticism, as in his philosophy, Eliot suggests that there is a connection between point of view and the changing phenomena present to an author. “To appreciate, for instance, the last turn in which Marie Lloyd appeared, one ought to know what objects a middle-aged woman of the char-woman class would carry in her bag; exactly how she would go through her bag in search of something; and exactly the tone of voice in which she would enumerate the objects she found in it.”¹¹² Conscious awareness of contexts and objects of attention also, Eliot argues, enables the artist to write believable characters.¹¹³ The subject and the object are united in the work of art. Eliot writes that “the creation of a work of art ... consists in the process of transfusion of the personality, or, in a deeper sense, the life, of the author into the character. This is a very different matter from the orthodox creation in one’s own image”.¹¹⁴ Here too, Eliot is anti-representationalist, anti-realist. The artist “expresses his

¹⁰⁹ *ibid*, p. 156

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, p. 157

¹¹¹ Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 209

¹¹² Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 457

¹¹³ *ibid*, p. 212

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 157

personality indirectly through concentrating upon a task which is a task in the same sense as the making of an efficient engine or the turning of a jug or a table-leg".¹¹⁵ The poem is a form of life, not a representation of it: "The experience of a poem ... is very much like our intenser experiences of other human beings".¹¹⁶ Those linguistic elements, in other words, that are most "local" -- the aspects of language that are eccentric and difficult -- are central to the poetic experience; and this eccentricity is experienced directly by the reader.

Not all points of view are equally valid in Eliot's criticism. As in his philosophical essays, he often expresses distrust of objectivity as an authentic point of view. Likewise, he champions difficulty as that which is "difficult to analyse", just as "Donne is difficult to analyse: what appears at one time a curious personal point of view may at another time appear rather the precise concentration of a kind of feeling diffused in the air around him".¹¹⁷ Point of view that is *present in the subject* appears to be significant to the raw materials of poetic production.

Edward Lobb sees the phenomenological method itself (though he doesn't call it this) operating in Eliot's criticism: "Eliot reverses the normal order of definition. He does not begin with a term the meaning of which he seeks to pin down, but with an observed phenomenon for which he seeks a name ... [beginning with] bodily experience".¹¹⁸ Eliot's quest for bodily and emotional correlations is complementary to his early philosophical views of language, and repeatedly surfaces in his literary criticism. He disparages the fact, to take another example, that "the two masters of diction in our language, Milton and Dryden, triumph with a dazzling disregard of the soul ... One must look into the cerebral cortex, the nervous system, and the digestive tracts".¹¹⁹ Eliot criticises Philip Massinger's work because

¹¹⁵ *ibid*, p.114

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, p. 250

¹¹⁷ *ibid*, p. 161

¹¹⁸ Lobb, E. (1981). T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, p. 116

¹¹⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). Selected Essays, p. 290

“He was not guided by direct communications through the nerves”.¹²⁰ This view is shared by Arthur Symons, whose work was integral to Eliot’s views on language during his early studies. Eliot’s reading of Symons was, according to his own account his 1959 interview with *The Paris Review*, the turning point of his poetic career -- the source of his interest in French poetic stylistics. Symons praises Laforgue because “he sees ... the possibilities for art which come from the sickly modern being, with his clothes, his nerves: the mere fact that he flowers from the soil of his epoch... It is an art of the nerves, this art of Laforgue, and it is what all art would tend towards if we followed our nerves on all their journeys”.¹²¹ Point of view in the poetic sense, then, is not simply a *perspective*, but an attempt to translate the time-contingent world into the shared, public description of this world.

The Objective Correlative

Another phenomenological feature of Eliot’s philosophical training which resurfaces in his critical writing is his notion of the “objective correlative”. As Robert Sokolowski explains, “Husserl [considers] acts simply as correlative to the objects they constitute”.¹²² That is, the notion of the “objective correlative” is another philosophical-poetic principle which is often traced directly from Eliot to Bradley. For example, Armin Paul Frank interprets Eliot, as influenced by Bradley, to be saying that one is searching for a way to make the emotion itself an object.¹²³ This is a slight misreading, I would argue, and certainly inaccurate as regards Eliot’s own stated position. If read from a phenomenological perspective, it is not that Eliot wants to make emotions objects, but simply that he wishes to *find the object* which best expresses the emotional unity already existing between the subject and “point of attention” -- i.e., that object which best evokes the feeling *as it was felt in the present moment*

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p. 215

¹²¹ Symons, A. (1919). *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 302-303

¹²² Sokolowski, R. (1971). "The Structure and Content of Husserl's *Logical Investigations*." *Inquiry* (14), p. 324

¹²³ Frank, Armin Paul. “T.S. Eliot’s Objective Correlative and the Philosophy of F.H. Bradley”, p. 313

-- to actively express and highlight an existing synthesis. Here, my emphasis would be on Eliot's term "correlative" as derivative from "correlate" -- that is, as derivative from the work of Husserl.¹²⁴ In his essay, "The Perfect Critic" (1920), Eliot revisits his former concern for objects and description in the context of philosophical exploration. He writes: "If we are allowed to accept certain remarks of Pascal and Mr. Bertrand Russell about mathematics, we believe that the mathematician deals with objects -- if he will permit us to call them objects -- which directly affect his sensibility. And during a good part of history the philosopher endeavored to deal with objects which he believed to be of the same exactness as the mathematician's."¹²⁵ However, Eliot believed, as previously discussed, that objects were grounded in conscious life -- the crucial connection between the mind and the world was the fovea or point of human attention. That is, the poet's goal is not to *define* an emotion absolutely, by scrutinizing categories, or to *select an object to "best represent"* this category, but rather, in their present perception, to cull those features of the *real objects of their world* that *already correlate* to emotions, and present them in a performance of consciousness.

Eliot's critical account of the objective correlative in his essay on Hamlet holds that: "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that *particular* emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given, the emotion is immediately evoked."¹²⁶ Instead of focusing on how to correctly identify states of affairs in the world, as Russell would do, Eliot outlines the

¹²⁴ The first use of this term, as scholars have noted, is found in Washington Allston's mid-nineteenth century "Lectures on Art": "No possible modification in the degrees or proportion of these elements can change the specific form of a plant,--for instance, a cabbage into a cauliflower; it must ever remain a cabbage, small or large, good or bad. So, too, is the external world to the mind; which needs, also, as the condition of its manifestation, its objective correlative. Hence the presence of some outward object, predetermined to correspond to the preëxisting idea in its living power, is essential to the evolution of its proper end,--the pleasurable emotion". The lecture is available through project Gutenberg: <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/11391/11391-h/11391-h.htm>

¹²⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1920). CP II "The Perfect Critic", p. 266

¹²⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1919). "Hamlet", CP II, p. 125

connection between the intuitive experience and the resulting expression selected by the poet. Eliot's "method" is to find an object which, to use this word cautiously, already "naturally" correlates to the internal state (the perspective, intention, feeling, and so forth). Eliot writes that "the artistic 'inevitability' lies in this complete adequacy of the external to the emotion".¹²⁷ Poetry can make one feel that the object is the most perfect exemplar of something internal (a mood, a memory, or an expectation, for example).

As long ago as 1958, it was argued that Eliot's use of the term "objective correlative" is very probably taken directly from Husserl's expression in the Logical Investigations: "Edmund Husserl had employed the terms 'gegenständliches Korrelat' and 'objectives Korrelat' in Logische Untersuchungen".¹²⁸ Steadman regards Eliot's notion as only trivially connected to Husserl's. He concludes, "His indebtedness to Husserl... appears to have been essentially verbal rather than conceptual".¹²⁹ Yet the difference between Husserl's notion of "objectives Korrelat" and Eliot's use of the "objective correlative" may be overstated here. By restricting himself to only one portion of Husserl's philosophy (the place where the expression first appears), Steadman overlooks the fact that Eliot's own interpretation of this expression is an interpretation that is distinctly phenomenological in character. Those critics who have paid exclusive attention to Eliot's philosophy of language argue that "Eliot's early philosophical papers indicate that he knew exactly what he was doing when he lifted the term from Husserl".¹³⁰ I am in agreement with this view. The notion of a "correlate" is a central tenet of phenomenology. As Don Ihde explains, "Intentionality *functions* as a correlational rule, and in his later works, Husserl sometimes spoke of intentionality as *correlation-apriori*."

¹²⁷ *ibid.*

¹²⁸ Steadman, J. M. (1958). "Eliot and Husserl: The Origin of the 'Objective Correlative'." Notes and Queries, p. 262

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Griffiths, D. H. (2012). 'A Raid on the inarticulate': exploring authenticity, ereignis and dwelling in Martin Heidegger and T.S. Eliot, The University of Auckland. **PhD**, p. 17

An *apriori* is the ground level that founds all other levels; it may also be considered the limit beyond which phenomenology ceases to be itself”.¹³¹ That is, the world and the mind are bound up with each other before one even begins to articulate these relationships. This is what “intentionality” is -- the mind is *orientated, contextualised, physical*. Within the discourse of phenomenology, consciousness is always embedded with an object-directed quality. To correlate is to co-relate.

It is likely that this borrowing was direct. In his edition, Eliot underlines Husserl’s notion that “the sides to be distinguished in each expression are closely connected: an expression only refers to an objective correlate because it means something... An act of meaning is the determinate manner in which we refer to our object of the moment, though this mode of significant reference and the meaning itself can change while the objective reference remains fixed”.¹³² Meaning is an interrelation between symbols and shifting phenomenal objects of consciousness: “Consciousness is viewed as a dual unity that includes the act of cognition (noesis) as well as the objective content (noema), which essentially coincides with ideal meaning”.¹³³ As Lawlor puts it, “The psychic field consists in a correlation between *noesis* (thought) and *noema* (the object thought about), the *intentio* and the *intentum*”.¹³⁴

¹³¹ Ihde, D. (2012). Experimental Phenomenology: Multistabilities. New York State University of New York, p. 24

¹³²Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume Two. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 198. Eliot highlights Husserl’s interest in creative forms of expressions, whose central purpose is the expression of unity: “the further facts in which association operates creatively, and produces peculiar descriptive characters and forms of unity” (underlining copied, Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 186-187). He also highlights the suggestions: “To turn mere coexistence into mutual pertinence, or, more precisely, to build cases of the former into intentional unities of things, which seems mutually pertinent, is the constant result of associative functioning. All unity of experience, all empirical unity, whether of a thing, an event or of the order and relation of things, becomes a phenomenal unity through the felt mutual belongingness of the sides and parts that can be made to stand out as units in the apparent object before us” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 187).

¹³³ <http://encyclopedia2.thefreedictionary.com/Husserlian+phenomenology>. “We hereby apprehend the truth as the ideal correlate of the transient subjective act of knowledge, as standing opposed in its unity to the unlimited multitude of possible acts of knowing, and of knowing individuals” (Husserl, E. (2001). Logical Investigations: Volume One. Abingdon, Oxon, Routledge, p. 145).

¹³⁴ Lawlor, L. (2011). Studies in Continental Thought : Early Twentieth-Century Continental Philosophy. Bloomington, IN, USA Indiana University Press, p. 67

Consciousness itself is *directed* towards objects. This reading of “correlation” as “co-relation” rather than “correspondence” casts new light on the insight of Hugh Kenner, who argues that Eliot’s “Prufrock” is “the name of a possible zone of consciousness where these materials can maintain a vague congruity; no more than that; certainly not a person ... strangely boundless”.¹³⁵ Kenner identifies Eliot’s liberal use of “a possible zone of consciousness” -- a correlative zone that gathers time and space together like a blanket -- within Eliot’s work. Perhaps the boundlessness of the ego in Eliot’s poetry is the boundlessness of the ego-as-world; a phenomenological reading of “Prufrock”, for example, would be one that performs acts of consciousness groping at transcendental meanings using the most direct experiences at hand: the observation of objects (and “other observations”).

Phenomenological Criticism¹³⁶

The 1920’s and 1930’s were for Eliot a time of transition and experimentation with various poetic forms. This was also a period in which Eliot’s philosophical interests reasserted themselves within his literary work, both in his role as editor of *The Criterion* (1922-1939) and in his own criticism. In May of 1928, to take only one of many examples, Eliot wrote to Montgomery Beligion of Alfred North Whitehead, one of Russell’s key collaborators: “I continue to plan a number of the *Criterion* in which the Whitehead matter will be thrashed out”.¹³⁷ Of Whitehead in *The Criterion*, he wrote: “a man may be one of the greatest living exponents of formal logic, and yet be quite helpless in a field with which he is not familiar”.¹³⁸ He calls Whitehead’s opinions on poetry “nonsense, and dangerous nonsense at that”.¹³⁹ Three days later, he wrote to C.K Ogden to “check in” (Ogden translated Wittgenstein’s epoch-altering Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus, and had a close connection to

¹³⁵ Kenner, H. (1965). *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 35

¹³⁶ This section has been significantly shortened, due to length constraints.

¹³⁷ Eliot, T. S. (2013). *The Letters of T.S. Eliot 1928-1929 (Vol. 4)*. London, Faber and Faber, p.163

¹³⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1922-1939). *The Criterion*. London, Faber and Faber 18v, p. 597

¹³⁹ *ibid.*

Russell. He was one of I.A. Richards' key collaborators).¹⁴⁰ Eliot appears to have had some disagreements with Ogden, as he confided to I.A. Richards that "The next time [I visit Cambridge] I shall be better prepared against the blandishments of Ogden".¹⁴¹ He spent time with him privately discussing the stakes of philosophy during this period, lunching with him, for example, at the Royal Societies Club in London.¹⁴² During this period, he sent I.A. Richards Belgion's book, Our Present Philosophy of Life.¹⁴³ He also sent Belgion's work to E.G. Selwyn, saying that he did so because Selwyn shared the concern for "the incredibility of 'our present philosophy'".¹⁴⁴ About this time, Eliot also promoted the work of George Dibblee, whose interest was in uniting mental dualities such as Intuition and Instinct, Feeling and Thought, Consciousness and Unconsciousness in his book Instinct and Intuition, and Montgomery Belgion's 1929 Our Present Philosophy of Life, which involves a savage takedown of Bertrand Russell -- both as a philosopher and as a cultural figure.¹⁴⁵ Among other evidence that Eliot was continuing to pursue his interests in philosophy (however privately), we find him promoting views concerning the *process* of writing a poem, espousing "varieties of intention" and "varieties of effect in time" in *The Criterion*.¹⁴⁶ These and other clues reveal that the ghost of Eliot's philosophical studies still haunted him.

Living Language

In his literary criticism, as in his philosophy, Eliot continued to suspect descriptivism, and to promote a notion of language as *living, active, and* "breathing" between

¹⁴⁰ Eliot, T. S. (2013). The Letters of T.S. Eliot 1928-1929 (Vol. 4). London, Faber and Faber, p.164

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 82

¹⁴² *ibid*, p. 143, 663, 719

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p. 663

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 670, 721

¹⁴⁵ Dibblee, G. B. (1929). Instinct and Intuition: A Study in Mental Duality. London, Faber & Faber, and Belgion, M. (1929). Our Present Philosophy of Life. London, Faber & Faber. Belgion, a key collaborator of Eliot's during the period, declared his goal to be: "to expose the falsity of Mr. Russell's whole position". p. 267

¹⁴⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1922-1939). *The Criterion*. London, Faber and Faber 18v, p. 600

descriptive categories and phenomenal experiences. Eliot thought the language philosophies of his time had direct consequences for how society perceived the task of the poet. He writes that “[Hegel’s] followers have as a rule taken for granted that words have definite meanings, overlooking the tendency of words to become indefinite emotions ... If verbalism were confined to professional philosophers, no harm would be done. But their corruption has extended very far ... What [words] have lost is definite, and what they have gained is indefinite”.¹⁴⁷ In poetry, Eliot sought the evocative uses of language, which to his mind were no less accurate or precise for being expressions of the internal landscape. Precision was a matter of intuition: “complexity for its own sake is not a proper goal: its purpose must be, first, the precise expression of finer shades of feeling and thought”.¹⁴⁸ Eliot would have modern poetry attend to the metaphysical by way of the internal -- to “general significance and emotional depth (for those two go together)”.¹⁴⁹

Conclusion

In his critical work, Eliot suggests that poetic language satisfied or performed something that philosophy could not always accomplish. As Manju Jain notes, “From the very outset Eliot was aware of the limitations of philosophical systems”.¹⁵⁰ In his essay “The Validity of Artificial Distinction”, Eliot had noticed that there is a necessary alienation of language from living consciousness in most philosophical modes of thought:

The true reason I think, for the failure of all philosophic flights, is not that they venture too far, but that they venture alone... The philosopher tells of the phenomena of his atmosphere, but what reason has the ground-dweller for believing that these statements are made about his world? Meanings will not stretch so far as to build a ladder between Your heaven and my earth. As a system extends, it becomes more tenuous. I agree that truth is forward and not behind. But in the work of any one, or any group of pioneers, the advance toward articulateness and completeness is invariably attended by a loss of density and richness.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁷ Eliot, T. S. (1975). *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. London, Faber & Faber Limited, “The Perfect Critic” p. 54

¹⁴⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1957). *On Poetry and Poets*, p. 59

¹⁴⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, “John Ford”, p. 198

¹⁵⁰ Jain, M. (1992). *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy: The Harvard Years*, Cambridge University Press, p. 86

¹⁵¹ Eliot, T.S. (1914). CPI, “The Validity of Artificial Distinctions”, p. 189

Density, richness, diversity, natural language: these are the qualities Eliot would seek in expression as he turns away from his philosophical career and towards literary studies.

Chapter Five: Let us go and make our visit.: Phenomenological Poetry

“Eliot’s purpose throughout was to make words express more and more, to free the ‘meaning’ of verse from the single statement, and to make the poem inclusive of the greatest possible number of meanings.”

(Gertrude Patterson, “T.S. Eliot: poems in the making”)

“It is not a permanent necessity that poets should be interested in philosophy, or in any other subject. We can only say that it appears likely that poets in our civilization, as it exists at present, must be difficult. Our civilization comprehends great variety and complexity, and this variety and complexity, playing upon a refined sensibility, must produce various and complex results. The poet must become more and more comprehensive, more allusive, more indirect, in order to force, to dislocate if necessary, language into his meaning...Hence we get something which looks very much like the conceit – we get, in fact, a method curiously similar to that of the ‘metaphysical poets,’ similar also in its use of obscure words and of simple phrasing.”

(T.S. Eliot, “The Metaphysical Poets”)

“If we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present.”

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*)

Eliot performed his early philosophical interests within a poetic context. This chapter will explore some of Eliot’s most quintessential poetic techniques, and describe how his poetic method reaffirms many of his early philosophical conceptions of how language and meaning operate. The pairing of logical opposites, the return of definite indefiniteness, the use of succession to mimic the activity of consciousness, and a heavy reliance on occasional expression all indicate that Eliot’s philosophical investment in the language debates never really died. This is also seen in his thematic fixation on modes of expression.

This chapter offers preliminary readings of Eliot’s philosophical poetry. The treatment of *Four Quartets* is truncated, and a longer analysis of the phenomenological epoché has been excised, due to length constraints. Dr. Jūratė Levina of the University of York has recently published a close reading of *Four Quartets* in the light of phenomenology, which serves as a starting point.¹ I would like to demonstrate that Eliot’s early contribution to the arguments surrounding the purpose and function of language complemented his approach

¹ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36(3): 194-211.

to poetic and dramatic expression, and that his interest in debates about meaning and metaphysics appear to have been a lifelong, rather than a passing interest.

Introduction

Eliot's language tried to bring language closer to consciousness in its daily, living contexts:

The symptom of approaching death of a language and a civilisation is when men go on writing poetry in a style and vocabulary which has become meaningless to their less learned contemporaries. The task of poetic innovators, therefore, is to restore to verse the accents of living speech, and to give back to current speech, in exchange for what they take from it, a more highly developed instrument than men can fashion for themselves in the rough and ready use and traffic of conversation.²

Throughout his career, Eliot depicts poetry as a form of *movement*, or *consciousness* -- his poems are invested in living language -- they represent a shift downwards towards the demotic, the street-level. But his poems never lose sight of Eliot's philosophical concerns. In his words: "We aim in the end at a theory of life, or a view of life, and so far as we are conscious, to terminate our enjoyment of the arts in a philosophy ... in such a way that the personal to oneself is fused and completed in the impersonal and general, not extinguished, but enriched, expanded, developed, and more itself by becoming more something not itself".³

Eliot saw philosophical search for truth as an integral feature of the poetic consciousness:

"And what poetry proves about any philosophy is merely its possibility for being lived,—for life includes both philosophy and art."⁴ Eliot argued that philosophy was "realised" in poetry:

"The poet must be rated in the end both by the philosophy he realizes in poetry and by the fulness and adequacy of the realization. For poetry—here and so far I am in accord with Mr. Richards—is not the assertion that something is true, but the making that truth more fully real to us; it is the creation of a sensuous *embodiment*. It is the making the *Word Flesh, if we*

² Eliot, T.S. (1939). Unpublished draft lecture for cancelled British Council Tour of Italy, 1939, The Hayward Bequest, King's College, Cambridge University. H/1: Essays, Addresses, and Verses [c. 1930] - 1955 b. 'The Last Twenty-Five Years of English Poetry'. 23. pp. TS with one sentence added in ink, p. 7.

³ Eliot, T. S. (1930). "Poetry and Propaganda." *The Bookman*, p. 598-599

⁴ *ibid*, p. 601

*remember that for poetry there are various qualities of Word and various qualities of Flesh.”*⁵

Four Quartets can be read against the backdrop of *several* philosophies, but it is to the embodied phenomenological view of language that the debt is probably greatest. It is our intention here to simply trace Eliot’s early interest in a phenomenological vision of language forward, without restricting his poetry to a single philosophical position. To do this, it will help to survey those poetic methods which appear to be aligned with his articulated views on language.⁶

Metaphysical Methods

To examine some of the methods and literary devices which might be considered a continuation or performance of Eliot’s philosophical and critical views concerning language, it is helpful to consider features he found most compelling within the context of philosophical or “metaphysical poetry”, and to take, as a case study, the poetic approach of John Donne. As I suggested in Chapter Four, there is no question that Eliot saw Donne as a model of poetic and philosophical excellence -- a forerunner to his own preferred modern techniques. In a review of Donne, he exults: “The dogmatic slumbers of the last hundred years are broken, and the chaos must be faced: we cannot return to sleep and call it order, and we cannot have any order but our own, but from Donne and his contemporaries we can draw instruction and encouragement”.⁷ Eliot pursued “a direct sensuous apprehension of thought, or a recreation of thought into feeling, which is exactly what we find in Donne”.⁸ But which techniques, specifically, did Eliot adopt from this “metaphysical” model?

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ A.J. Weiderman, for instance, notices that “*Burnt Norton* is packed, perhaps to a greater extent than any of the other *Quartets*, with references to the Heraclitean flux” and with other early philosophical references, such as those involving Kant and Aristotle, can be ascertained as well. Weiderman, A. J. (1977). "Philosophical Elements in *Four Quartets*." *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 42(6), p. 527

⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1923). CP II, “John Donne”, p. 443

⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 379

In Eliot's search for a "pure" poetic language ("It is to be observed that the language of these poets is as a rule simple and pure"), he adopts a few of the metaphysical methods.⁹ One admired technique could be described as "fusion" -- the selection of a specific object to "fuse" with a mood or emotion, or the use of objects to evoke, rather than signify (the emphasis falls not on the idea, but on the object as "replacing" the idea). Another technique Eliot adopted was the swift succession of sensations or images, which replicated the activity or speed of consciousness. Finally, Eliot embraced Donne's radicalization of common ideas -- the use of uncanny conceits, which suspended rigid definition in favour of the shock of clothing old ideas in strange new outfits. These features are central to Eliot's own work. Other unique features and themes seem to accomplish Eliot's aims for an ideal language -- the use of occasional expression, the quality of definite indefiniteness that infuses his work, and the distinctly phenomenological themes of the *Four Quartets*. These will be described, offering a reading of Eliot's literary work as, at least partly, consistent with his early philosophical vision of language.¹⁰

Succession, Lists

Eliot admired the use of swiftly progressing imagery and quickly shifting sequentiality in the work of Donne, which dramatises the movement of the mind in the process of interpretation. The use of rapid association using series of images, Eliot thought, also helped enhance the emotional quality of the poem. "One of the characteristics of Donne" he writes, "which wins him, I fancy, his interest for the present age, is his fidelity to emotion as he finds it; his recognition of the complexity of feeling and its rapid alterations and

⁹ *ibid*, p. 378

¹⁰ I have chosen a constructivist approach, as opposed to a deconstructive approach. Inconsistencies between Eliot's views and his poetic technique can also be found -- particularly as concerns his emphasis on feeling and the first person point of view (due to the irony and alienation of much of his poetry) -- but these aspects of his work have already been the object of much attention in Eliot scholarship.

antitheses”.¹¹ Eliot sought “a development by rapid association of thought which requires considerable agility on the part of the reader”.¹² He praises his own contemporaries for similar successes: Of Marianne Moore, for example, he writes: “What her imitators cannot get are the swift dissolving images”.¹³ “Getting” Moore’s poetry does not mean translating the individual images or the particular data-points on which consciousness rests, as might the goal of the strict Imagist -- but rather, engaging a space, as it were, *between* the images. This involves an *activity -- a movement*. The way a poet represents the present and evokes the underlying unity between idea and phenomenon is by playing up the process of succession, as if by increasing the *speed* of the poem. He is looking for: “that quality [which] is something which no system of scansion can define. It is not separable from the use of words, in Miss Moore’s case the conscious and complete appreciation of every word, and in relation to every other word, as it goes by”.¹⁴ Eliot admires Woolf for the same reason: “Mrs. Woolf gives you the minutest datum, and leads you on to explore, quite consciously, the sequence of images and feelings which float away from it”.¹⁵ Eliot’s example looks to Donne’s “A Valediction: of weeping”:

On a round ball
 A workman that hath copies by, can lay
 An Europe, Afrique, and an Asia,
 And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,

 So doth each teare,

 Which thee doth weare,
 A globe, yea world by that impression grow,
 Till thy tears mixt with mine doe overflow
 This world, by waters sent from thee, my heaven dissolved so.¹⁶

¹¹ Eliot, T.S. (1923). CP II, “John Donne: A review of *Love Poems of John Donne*”, p. 441

¹² Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 376

¹³ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “Marianne Moore: A review of *Poems*, by Marianne Moore”, p. 497

¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 496

¹⁵ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “London Letter: July, 1921”, p. 365

¹⁶ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “The Metaphysical Poets”, p. 376

In the title, we find the use of the progressive “ing” -- an ongoing process, rather than an afterthought. This poem articulates something that is *occurring* -- an interpretation being performed here and now. Three continents are conflated in a single line, and quickly juxtaposed with teardrops. The abstract appeals for its poetic weight to the particular point of view, and it does so by “quickly” yoking together “A globe, yea world by that impression” -- no sooner is one image landed on than another replaces it. Donne says “world” twice, the first time in the context of a glowing globe or orb of an impression, and the second time in the context of water and heaven being dissolved. Here already, in the rapid succession between images, we find the basis of Eliot’s “Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney, / Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here/Not here the darkness, in this twittering world” and his “Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.” and his “O dark dark dark. They all go into the dark, / The vacant interstellar spaces, the vacant into the vacant, / The captains, merchant bankers, eminent men of letters. / The generous patrons of art, the statesmen and the rulers, / Distinguished civil servants, chairmen of many committees, / Industrial lords and petty contractors, all go into the dark, / And dark the Sun and Moon, and the Almanach de Gotha / And the Stock Exchange Gazette, the Directory of Directors.”¹⁷ We have not only the “all” of Donne, but a sense of the supremacy of *here and now*, and the insistent mingling of diverse nouns.

The use of rapid succession to stimulate and replicate the movement of the mind is found throughout Eliot’s work, as is the use of repetition or refrain, which often yokes a topic of interest to some impression or physical sensation. This technique appears frequently in his more experimental 20s and 30s work, and the method is reiterated throughout *Four Quartets*. One might consider a minor poem -- “Landscapes”, “V. Cape Ann”:

O quick quick quick, quick here the song-sparrow,

¹⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p. 174 lines 115-117, “The Dry Salvages”, p. 189, line 202, “East Coker”, p. 180, lines 102-109

Swamp-sparrow, fox-sparrow, vesper-sparrow
At dawn and dusk. Follow the dance
Of the goldfinch at noon. Leave to chance
The Blackburnian warbler, the shy one. Hail
With shrill whistle the note of the quail, the bob-white
Dodging by bay-bush. Follow the feet
Of the walker, the water-thrush. Follow the flight
Of the dancing arrow, the purple martin. Greet
In silence the bullbat. All are delectable. Sweet sweet sweet
But resign this land at the end, resign it
To its true owner, the tough one, the sea-gull.

The palaver is finished.¹⁸

No sooner has the reader discovered or identified the sparrow than they are thrown from one occasion of predication to the next (Swamp-sparrow, fox-sparrow, vesper-sparrow). The reader is requested to “follow” the motion of flight from context to context -- each context lends the sparrow a different hue, then suddenly the reader is presented with different birds, different soundscapes, and then the phenomenon is just as suddenly stopped. Here again is the “All” of Donne’s “And quickly make that, which was nothing, All,” and the “quickenings” dance from image to image. In *Four Quartets*, likewise, we find:

Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner.
Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.¹⁹

The “world” -- like Donne’s world -- is swiftly flooded with impressions, sounds, heat, flowers that are looked at, the pool once full, empty, and so forth. Movement as a theme dominates the *Four Quartets*, and is performed by the rapid succession of images and repetition of abstractions.

Eliot, like Donne, perceives the combination of philosophical and sensory registers to be useful, and he favoured a *swift* joining of these domains using repetition. In the *Four Quartets*, Time is contemplated over and over, but each moment it appears it is referred to the

¹⁸ *ibid*, p. 142, entire

¹⁹ *ibid*, “Burnt Norton”, p. 171, lines 21-24

physical, temporal -- to the ongoing movements of the present. This insistence on movement in time is both performed and philosophically espoused: "But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden ... The moment in the draughty church at smokefall / Be remembered; involved with past and future. / Only through time is time conquered."²⁰ The emphasis on succession, or the "real time" of thought is also found in his use of lists.

Eliot's poetry often oscillates between statement and suggestion -- between questioning, narrating, and describing. He alternates between what would seem to be straightforward definitional "thinking" and what appears of its own accord -- streams of phenomena, interrupting the very process of definition: "In my beginning is my end. In succession / Houses rise and fall, crumble, are extended, / Are removed, destroyed, restored, or in their place / Is an open field, or a factory, or a by-pass"²¹ Listing concrete images immediately after a straightforward statement of "fact" lends a cinematographic quality to the poem, and mirrors the passage of time as experienced by individual consciousness; beginnings and ends would not normally imply successive experience, but rather would suggest fixed points in time, yet succession is unavoidable in Eliot's work. Eliot uses lists of objects: "The starfish, the horseshoe crab, the whale's backbone" or "cargo of dead negroes, cows and / chicken coups" lists of verbs: "unweave, unwind, unravel" and lists of professions.²² The reader "watches" the scenes, thoughts, and feelings scroll by, as if from the inside of a moving train -- or inside the mind of the poem. By refusing to "land", as it were, Eliot resists the definitional impulse -- an impulse he explicitly criticised in his early philosophy of language. Like Donne, his conceits privilege the phenomenal object over the idea, by fusing something abstract with a mood or emotion, or by using an object to *stand in for* a feeling, rather than a well-defined concept.

²⁰ *ibid*, "Burnt Norton", p. 173, lines 89-93

²¹ *ibid*, lines 1-4

²² *ibid*, "The Dry Salvages", p.184-187, line 19, 116, 41, lines 103-105

William Empson describes a “fluid unity, in which phrases will go either with the sentence before or after and there is no break in the movement of the thought”.²³ Because “propositions” of the poem are read fluidly, like music, the reader simply accepts the unity and moves on from it. In reading a conventional definition, the reader might be tempted to question or belabor individual terms, and something similar, though not identical, takes place in the reading of an Eliot poem. Whether the specific form of ambiguity is felt depends, Empson opines, on “how carefully the passage is supposed to be read ... you would not look for the same concentration of imagery as in a lyric”.²⁴ In other words, Eliot’s poetry as a medium performs a radical act of unification as a process of thought. Empson notes that “Donne, indeed, uses these methods with vehemence”.²⁵ It is significant that Empson witnesses this form of ambiguity in the Elizabethans and the “Metaphysical” poets that Eliot so admired.

1920s and 1930s: A Transitional Period

Eliot’s integration of his interest in language as-such seems to crystallise in the 20s and 30s. “Animula” and “Ash-Wednesday” will be examined here as case studies. From an early age, Eliot’s views on language would captivate his imagination. As he admitted, “From 1919 on -- my own course of evolution was already determined”.²⁶ His dissertation in philosophy recently behind him, the Eliot of 1919 had begun to formulate critical and poetic ideas about ideal poetic form, and he would start thematically interweaving examinations of language into his poetry. The status of meaning remained central to his particular poetic approach. In a 1919 review, Eliot outlined two modern streams of poetry -- one which tried to say the unsayable by expressing “impossibility”, the other which maintained the supremacy of

²³ Empson, W. (1970). *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Great Britain, Chatto and Windus Ltd, p. 50

²⁴ *ibid*, p. 63

²⁵ *ibid*, p. 51

²⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1975). *Selected Prose of T.S. Eliot*. London, Faber & Faber Limited. “Yeats”, p. 248

the static object or image (Imagism). Eliot, meanwhile, would aim at a form which fell between these approaches, demanding that the image “mean something more”, and gesture at a horizon of, presumably, internal meaning, by “blending” it with the external, so as to reduce the trace of the individual personality and to play up the point of view.²⁷ This form of meaning does not necessarily imply a singular interpretive “thing” that can be translated (as in, “this poem *means* X, Y, or Z), but rather a kind of intentional attitude, focus, or singular resolve to accurately portray a point of view or thought process. Eliot admired a form of language which might express a very specific sense of feeling, arguing that “art has to create a new world, and a new world must have a new structure... There are several other writers – among the very best that we have – who can explore feeling...”.²⁸ In 1920, Eliot outlined what he saw as false dichotomies between prose and poetry. He expressed suspicion of “the old assertion that poetry is the language of emotion and imagination - proceeding by concrete images - and that prose is the language of thought and ratiocination - proceeding by argument, by definition, by inference, by the use of abstract terms”.²⁹ Again, he argued that logic and feeling cannot be separated, and often insisted on the dissemination of false logical binaries, saying, for instance, “my remarks are only valid, if valid they be, so far as they are destructive of false distinctions”.³⁰ To perform this approach, Eliot would integrate his views on language into poetry itself.

Thematically, much of Eliot’s poetry touches on the status of language, horizons of meaning, and the process of signification. The concern for language and meaning appears, for example, in poems such as his 1917 “Hysteria”, and “Conversation Galante”. The expression

²⁷ Eliot, T.S. (1919) CP II, “Murmuring of Innumerable Bees: An unsigned review of *Coterie: An Illustrated Quarterly*), p. 130

²⁸ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, “London Letter: July, 1921”, p. 365

²⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1921): CP II, “Prose and Verse”, p. 329

³⁰ *ibid.*

of meaning is often found to be in league with the moment, while speakers simultaneously attempt to signify in a more transcendental or metaphysical manner (one might recall the title of Eliot's essay on language -- "The Validity of Artificial Distinction" -- wherein literalist distinction in metaphysics was described as being at once "valid" and "artificial"). In "Hysteria", for instance, the speaker is "drawn in by short gasps, inhaled at each momentary recovery, lost finally in the dark caverns of her throat, bruised by the ripple of unseen muscles" -- becoming wholly involved with the physical moment of expression, and suggesting how "some fragments of the afternoon might be collected, and I concentrated my attention with careful subtlety to this end" (foreshadowing the fragments shored against his ruin in "The Waste Land").³¹

Eliot's early poetry often employs voices, whispers, echoes -- the gestural, intuitive, physical, time-contingent aspects of meaning-making. In his "Portrait of a Lady", a woman's voice floats in and out of the passages: "So intimate, this Chopin". The woman remarks on things that "mean something" to her: "You do not know how much they mean to me, my friends".³² Eliot centers the poem around a conversation that "slips / Among velleities and carefully caught regrets / Through attenuated tones of violins / Mingled with remote cornets / and begins".³³ Meaning formation mixes with sensations of the world. The lady expresses her inner feelings, which Eliot weaves together with phenomenal, physical impressions. The poem is imbued with a nostalgia that will resurface in *Four Quartets* -- its repetitions, questionings, and movements foreshadow his later poems. The lady stays resolutely in the activity of the present moment: "I shall sit here, serving tea to friends."³⁴ The gesture is also found in "Coriolan" -- a poem that is explicitly phenomenological (treated later): "We can

³¹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Hysteria", p. 32

³² *ibid*, "Portrait of a Lady", p. 18, lines 10, 19

³³ *ibid*, lines 14-18

³⁴ *ibid*, p. 21, line 108

wait with our stools and our sausages”.³⁵ The poet searches for a mode of representation: “And I must borrow every changing shape / To find expression ... dance, dance”.³⁶ Meaning is continually augmented by and in dialogue with the phenomenal -- signification mingles with the present, changing sensory world. Eliot describes the poetic act of signification as a “dance” -- the expression will reappear seven times in *Four Quartets*. Throughout his poetry, the search for meaning will attach itself to change and movement -- to inner modes of interpretive activity and points of view (opinion, memory, or interpretation, to take three examples). This recalls his early desire to find a language of *life* -- a form which resists easy definitive stopping places.

“Animula”

“Animula”, published on September 24, 1928, falls in the middle period of Eliot’s life and work, and is the centre of the “Ariel” poems (as the third poem released out of six). It is a pivotal poem, both because of its use of the philosophical register, and for its (admittedly stilted and awkward) emergence of characteristics which resurface frequently in his late poetry. Ronald Bush notes that “The poem is what Eliot had called phenomenological. Each of its four movements illustrates ‘what it feels like’ to view the world from a different platform”.³⁷ Its imagery relies on a complex negotiation between “intense concentration ... and denotative precision” -- between grand ideas and the physical and emotional framing of these ideas.³⁸ Grover Smith notices that the piece is a “philosophic” poem.³⁹ A phenomenological reading of this poem -- where each section explores a precise *feeling or*

³⁵ *ibid*, “Coriolan”, p. 127, line 12

³⁶ *ibid*, p. 21, “Portrait of a Lady”, lines 109, 110

³⁷ Bush, R. (1984). *T.S. Eliot: A Study of Character and Style*. New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 119

³⁸ *ibid*, p. 120

³⁹ Smith, G. (1950). *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning* United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 128

point of view, rather than a definite state of affairs -- can also be projected forwards, as an early development of techniques used in Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Smith describes the "technical disorders" of the poem..⁴⁰

Eliot wants to "express a content of some intensity" without being "diverted into verbal suggestiveness".⁴¹ If we take "Phenomenology" to be "a philosophy of incompleteness that precludes closure", Eliot's 1920's and 1930's poetry is phenomenological through and through.⁴² Bush writes that "[i]n many ways, 'Animula' (1929) represents the intentions of the middle phase of Eliot's career in their purest [philosophical] form.⁴³ The poem attempts to "fix the way the stages of consciousness feel".⁴⁴ This involves a distinctly phenomenological form of "attention-getting precision", recalling his early views.⁴⁵ "Animula" is "essentially philosophical", more so than Eliot's other "Ariel" poems: "In a sense, the former Harvard graduate student of philosophy rekindles his early training, reflects upon that, and attempts to synthesize it with his converted view of life".⁴⁶ "Animula" engages many dualities and contrasts in a short space (the world and heaven, light and dark, time and eternity, the actual and the fanciful). The poem focuses on the duality of the soul and the body. Critics have struggled to explain the events which transpire in the poem, as well as their significance. Grover Smith describes the poem as "distracted between the demands of flesh

⁴⁰ Smith, G. (1950). *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning* United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 128

⁴¹ Eliot, T.S. (1921). CP II, "Prose and Verse", p. 328

⁴² Bourne-Taylor, C. a. M., Ariane (2010). *Phenomenology, Modernism and Beyond*. Oxford, Bern, Berlin, Bruzelles, Frankfurt am Main, New York, Wein Peter Lang, p. 18

⁴³ Bush, R. (1984). *T.S. Eliot: A Study of Character and Style*. New York, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 119

⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 120

⁴⁵ *ibid*.

⁴⁶ Timmerman, J. H. (1994). *T.S. Eliot's Ariel Poems: The Poetics of Recovery*. Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, p. 124

and spirit”.⁴⁷ “Animula” (read as Hadrian’s death poem) seems to articulate the moment wherein the soul leaves or is suspended above the body -- between heaven and earth -- (inhabiting a “between”-space that Eliot’s later poetry also investigates) and revels in this liminality, as the speaker addresses its departure. George Williamson reads the poem as the soul’s descent into the “adulteration” of time”,⁴⁸ and Ronald Bush describes the poem as “Dante’s exposition of life as a pilgrimage generated by desire”.⁴⁹ Eliot utilises contradistinctions heavily: the “flat world” is dynamic, “imperatives” bump up against the “Irresolute and selfish” soul, and a characteristic conflation of logical oppositions is prominent throughout the piece: “may and may not, desire and control” follows “light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm ... rising or falling”.⁵⁰ Bush considers Eliot’s technique in terms of “parallel constructions”.⁵¹ The *crudity* and *awkwardness* of the poem, highlights its philosophical tensions, and gets at something of a “primitive” feeling.⁵² The poem collapses opposites into a singular, ambiguous moment. The dominant conjunction of the poem is “and” rather than “or”. These techniques lend the poem an indefinite quality, but here is nevertheless a sense of *definitive presence* -- a specific event, with clear emotional import.

“Animula” oscillates between “thought” (verifiable communication) and “feeling” (gestural, indefinite descriptions). The soul is seen “Moving between the legs of tables and chairs / Rising or falling ... Confounds the actual and the fanciful, / Content with playing-cards and kings and queens, / What the fairies do and what the servants say.”⁵³ This

⁴⁷ Smith, G. (1950). T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.122

⁴⁸ Williamson, G. (1998). A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot: A Poem-by-poem Analysis. New York, First Syracuse University Press, p. 167

⁴⁹ Bush, R. (1984). T.S. Eliot: A Study of Character and Style, p. 119

⁵⁰ Eliot, T.S., CPP, “Animula”, p. 107, lines 2-3, 19, 25, 20, 3, 5

⁵¹ Bush, R. (1984). T.S. Eliot: A Study of Character and Style, p. 121

⁵² *ibid*, p. 122

⁵³ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Animula”, p. 107, lines 4-5, 13-15

transient, indefinite being, which mixes up the real and the unreal, and interests itself with playing cards (and, presumably their variable semantic values) finally lands “in the window seat / Behind the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.”⁵⁴ The *Encyclopaedia* defines experiences, but the spirit simply moves between them. Dibblee argues that forms of literature that are “sympathetic” to feeling can also articulate it, by avoiding the kind of rigid designation or description of language, and mentions silence in particular as an element that conveys feeling directly, or at least retains the trace of feeling.⁵⁵ Like an ambiguous signifier, silence signifies “nothing in particular” -- it creates an indefinite mood against which more definite language ricochets. Eliot includes a description of the silence of the soul in “Animula”: “Shadow of its own shadows, spectre in its own gloom, / Leaving disordered papers in a dusty room; / Living first in the silence after the viaticum.”⁵⁶ As the soul leaves earth, it first must reckon with a feeling, as it were, “beyond expression”, on the horizon of articulation. The soul, in this poem, inhabits silence: it lives on the horizon of what is known. Eliot also silences the “characters” of the poem, by opting not to rely on dialogue or caricature (as is seen, for instance, in “Prufrock”’s ladies and internal monologues, or in “Hysteria”’s elderly waiter and manic conversation partner.

“Animula” in particular evokes a “studied interplay between descriptive passages and narrative voice”, which is also found in Eliot’s later work.⁵⁷ Slippages between description and narration are so discrete that one might pass over them without noticing a shift. Eliot begins his poem with a narrative quote: “Issues from the hand of God, the simple soul” and then transitions immediately to “a flat world of changing lights and noise, / To

⁵⁴ *ibid*, lines 22-23

⁵⁵ Dibblee, G. B. (1929). *Instinct and Intuition: A Study in Mental Duality*. London, Faber & Faber, p. 221

⁵⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Animula”, p. 107, lines 29, 30, 31

⁵⁷ Timmerman, J. H. (1994). *T.S. Eliot's Ariel Poems: The Poetics of Recovery*. Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, p. 123

light, dark, dry or damp, chilly or warm; Moving between the legs of tables and of chairs...”⁵⁸

The narrative relies on a sort of “hurrying” effect, which takes advantage of the durational quality of reading. Eliot’s attention to duration, which was a philosophical interest for Dibblee as well, is likewise evidenced in the heavy reliance on the progressive tense, a method which also reappears in *Four Quartets*. The soul is found “Rising or falling, grasping... Advancing ... Retreating ... running ... living ... fearing ... denying ... leaving ... living”⁵⁹

Eliot’s poem depicts a *process* -- highly liminal and horizontal, and engages many of the techniques and themes of his later work (time, death, consciousness, public and private meaning, the search for definition). As Bush explains: “the more earnestly Eliot strives toward philosophical concentration, the more he seems to veer toward loosened syntax, musical elaboration of ideas and incantatory rhythms”⁶⁰ The interest in movement, passage, and the process of thought *itself* will continue to make appearances throughout Eliot’s later work, and is particularly evident in his *Four Quartets*.

Whereas in earlier poetry the vivacity of language was contingent on a record or transcript of conversational speech, his later work focuses more on the creation of a cognitive dissonance in the reading experience, and a blending of philosophical and physical registers. The reader can hardly stop to reflect on the contrasts of “Animula”, for example (“may and may not, desire and control. / The pain of living and the drug of dreams”).⁶¹ Shifting signifiers mirror a restless consciousness, hardly landing on a definite moment before flying off to play with the next pair of contradictions. Eliot’s final poetic gesture is open-ended -- a prayer, rather than a description, repeated like a mantra: “Pray for Guiterriez ... For Boudin ... for

⁵⁸ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Animula”, p. 107, lines 1-4

⁵⁹ *ibid*, p. 107-108, lines 5-67, 12, 21, 27-28, 30-31

⁶⁰ Bush, R. (1984). *T.S. Eliot: A Study of Character and Style*. New York, Oxford University Press, p. 122

⁶¹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Animula”, p. 108, lines 20-21

Floret, by the boarhouse slain between the yew trees, / Pray for us now and at the hour of our birth".⁶² Indeterminate reference is also used here -- it is unclear whether the prayer is uttered by a congregation, a priest, or the soul itself.⁶³ The yew-tree -- a tree planted in graveyards (the location of blending life and death) -- is found in *Four Quartets* alongside Eliot's quest for "The Word". If "Animula" too is essentially philosophical, in its background is Eliot's old quest to reconcile signification (conventional truth) and suggestion or interpretation (gesture, indefiniteness). "Meaning" lies somewhere between these two modes in the poem.

"Animula's" emphasis on the indefinite ("With the imperatives of 'is and seems'"⁶⁴ is wrapped up in Eliot's broader attempt to find a form that best suits the blending of thought and feeling. As he mentions on his essay "Sir John Davies", his interest is not to provide a wide *range* of feelings, it is to discover a "wholly intensifying" single feeling, by driving at feeling, as it were, the way one drives at the clarification of a thought.⁶⁵ The simple soul lives *between* -- in silence, in gesture, *alongside* the public prayer, but the mood of the poem seems stubbornly singular; both those who pray and the spirit itself are *seeking recognition* -- they are anxiously flirting with the horizon. Singularity of mood is apparent, while singularity of meaning is impossible.

"Ash- Wednesday"

In "Ash-Wednesday", the quest for the thing not-yet-meant is a central theme: "If the lost word is lost, if the spent word is spent / If the unheard, unspoken / Word is spoken, unheard; / Still is the unspoken word, the Word unheard, / The Word without a word, / The Word within / The world and for the world; / And the light shone in the darkness and / Against

⁶² *ibid*, lines 32-33, 36-37

⁶³ *ibid*, lines 32-37

⁶⁴ *ibid*, p. 107, line 19

⁶⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1967). "Sir John Davies." *Elisabethan Poetry: Modern Essays in Criticism* New York, Oxford University Press, p. 326

the Word the unstilled world still whirled / About the centre of the silent Word.”⁶⁶ The “still point” of truth -- where the Word (the incarnate divine) and the human word meet each other, is sought, through silence -- meaning gestures inwards. In “A Song for Simeon”, we find “the still unspeaking and unspoken Word.”⁶⁷ The quest is for a language that moves speakers, but originates in the “dark” of the human mind (or individual point of view), yet nevertheless produces the eternising moment of signification: “Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me/Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken, / The awakened, lips parted, the hope, the new ships.”⁶⁸ The word almost always appears together with silence -- “Where shall the word be found, / where will the word / Resound? Not here, there is not enough silence”.⁶⁹ Expression comes from meditation -- reflection -- suspension within the “now”. These tendencies complement Eliot’s philosophical views on language and will reemerge in *Four Quartets*.

David Spurr contends that “Ash-Wednesday”, in particular, showcases “complex interrelation between the elements of nature and the speaker’s inner life”.⁷⁰ This is also found in Laforgue’s work, greatly admired by Eliot, described as: “terribly conscious of daily life, cannot omit, mentally, a single hour of the day ... he sees ... the possibilities for art which come from the sickly modern being, with his clothes, his nerves: the mere fact that he flowers from the soil of his epoch... It is an art of the nerves, this art of Laforgue, and it is what all art would tend towards if we followed our nerves on all their journeys”.⁷¹ Laforgue’s work

⁶⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPP, p.96, “Ash-Wednesday”, Part V., lines 1-9

⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 105, “A Song For Simeon”, line 22

⁶⁸ *ibid*, p. 110, “Marina”, lines 30-32

⁶⁹ “Ash-Wednesday”, p. 96, lines 164-165

⁷⁰ Spurr, D. (1984). *Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 62, 68

⁷¹ Symons, A. (1919). *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 302-303

succeeds in “the attaching pathos of passing things”.⁷² This focus on the meaning-making activity of consciousness reoccurs in *Four Quartets*. As Spurr writes, in the *Four Quartets*, “nature is endowed with intention”.⁷³ The poem points “downwards and inwards”.⁷⁴ Even in Eliot’s earliest poetic efforts, critics detect a depiction of the world as it “really is for a particular consciousness at a certain pitch of aboulie... perhaps the consequence not of the creation of a new form but of the shattering of an old one”.⁷⁵ The old form, in this reading, was image-centric. The new form is contingent, durational, evasive, allusion and paradox-ridden, and suggestive, rather than descriptive.

Eliot’s early academic interest in occasional expressions and indicative modes of reference reemerges during this period. A shift away from descriptivism seems to solidify in the 1920s and 30s. Eliot’s “middle period” of poetry is particularly puzzling to critics, because unlike *The Waste Land*, with its footnotes and seemingly significant (though sometimes oblique) source material, many of the references and proper pronouns these poems engage seem arbitrary.⁷⁶ Eliot uses proper nouns improperly. In “Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar”, for example, the surplus of characters (Princess Volupine, Hercules, Bleistein, Canaletto, and so on) draws attention away from whatever “plot” or “narrative” or “shared descriptive reference point” might be said to unfold within the poem, and highlights the playful musicality of the poem: the names seem to be as significant for their consonance or assonance as for their historical content or reference. Playful uses of names emerged simultaneously with Eliot’s confrontation with Russell’s philosophy. In “Mr. Apollinax”,

⁷² *ibid*, p. 303

⁷³ Spurr, D. (1984). *Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 95

⁷⁴ *ibid*.

⁷⁵ Menand, L. (2007). *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* USA Oxford University Press, p. 27

⁷⁶ As George Williamson points out, “We must distinguish between borrowing and allusion: the latter asks the reader to recall, since the reference is necessary; the former does not. While borrowing may be reinforced by its reference, it may also be perverted”. Williamson, G. (1998). *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot: A Poem-by-poem Analysis*. New York, First Syracuse University Press, p. 102

Eliot's poem about Russell, "Mrs. Phlaccus", "Professor Channing-Cheetah", and "Mr. Apollinax" are all sobriquets for real individuals. By the 1920s, names are frequently used in absence of any universally-accessible empirical counterpart. "Mélange Adultère de Tout" reads like a manifesto against definite description.⁷⁷ "Le Directeur", similarly, playfully repeats and redefines a seemingly simple reference beyond recognition.⁷⁸

Ricks calls this period of Eliot's work "transitional".⁷⁹ Eliot develops what will be his characteristic methods and themes by employing a rigidity of rhyme and meter, and toying with the 17th century octosyllabic quatrain verse form. The majority of the poems rely on abab and ballad rhyme schemes that hardly ever rest. This is a "temporary discipline" which also draws inspiration from his studies of French poetry and his early language studies.⁸⁰ Alongside this stricter form, he uses logical contrasts heavily -- a choice that will find its full manifestation in the complex negotiations of *Four Quartets*.⁸¹ For instance, the Church is compared to a Hippopotamus in "The Hippopotamus".⁸² "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service", compares religion to caterpillars.⁸³ "Ash-Wednesday" contains lines that foreshadow *Four Quartets*.⁸⁴ Repetitions, protentions, the imaginary, and hallucinogenic perspectivism which was of interest to his early language philosophy resurfaces during the period, as well as a distinct concern for embodied consciousness -- for meaning that is in league with the moment. It is not simply that Eliot poetically performs these modalities, he

⁷⁷ *ibid*, p. 47

⁷⁸ *ibid*, p. 46

⁷⁹ Ricks, C. (1988). *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 208

⁸⁰ Williamson, G. (1998). *A Reader's Guide to T.S. Eliot: A Poem-by-poem Analysis*. New York, First Syracuse University Press, p. 89-90

⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 90

⁸² Eliot, T.S. CPP, "The Hippopotamus", p. 49

⁸³ *ibid*, "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service", p. 54-55

⁸⁴ *ibid*, "Ash-Wednesday", p. 96, line 169

addresses them explicitly, even sometimes philosophically, within the poems. Before considering later manifestations of Eliot's philosophical poetics, I wish to examine several techniques that appear during his middle period.

Occasional Expression and Process

In his Logical Investigations, Husserl explains that in the indicative mode, a sign "indicates" something else. So, for instance, a flag flown at half mast indicates that somebody has died, but only for a certain sort of community. A bird might "mean" freedom, or it may be an omen of death, or it might gesture towards any number of associations -- the meaning will depend on a particular context, and requires further elaboration. This is different than, say, using the term "H₂O" to represent an arrangement of molecules. Husserl includes in his assessment of the indicative modality a treatment of what he calls "occasional expressions" -- that is, expressions whose meaning is time-contingent -- contingent upon *an occasion*. The statement: "I hope you have a good time tonight" is an occasional expression. To really understand the meaning of this sentence, we need to know what "I", "you", and "tonight" indicate.

Eliot uses a surplus of occasional expressions both in his early poetry and in his mature work. He depicts, for instance, bells, songs, cries, gestures, states of consciousness, nicknames, and symbols whose ideal meaning or universal significance might be interpreted broadly. As with the French Symbolists, his poetry leans heavily on the evocative mode. Rebecca Beasley has pointed out that: "the particular importance of the symbol to [The French Symbolist poets]" becomes clear: if language cannot adequately *describe* a thing or feeling or thought, a symbol may be able to *evoke* it obliquely".⁸⁵ The occasional expression

⁸⁵ Beasley, R. (2007). Theorists of Modernist Poetry: T.S. Eliot, T.E. Hulme, Ezra Pound. London and New York, Routledge, p. 26

evokes an experience -- it gestures, as it were, *inwards*.⁸⁶ Without an ideal referent, the reader is thrown into the process of interpretation. Without reference, words, as it were, “come to life”, alerting the reader to a *range* of possibilities.

Consider first the titles of Eliot’s poems and plays: “Morning at the Window” (which window?), “Burbank with a Baedeker: Bleistein with a Cigar” (who are Burbank and Bleistein?), “What the Thunder said”, “The Rock”, “Occasional Verses”, “The Naming of Cats”, “The Family Reunion” “The Cocktail Party”, “The Confidential Clerk”, “The Elder Statesmen”, and so forth. These titles suggest something specific, but the referent is not immediately clear. The poem “Mr. Apollinax”, to take another example, is known to refer to Bertrand Russell, but only because scholarship has uncovered this reference. Who, to pose a familiar question, is J. Alfred Prufrock? The poem itself merely suggests a personage of a specific character and personality -- by alluding to, rather than ideally defining, somebody specific, the reader *experiences* the presence of the personality through the appearances of phenomena (likewise with Eliot’s use of “Sweeney” and other fictional characters). This consistent refusal to be singular, literalist, or overtly referential is one of the reasons Eliot’s work has inspired scholarship which naturally seeks to “pin down” the vast array of characters and situations that Eliot evokes in his work.

In his poetry and plays, occasional expressions appear over and over again. What is the “it” of “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, or the “It” of “Conversation Galante”, with its search for a referent, who is the “our” of “our lot” that “crawls between dry ribs / To keep our metaphysics warm” in “Whispers of Immortality”, when “even the Abstract Entities / Circumambulate her charm”? What is “The Word” that so obsesses Eliot throughout his

⁸⁶ Occasional expression implies the present tense. See Whitworth, M. H. (2010). *Reading Modernist Poetry*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell: “To say ‘now’ or ‘then,’ ‘here’ or ‘there,’ ‘these’ or ‘those’ is to imply a first person speaker; to use the perfect tense is to imply a present moment in relation to which the narrated events are past”, p. 156

poetry (treated in the following section)?⁸⁷ These expressions require interpretation, but perhaps the point is *precisely not* to refer them to something singular, specific or universal. The point is to let these expressions (expressions like “this”, “here”, “now”, or the use of names that appear not to correspond to a particular person, and so on) echo in our living consciousness, calling up a wide range of associations in a kind of dialogue with Eliot’s own experiences. The occasional expression often appears alongside suggestions of an active mind -- “The waking echo of confusing strife”.⁸⁸ Nowhere is this tendency more obvious than in *Four Quartets*, though it is found throughout Eliot’s work, and with increasing frequency in the 20s and 30s.

The occasional aspect of Eliot’s work involves the *process* of deciding what something means. This aspect also appears in his more dramatic work. In “Sweeney Agonistes”, for example, a large portion of the conversation revolves around using the same words in different ways -- the refining process of reference as it exists in human conversation, where a referent is bandied about and altered by multiple points of view. The piece could be read as a catalogue of all the illogical modes of “ordinary” language. Speakers repeat precisely the same words with very different emphasis, drastically altering the meaning suggested (for example, the difference between Dusty’s “Oh I’m *so* sorry” and the immediately following “I *am* so sorry”).⁸⁹ Interruption, whistling (which can indicate a hundred things), ungrammatical speech patterns, and the performative “failure” of absolute signification or definite description play a central role in “Sweeney Agonistes”:

Dusty: “What about Pereira?
Doris: He’s no gentleman, Pereira:
You can’t trust him!
Dusty: Well that’s true.

⁸⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock”, p. 13, line 11, “Conversation Galante”, p. 33, line 3, and “Whispers of Immortality”, p. 52, lines 29-32

⁸⁸ *ibid*, p. 134, “The Wind sprang up at four o’clock”, line 5

⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 116

He's no gentleman if you can't trust him and *if* you can't trust him--

...

Dusty: Now Sam's a gentleman through and through.

Doris: I like Sam

Dusty: *I* like Sam

Yes and Sam's a nice guy too. He's a funny fellow.

Doris: He *is* a funny fellow

He's like a fellow I once knew.

He could make you laugh."⁹⁰

Conversation, allusion, emphasis, association, and aesthetic taste play a role in deciding the meaning of a symbol in much of Eliot's work. A person's understanding of a referent rests on no objective empirical grounds, but is subject entirely to caprice and is in league with a moment's act of judgement. Significantly, the dialogue also involves playing a card game wherein the cards indicate somewhat arbitrary or personally defined meanings.⁹¹ The interpretation of cards is found too in "The Waste Land", alongside a glut of occasional expressions (who is the "us", "Marie", "I", "Madame Sosostris", "she", and so on? Does it matter?)

In *The Waste Land*, one witnesses two unmistakable features of Eliot's phenomenological philosophy: first, a heavy use of phenomenal descriptions (sound, taste, touch, and so on) -- descriptions which seem to float, as it were "in the air", without belonging to anyone in particular (or rather, belonging simply to the "consciousness" of the poem). Alongside these descriptions, one encounters a deluge of occasional expression. The indicative mode appears to be a fascination of this period of his poetry.

In *Four Quartets*, Eliot's interest in the activities of interpretation that are subject to caprice or phenomenal fluctuations becomes even clearer. He notices, for instance the human attempts⁹²:

To communicate with Mars, converse with spirits,
To report the behaviour of the sea monster,
Describe the horoscope, haruspicate or sery,

⁹⁰ *ibid*, p. 115

⁹¹ *ibid*, p. 117

⁹² *ibid*, "The Dry Salvages", p. 189, lines 188-197

Observe disease in signatures, evoke
Biography from the wrinkles of the palm
And tragedy from fingers; release omens
By sortilege, or tea leaves, riddle the inevitable
With playing cards, fiddle with pentagrams
Or barbituric acids, or dissect
The recurrent image into pre-conscious terrors

The process-oriented aspect of defining what something means reappears throughout most of Eliot's 20s and 30s poetry and dramatic work. In "Marina", to cite another example, definition and redefinition open the poem, aligned with the lapping of water: "Those who sharpen the tooth of the dog, meaning / Death / Those who glitter with the glory of the hummingbird, meaning / Death / Those who sit in the sty of contentment, meaning / Death / Those who suffer the exstasy of animals, meaning / Death".⁹³ Who "those" might be appears to be occasional. The meaning of "Death" is redefined in each line, taking on a different symbolic value with each iteration. Contrasted with this search for meaning are phenomenal images -- breath, water, wind, fog. Similarly, Eliot's 1925 poem "The Hollow Men", we find:

Between the idea
And the reality
Between the motion
And the act
Falls the Shadow

Between the conception
And the creation
Between the emotion
And the response
Falls the Shadow

Between the desire
And the spasm
Between the potency
And the existence
Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow⁹⁴

The meaning of "the Shadow" shifts with each new iteration or context.

⁹³ *ibid*, "Marina", p. 109, lines 6-13

⁹⁴ *ibid*, "The Hollow Men", p. 85, lines 71-89

There are many other examples of the occasional aspect of signification in Eliot's poetry and drama. In "Fragment of an Agon", an egg symbolises life on "crocodile isle". The speakers refer to each other, sarcastically, as a missionary and a cannibal -- the playful context, presumably, making sense only to Sweeney and Doris.⁹⁵ Sweeney complains "I gotta use words when I talk to you".⁹⁶ Words are somehow not enough to signify the speaker's full meaning; meaning is, here, as in his philosophy, deeply contingent on point of view. In his middle period, Eliot also returns to an interest in "signs" -- a term that is central to Husserl's phenomenological programme. In "Gerontion", what is sought seems to be "signs" -- a sign is a meaning that is directed -- personal. "Signs are taken for wonders. 'We would see a sign!' / The word within a word, unable to speak a word, / Swaddled with darkness. In the juvescence of the year / Came Christ the tiger".⁹⁷ Meaning is a story that meets an immediate human need. Christ, as-tiger, is an unusual connotation. Eliot then lists names and objects in rapid succession: "dogwood and chestnut, flowering judas ... Mr. Silvero ... Hakagawa ... Titians ... Madame de Tornquist ... Fräulein von Kulp".⁹⁸ Names here are used for musical affect, and, as elsewhere, Eliot submits definite descriptions to the listing technique, which mirrors the rapid activity of a consciousness in any given present moment. Where is the meaning in these names? Certainly not in their corresponding references. The meaning has an evocative effect, and resists the urge to describe definitely -- *they are present as sound to the mind of the reader.*

While in *The Waste Land* Eliot uses many references to classical literature to perform a play of association, *Four Quartets* relies heavily on expressions which have no referent whatsoever. In *Four Quartets*, terms like "the garden", "the bird", "our first world",

⁹⁵ *ibid*, "Fragment of an Agon", p. 121

⁹⁶ *ibid*, p. 125

⁹⁷ *ibid*, "Gerontion", p. 37-38, lines 17-20

⁹⁸ *ibid*, lines 21-28

and other definite nouns implicate the reader's own interpretive activity -- they are not postulated as shared referents, but as open-ended terms. As in much of Eliot's other work, the phenomenal and the search for what might be called significant are locked in an endless dance. In "Burnt Norton" we discover "the memory", "me" and "you", "we" "the pool" "the lotus" "the bird" "the blood" and so on. In "East Coker" we have "the loosened pane", "my beginning" and "my end", "the light" "the empty silence" "the early owl" "the music" "association of man and woman", and so on. In "The Dry Salvages" there are "gods", "the river", "a strong brown god", "us" "The pools" and so on. In "Little Gidding" there appears "the early afternoon" "the summer" sought "you", "the journey", "the rough road" and so on. Practically every stanza contains a profusion of occasional references alongside an appeal to the phenomenal -- to "echoes", "Moving", "light", "blood" "circulation of the lymph", "flesh" "a grace of sense" "consciousness" and a holy host of others. Here we find an active movement in and out of the phenomenal world, together with an equally urgent search for what can be said to be of lasting or *essential* transcendental significance -- "revived in the meaning... towards the primitive terror. ... With such a permanence as time has... covered by the currents of action,".⁹⁹

Like many other phenomenological features of *Four Quartets*, an interest in *process*, or interpretive activity, has long featured in critical reception of the work. David Spurr alludes to the "phenomenology of the poetic act" which is featured in *Four Quartets*, and describes "Eliot's final attempt at creating a unified self out of the opposing faces of his poetic identity".¹⁰⁰ Spanos cites the "processual or projective thrust of the poem" as key to his reading.¹⁰¹ Francis O. Austin notices that the poem showcases an unusually high frequency of

⁹⁹ *ibid*, "The Dry Salvages", p. 188, lines 99, 105, 110, 113

¹⁰⁰ Gardner, H. (1978). *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London, Oxford University Press, p. 77

¹⁰¹ Spanos, W. V. (1978). "Hermeneutics and Memory: Destroying T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Genre* 11(4), p. 527

“ing” forms.¹⁰² Together with the surfeit of occasional expressions, Eliot’s heavy use of the gerund emphasises the action and movement of consciousness. In particular, notes Austin, Eliot tends to favour the present participle form of the progressive tense.¹⁰³ The progressive is paired with the thematically “timeless” moments of the poem. The movement of the poem, Ricks says, is “a plaiting, a moving in and out”.¹⁰⁴ We might recall the “in and out” of Chapter 2, which is found in his earliest notes, and in the Husserl marginalia. In his notes, the “breathing” of active language concerned the dance between physics and metaphysics. Austin maintains that the philosophical “argument” of the poem is that humankind “lives in [two] dimensions of time: eternal timelessness and historical time”.¹⁰⁵ The search for a moment of intersection between these two senses of time is located, Husserl would argue, in human consciousness, which is expressed in Eliot’s work in the “search for the Word” -- a desire for the still point within the activity of interpretation.

Eliot’s particular emphasis on the occasional, though, is rarely linked to phenomenology. William Spanos uniquely notices Eliot’s mature poetic language is change-contingent: “These explicit disclosures, it is important to emphasize, are not progressive. They are *occasional*”.¹⁰⁶ Although Spanos does not develop this line of inquiry at length, his comment should recall Eliot’s earliest 1913 interest in occasional expression. Eliot’s interest in indexical words such as “this”, “it”, “he”, and so on, and his use of the definite article -- expressions that rely on context for their meaning -- can be traced to his early philosophical training; these words densely populate his later work. One might read the use of occasional

¹⁰² Austin, F. O. (1982). “Ing forms in *Four Quartets*.” *English Studies* 63(1), p. 23

¹⁰³ *ibid*, p. 24

¹⁰⁴ Ricks, C. (1988). *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 265

¹⁰⁵ Austin, F. O. (1982). “Ing forms in *Four Quartets*.” *English Studies* 63(1), p. 27

¹⁰⁶ Spanos, W. V. (1978). “Hermeneutics and Memory: Destroying T.S. Eliot’s *Four Quartets*.” *Genre* 11(4), p. 541

expression as a counterpart to definite description -- a counterpart that has rarely been traced to Russell's philosophy of language within Eliot scholarship.¹⁰⁷

The Definite Indefinite

As Michael Whitworth notes, the deliberate and disorientating use of the definite article becomes one of the keystones of canonical modernist poetry.¹⁰⁸ Eliot's use of definite expressions which fail to define absolutely -- of meaning which appeals to an internal horizon or process rather than an external system of correspondence -- is another dominating theme in the second half of his career. The definite indefiniteness of Eliot's poetry -- the use of terms that *seem* to be definite but are not -- creates a *sensibility* of something definite, minus a referent, is a constant instinct in Eliot's work.

The use of the definite to signal the indefinite is pervasive in Eliot's work, and puts the reader in a "between" place. As Christopher Ricks explains, dominance of the word "between" is seen in Eliot's 1920s and 1930s poems. Meaning that rests "between" logical binaries resurfaces in *Four Quartets*. In "Burnt Norton" we find ourselves "Between un-being and being."¹⁰⁹ In "East Coker" one is stuck "between / stations".¹¹⁰ In "The Dry Salvages", the past and the future are "Between midnight and dawn", the future is "Pressed between yellow leaves of a book that has never been opened", passengers are "Here between the hither and the farther shore".¹¹¹ In "Little Gidding", the word "between" appears eight more times. Meaning is caught up with human being-in-the-world: the state of "between-ness" -- being between ignorance and knowledge, birth and death, memory and future projection. Ricks also

¹⁰⁷ See Svarny, E. (1988). *The Men of 1914: T.S. Eliot and early Modernism*. Philadelphia, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, p. 11: "The poem as a self-sufficient, non-referential entity" Eric Svarny writes, "has its place as a necessary reaction against the mechanical, reductionist tendencies of nineteenth-century positivism"

¹⁰⁸ Whitworth, M. H. (2010). *Reading Modernist Poetry*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell: "articles are easily neglected, but they have great power to orient and to disorient", p. 63

¹⁰⁹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Burnt Norton", p. 175, line 172

¹¹⁰ *ibid*, "East Coker", p. 180, lines 120-121

¹¹¹ *ibid*, "The Dry Salvages", line p. 185, 187, and 188, lines 45, 130, 154

articulates a kind of “positive unnamings” that Eliot uses to lend a sense of indeterminacy to his interwar work.¹¹² He suggests that the “positive unnamings” trend is acutely discernible by the time of *Four Quartets*.¹¹³ In “Ash-Wednesday”, he writes: “there are faces but no names. The prejudicial power of names is not invoked in Ash-Wednesday, a poem which nevertheless evokes a naming power whenever it capitalizes: not only God and Lord, but Lady, the Virgin, Mother, the Rose, the Garden, and -- supremely the poem’s word -- the Word”.¹¹⁴ Eliot’s interest in the ambiguity of names manifests itself more frequently in his later poetry, though nicknaming and misnaming is found throughout his poetic work. A focus on the search for signification -- for degrees of meaning and truth -- reasserts itself in his use of names. Eliot uses names allusively -- not to denote, but to connote -- to evoke. In harmony with this poetic emphasis on a definite indefiniteness is a fixation or fascination with the word, the Word, language, expression, and truths located in subjectivity. The goal of this section is to lay some of these techniques and themes surrounding this definite indefiniteness bare, and to place them gently alongside his philosophical tendencies.

One technique Eliot often uses in his poetry is the presentation of a person without an explanation of who they are. In “Cousin Nancy”, to take one example, the likely definite referent is given a slight twist (“Miss Nancy Ellicott”). In “Mr. Apollinax”, similarly, the referents or “real names” are not only withheld, but the search for definite description is itself mocked by the poem.¹¹⁵ Neither are the “characters” themselves definitely defined; their names are replaced with sobriquets (Mrs. Phlaccus, Professor Channing-Cheetah). Here the “meaning” of Mr. Apollinax is subjected to interpretive caprice. As for the poet, he concludes that the *significant* descriptive detail is not found in the definite descriptions at all: “Of

¹¹² Ricks, C. (1988). *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 251

¹¹³ *ibid*, p. 251

¹¹⁴ *ibid*, p. 226

¹¹⁵ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Mr. Apollinax”, p. 31, lines 18-19

dowager Mrs. Phlaccus, and Professor and Mrs. Cheetah / I remember a slice of lemon, and a bitten macaroon.”¹¹⁶ Phenomenal events are playfully held up against seemingly definitive referents time and again throughout Eliot’s early work; it is of no small significance that “Mr. Apollinax” was written when Eliot was studying Russell’s philosophy of language.

“Conversation Galante” is practically an ode to the absurd propositions entertained in ordinary discussions. Consistent with Eliot’s own philosophy at the time, identity is a fragile, flexible, and constantly shifting undertaking. One is always, when reading Eliot, at the *horizon* of literal meaning, but never arrives at a propositional stopping point. Interpretation becomes necessary precisely because Eliot refuses to grant access to the “what” of the poem.

“Coriolan”

Eliot’s “Coriolan” employs the definite indefinite in curious ways, and throws the reader into a philosophical negotiation between a moment and the way this moment is collectively represented or understood. Timmerman argues that “Triumphal March” “signals an entirely new way of thinking about poetry, of adapting poetry to dramatic forms”.¹¹⁷ “Triumphal March” was published in October of 1931.¹¹⁸ As Timmerman explains, Eliot “was often to recall the work with undisguised fondness”.¹¹⁹ One of the outstanding formal features of the poem is its combination of “diffuse, often contradictory, literary allusions”.¹²⁰

In “Triumphal March”, Eliot explores meaning found in gestures, occasional expressions, interpretations, projections, memories, and hallucinations. One of the most oft-cited references to Husserl within Eliot’s work is his use of Husserl’s philosophy within “Coriolan”. In “Triumphal March”, young Cyril witnesses the passage of Coriolanus, the anti-

¹¹⁶ *ibid*, lines 21-22

¹¹⁷ Timmerman, J. H. (1994). *T.S. Eliot's Ariel Poems: The Poetics of Recovery*. Lewisburg, Bucknell University Press, p. 154

¹¹⁸ *ibid*.

¹¹⁹ *ibid*, p.155

¹²⁰ *ibid*, p. 159

populist dictator, who “stands for an arrogant betrayal of people who also betray him”.¹²¹ Importantly for Eliot’s later work, Coriolanus is conceived as a *false* “still point” -- a stubborn symbol surrounded by fluctuating reality of the crowd: “they are flux and he seems to be permanence”.¹²² “Coriolan” addresses the trauma of war using historical allegory, and steals a line from Husserl’s philosophy: “The natural wakeful life of our Ego is perceiving.”¹²³ The line comes from the General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology in Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy: “The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a continuous perceiving, actual or potential. The world of things and our body within it are continuously present to our perception.”¹²⁴ The line expresses one of the defining questions of Husserl’s entire philosophical enterprise and succinctly summarizes one of Eliot’s key points of interest. Husserl’s focus here (echoed by Eliot in his poem) is the way perception continually changes with a body’s located awareness.

What is at stake in “Coriolan” are the “emotional values attached by the populace to Coriolan”.¹²⁵ Eliot renders what is conventionally thought to be definite, less definite. In the poem, Eliot contrasts phenomenal flux with a social desire for absolute symbolic representation:

Coriolan

¹²¹ Smith, G. (1950). T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p.160

¹²² *ibid*, p. 161 Smith sees Cyril as a foil for Coriolan -- the dramatic irony of the scene draws on the contrast between the secular and the religious -- the boy mistakes the Sanctus bell for the handbell of the crumpet man. *ibid*. David Chinitz, in his *Companion to T.S. Eliot* notices that Eliot “echoes Edmund Husserl” in his unfinished poem, “Triumphal March” (1931). Chinitz, David. *Companion to T.S. Eliot*, p. 207, Elisabeth Wintersteen Schneider notes the same lines, saying simply that Eliot is “quoting Husserl”. Wintersteen Schneider, Elisabeth. *T.S. Eliot: the pattern in the carpet*, p. 144. Of the significance of “Coriolan” within Eliot’s work, Ronald Bush writes: “That the poem should have been treated for so long as a minor piece of political satire is a mystery only the success of Eliot’s self-marketing will explain”, p. 156

¹²³ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Coriolan”, p. 127, line 11

¹²⁴ Husserl, E. (1983). Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy. The Netherlands Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 74

¹²⁵ Smith, G. (1950). T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 163

I. Triumphal March

Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels
Over the paving.
And the flags. And the trumpets. And so many eagles.
How many? Count them. And such a press of people.
We hardly knew ourselves that day, or knew the City.
This is the way to the temple, and we so many crowding the way.
So many waiting, how many waiting? what did it matter, on such a day?
Are they coming? No, not yet. You can see some eagles. And hear the
trumpets.
Here they come. Is he coming?
The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving.
We can wait with our stools and our sausages.¹²⁶

Opening the poem by “listing”, as Donne would, a range of impressions, Eliot depicts transitory thoughts -- a crowd’s discourse -- contingent on the present moment. Unlike Donne, who speaks *outwards* in his poetry, as if to an audience, Eliot uses “lists” to locate the reader in the uncertain, fluctuating consciousness of the mob. The expectation of the crowd is fixated on the figure of the dictator, who is given the occasional title “he”; characteristically, the referent is withheld. A sudden, unannounced introduction of a philosophical register during the hubbub offers a tentative pause to the questioning voices: “The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving.” Deceptively conclusive, the line presents a suspension of questions, and the “answer” seems to be found in an acceptance of the supremacy of the phenomenal reality at hand: “We can wait with our stools and our sausages”. Perception *itself* is the answer to the questions asked -- and perception is depicted as fluid, uneasy, unavoidable (as it is in Husserl’s account). Within Husserl’s work, this line also expresses a constant re-evaluation of perceptual experience -- a process which is ongoing and unresolved, by necessity. Continuous perception opens the poem: “Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses’ heels / Over the paving.” but also answers the philosophical question of transcendence, sought in the universal symbol of the politician. The transitory mode of consciousness -- a kind of dizzy, immediate motion, is supplanted with the questioning mode

¹²⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPP, p. 127, “Coriolan”, lines 1-12

of thought: “How many? Count them.” Questions and sensations weave together into a shifting fabric of significance, coming to a climax in Husserl’s declarative statement, before collapsing into the present. Here, we note that Husserl reappears almost two decades after Eliot had completed his thesis in philosophy, to provide his crowd with some theoretical comfort.¹²⁷

“Coriolan” is an oddly formatted poem. Smith says that Eliot is “careless with the tenses of his verbs” and that this poem showcases “allusiveness”.¹²⁸ The poem, in his reading, is “about the empty husk of a suppositious centrality, personified in a conquering master accorded a Roman triumph and, in the Roman fashion, crowned as a god with the oakleaves of Jupiter”.¹²⁹ But perhaps this “carelessness” is also a comment on the human experience of time as it pertains to the act of signification -- an experience which, as Eliot’s early philosophy stated, was more variable and various than often assumed by those who sought a logically static picture of the universe. The use of Husserl occurs, in Smith’s reading, because Eliot seeks to highlight the fact that “a naïve view of consciousness, as an immediate absorption of the perceived thing into the subject, must be inadequate”.¹³⁰ Yet this “naive” view was precisely what Eliot’s own philosophy of language had defended.

¹²⁷ Although other marginalia or references to Eliot’s reading of Ideas Pertaining to a Pure Phenomenology and to a Phenomenological Philosophy have not been found, traces of Eliot’s serious study of Husserl’s later work still exist. What then of the Husserl reference in this poem? As Robert Sokolowski has pointed out, in a personal commentary made in correspondence concerning this work, Eliot would have been reading an edition of Husserl’s Ideas I which was translated by W.R. Boyce Gibson, and published in 1931. From Eliot’s personal history, we know that he was reading Husserl at the start of World War One, but the use of a quotation from a later publication means that he was aware of Husserl’s work much later in life as well. Just as he had read one of the earliest of editions of Husserl’s Logical Investigations, Eliot must have also gotten his hands on a very early edition of Ideas, indicating an active interest in the developments of Husserl’s work. Husserl must have made a strong impression on him if he was still quoting his work seventeen years after his reading of the Logical Investigations for his studies in philosophy. It is likely that Eliot was reading the 1931 edition of Ideas I and recalling his early fascination with phenomenology. The question posed by Husserl in Ideas I is *how consciousness provides the foundation for language and logic*.

¹²⁸ Smith, G. (1950). T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 160

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p. 161.

¹³⁰ *ibid*, p. 162

The crowd, with its shifting questions and impressions, contrasts with the “fixed” political symbol. As in *Four Quartets*, different points of view refine and perpetually redefine the absolute “Word” or signification that is sought -- what is “timeless” is always in time, and thus the transcendental or metaphysical is only accessed through the physical and the located. In “Coriolan” the reader witnesses the act of signification take on a variety of modes. Thematically, the poem recalls the “broken Coriolanus” of “The Waste Land”, wherein one witnesses a “key / Turn in the door once and once only / We think of the key, each in his prison / Thinking of the key, each confirms a prison / Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours / Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus”.¹³¹ Karl Popper famously described: “a prison formed by the structural rules of our language”.¹³² The “key”, in this reading, resides not in verification or falsification of a proposition that might attribute to a state of affairs universally for all cases, but in the moment of *brokenness* -- in the imperfect, incomplete symbol.

The “same” phenomenal event in the poem is investigated from several perspectives or “modes” of consciousness (points of view): the political symbol is seen in terms of counting, expectation, anxiety, questioning, relief, description, perceptual disturbances, and misidentification. In all of this interpretive flurry, the absolute “identity” or “meaning” of the dictator is necessarily “hidden” within the *odd* symbol -- the *occasional* symbol: “O hidden under the dove’s wing, hidden in the turtle’s breast”.¹³³ This “hiddenness” of absolute meaning is also a central focus of the *Four Quartets* -- where what is sought, yet perpetually evades, is “A symbol perfected in death”.¹³⁴ The “dark dove” also reappears in *Four Quartets* alongside this search.¹³⁵ Eliot returns to his interest in point of view, and the various

¹³¹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “The Waste Land”, p. 74, lines 411-416

¹³² Popper, K. (1994). *The Myth of the Framework: In defence of science and rationality* London, Routledge, p. 52

¹³³ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Coriolan”, p. 127, line 33

¹³⁴ *ibid*, p. 196 “Little Gidding”, line 198

¹³⁵ *ibid*, p. 196 “Little Gidding”, lines 83, 203

conscious experiences or aspects of symbolic objects -- the meaning of a symbol as contingent on a phenomenal perspective or underlying unifying feeling of excitement, expectation, confusion, or questioning (the “meaning” of “Coriolan” would thus be impossible to access from a purely descriptivist perspective -- the ultimate or final meaning is “hidden” from sight).

The leader *is there*, but he is perceived and evaluated phenomenally by the crowd, not described or defined as an abstraction or ideal. This is an old concern for Eliot: an investment in the way meaning operates, and the status of emotion as it pertains to the act of description. In “The Waste Land”, there is a suggestion that linguistic certitude erupts only in moments of inspiration: “Only at nightfall, aethereal rumours / Revive for a moment a broken Coriolanus / DA / Damyata...”.¹³⁶ The certitude of Coriolanus’ symbolic value is “broken”. The artist’s task is “to ‘cry crumpets,’ as it were, to satisfy the material not the spiritual demands of his small chirping constituents”.¹³⁷ However, taken at face value, the boy’s malapropism (“crumpets”) is simply a reinterpretation of a symbol -- as such, it is an occasional expression (to the boy, the bell means “crumpets”, losing its liturgical register). *Misidentification* is a form of poetry. The youthful mistake is, after all, depicted as “artful”, and even the title of the poem is a riff on a name (“Coriolanus” instead of Caius Marcius).¹³⁸ The ultimate symbolic value of Coriolan *continually escapes* the crowd, though they go on aiming at an understanding of the event in singular linguistic itemizations (using, for example, the most singular terms of all -- numbers and lists). Is this escape from rigid signification a triumph or a tragedy of Shakespearean proportions? On this matter, the poem seems to remain

¹³⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “The Waste Land”, p. 74, lines 416-418

¹³⁷ Smith, G. (1950). *T.S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: a study in sources and meaning* United States, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, p. 165

¹³⁸ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Coriolan”, p. 128, line 48

comfortably ambiguous. It is true that Shakespeare's *Coriolanus* was seen, by Eliot, to be his greatest dramatic triumph.¹³⁹

Readers find themselves on the ground and in the throng, searching for an eternal meaning within the present. Philosophically, one can read the poem as a depiction either of the failure of absolute signification, or of the necessary submission of metaphysics to phenomenal occurrences, which is ultimately a triumphal declaration of the supremacy of the existential. From this reading, the activity of interpretation helps solidify, if only for a brief moment, an understanding. The moment in question is undoubtedly, however, "Now" -- a word repeated in the poem eight times. The shifting material landscape of the crowd, with its stools and sausages, its stone, bronze, steel, eagles, or trumpets, its curiosity and uncertainty, is contrasted with the desired immaterial satisfaction of a "final linguistic symbol". One image suggesting both finality of signification and the horizontal or shifting aspect of meaning itself is the phrase, central to Eliot's *Four Quartets*: "At the still point of the turning world. O hidden."¹⁴⁰ The search for a significant stopping place is swept up by the preceding and repeated auto-antonym "dust": "Now they go up to the temple. Then the sacrifice. / Now come the virgins bearing urns, urns containing / Dust / Dust / Dust of dust, and now / Stone, bronze stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels / Over the paving."¹⁴¹ Eliot is fond of auto-antonyms (words which mean their own opposites), which often appear in his poems alongside attempts at metaphysical solidity or ultimate meaning, as one can see in his emphasis on the word "resign" in "Marina", for instance, which also appears alongside a thematic search or quest for meaning -- resign can mean either a commitment or a relieving of commitment, and also contains the delightful play on words of re-signing something (rewriting and revision is another Eliotic theme) -- or the word "fix", as seen in "The Love

¹³⁹ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, "Hamlet", p. 144

¹⁴⁰ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Coriolan", p. 128, line 35

¹⁴¹ *ibid*, lines 36-42

Song” -- fixing can be read as a mending or as a breaking. The word “go” in *Four Quartets* can be read as “move forwards” or “die”.

The word “dust”, likewise, means itself and its own opposite -- both the activity of sweeping away or erasing, and that which one wishes to erase (it also has the sensibility or feeling of “fear”, found in “The Waste Land” about it -- a reminder of death, which is always at the poet’s horizon of consciousness -- the horizon against which all meaning takes on new shades and perspectives). (Thematically, phenomenal repetition of the opening images establishes the supremacy of the phenomenal over the universal. Meaning is use: “Don’t throw away that sausage, / It’ll come in handy.” Phenomenal flux is inevitable -- the artist enters the fray, putting interpretive spins on the symbolic reference -- referring the absolute to the particular point of view. In *Four Quartets*, this philosophical theme will make itself more clear: “For most of us, / this is the aim/ Never here to be realised; / Who are only undefeated / Because we have gone on trying; / We, content at last / In our temporal reversion nourish / (Not too far from the yew-tree) / The life of significant soil.”¹⁴² Significance is kept alive (or “nourished”) by a community of speakers because it moves towards, but never arrives, at a final understanding of “The Word” or “The Absolute” -- what is meaningful moves through temporal stages of belief, practice, and reflection.

Eliot’s poems often depict meaning “itself” (the singular semiotic resting place, we could say, or the “what” of the poem -- its reference, as the philosopher of language might say) as playfully evading the reader, raising the status and interest of particular, time-contingent points of view, and delaying, or even denying, the gratification of descriptive certainty in favour of the occasional or time-contingent. In doing so, Eliot’s poems become *experiences*, rather than codexes in need of translation. This continued investment in the way meaning works expresses itself quite explicitly in many of Eliot’s poems. In “Gerontion”, “Signs are taken for wonders. ‘We would see a sign!’ / The word within a word/unable to

¹⁴² Eliot, T.S. CPP, “The Dry Salvages”, p. 190, lines 230-237

speak a word, / Swaddled with darkness".¹⁴³ In "A Cooking Egg", Eliot describes symbols that are "Buried beneath some snow-deep Alps. / Over buttered scones and crumpets / Weeping, weeping multitudes / Droop in a hundred A.B.C.'s".¹⁴⁴ Almost everywhere symbols or signifiers are found as a motif, they defer to transitory consciousness

The act of signification or "ordering" reality, depicted poetically in "Coriolan" is paired with sounds, echoes, moving, dancing, remembering, or questioning, and other forms of physical or mental activity. This becomes particularly clear in the second part of the poem, "Difficulties of a Statesman", wherein an oscillation between emotion and thought or between physical sensation and abstraction is performed. Eliot poses the mundane or regimented "The first thing to do is to form committees", and then lists many different types of committees (as if thinking them through), against the emotional and eruptive: "Cry cry what shall I cry?"¹⁴⁵ In this section, as in *Four Quartets*, where what is sought is the "still point". Shifting human experience is contrasted with "A still moment, repose of noon, set under the upper branches of noon's / widest tree".¹⁴⁶ A "cry" also concludes "East Coker" of *Four Quartets*: "The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters" -- an emotional, gestural moment, juxtaposed with: "Distinguished civil servants, chairman of many committees".¹⁴⁷ Here too, the occasional expression reigns supreme ("Mother", various "Orders", "the breast", "the cyclamen", "the clematis" "the lintel", etc). This mingling of the sublime or universal signifier with opaque emotional utterances, spoken from individual points of view, is found both in the phenomenology of "Coriolan", and in the performance of phenomenology in *Four Quartets*, where static public definitions are placed alongside the momentarily ambiguous, bodily, suggestive, guttural language of the "now". The end of "Difficulties of a Statesman" spirals

¹⁴³ *ibid*, p. 37, "Gerontion" lines 17-19

¹⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 45, "A Cooking Egg", lines 30-34

¹⁴⁵ *ibid*, "Difficulties of a Statesman", p. 129, lines 9, 8

¹⁴⁶ *ibid*, lines 40-41

¹⁴⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "East Coker", lines 213, 106

from processes that are observed to “RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN”.¹⁴⁸ Like the “Datta. Dayadhvam. Damyata. /Shantih shantih shantih” at the conclusion of *The Waste Land*, these lines come from nowhere and fail to refer to anybody in particular (who should resign? Why should they resign?)

That is not it at all

Eliot describes poetry as the practice of “not using the wrong word” rather than the practice of finding *le mot juste*. The poet’s precision concerns a precise *emotion*, or the internal lifeworld that is as-yet unexpressed, rather than the correspondence between a “fact” and the external world.¹⁴⁹ Both Eliot’s philosophy and his poetry attend to expressions falling outside the scope of the literalist position he confronted explicitly in his philosophy of language. His tendency is to investigate meanings that mean *more* than their literal definitions allow, articulating a kind of *gesture* or *orientation towards* precision. Precision is a longstanding theme in Eliot’s poetry, but his precision tends to involve the task of negotiating between abstract signifiers and phenomenal occasions. One witnesses his speakers *reaching at or towards* something definite, often not-quite arriving at a definition, but instead articulating a feeling or mood that a scene or object evokes. In 1917, for instance, “Prufrock” meets “one” who says ““That is not what I meant at all. / That is not it, at all””¹⁵⁰ and gripes “It is impossible to say just what I mean!”¹⁵¹ The speaker’s anxiety, spoken through the auto-antonym “fix”, refers to his own legacy (how he will be “fixed” -- both set up as a symbol and “killed” -- in time), but also to the horizon of meaning itself: “The eyes that fix you in a formulated phrase / And when I am formulated, sprawling on a pin, / When I am pinned and wriggling on the wall, / Then how shall I begin”.¹⁵² “Fixing” a term makes it impossible for

¹⁴⁸ *ibid*, “Difficulties of a Statesman”, p. 130, line 64

¹⁴⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1952). “Scylla and Charybdis”. *Agenda: An Anthology (The First Four Decades)*. 285-295.

¹⁵⁰ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Prufrock”, p. 16, lines 98-99

¹⁵¹ *ibid*, line 105

¹⁵² *ibid*, p. 14, lines 56-59

the activity of consciousness to act. In *Four Quartets*, similarly, intuitive meaning is sought: “I sometimes wonder if that is what Krishna meant --”.¹⁵³ This thematic insistence on the changing and variable nature of human definition was, as critics have already noticed, probably part of Eliot’s self-conscious interest in poetic language more generally, and in what poetic language accomplished that philosophical language did not.

Geoffrey B. Williams states that “as tradition changes so too, [Eliot] perceived, did the public decorum for the clarity of expression, grammar, approved poetic vocabularies, techniques, and ideas”.¹⁵⁴ Williams compellingly explains how Eliot’s use of allusive and elusive language relies on a deliberate blurring of categorical registers, something he admired in his favourite metaphysical poets. While Hugh Kenner and others have identified Eliot’s use of vagueness as such, it is helpful to consider ambiguity as a deliberate literary technique or method, rather than lumping all of the instances of Eliot’s form into a description of “every possible vagueness”.¹⁵⁵ William Empson saw Eliot’s use of the definite indefinite -- of ambiguity -- as revolutionary to 20th century poetics, and it is likely that this attempt to highlight the more nuanced and less definitive modes of human description was partly a result of his philosophical training.¹⁵⁶ Empson thought Eliot’s particular form of ambiguity conveyed a heavy reliance on semantic contrasts to convey new meaning. Eliot’s work repeatedly juxtaposes the abstract and the phenomenal: “And even Abstract Entities / Circumambulate her charm; / But our lot crawls between dry ribs / To keep our metaphysics warm”.¹⁵⁷ Ambiguity thrives, as it were, “between the lines” -- the Abstract charm is directly followed by dry ribs, metaphysics is preceded by “warmth” -- a quality that is only felt by

¹⁵³ *ibid*, “The Dry Salvages”, p. 187, line 126

¹⁵⁴ Williams, G. B. (1991). *The Reason in a Storm: A Study of the use of Ambiguity in the Writings of T.S. Eliot*. Lanham, New York, and London, University Press of America p. 84

¹⁵⁵ Kenner, H. (1965). *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 36

¹⁵⁶ Empson, W. (1970). *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Great Britain, Chatto and Windus Ltd, p. viii

¹⁵⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, p. 53, “Whispers of Immortality”, lines 29-32

living flesh. In “The Waste Land” this technique -- of blending drastically the philosophical and the physical registers to achieve a kind of definitive *feeling of the meaningful*, rather than a singularly defined meaning -- infuses the poem (Winter is warm, life and death blend together, memory is forgetful, and so forth). The definite indefinite -- the gesture towards definition which nevertheless refuses an arrival -- functions rhetorically as well as thematically in Eliot’s work.¹⁵⁸

Hugh Kenner has noticed how Eliot’s particular use of abstraction -- wherein the abstract is “in league with the moment” or, clothed in all the ambiguity of the occasion -- alters the way his poems are interpreted to mean something: “Eliot’s poems ... differ from reader to reader to an unusual degree”. The poems vacillate “between meaning nothing and meaning everything”.¹⁵⁹ Edward Lobb describes Eliot’s reticence to define literally as an extension of a broader literary approach: “rational argument [in Eliot’s criticism] is harder to conduct as words are treated more and more subjectively”; Lobb views Eliot’s critical work as a form of *rhetoric*, rather than logic, because of this tendency towards regressive vocabularies.¹⁶⁰ Between Eliot’s criticism and poetry, then, there exists an attitude towards language that is consistent -- namely, an attempt not to define a term but rather to *perform* its full semantic range, using forced juxtapositions and internal contradictions. Lobb believes that it is impossible to make Eliot’s philosophy of language articulate in logical terms, but, I would argue, this is precisely because Eliot himself rejected formulaic or scientific visions of truth computational or overly empiricist language as a young man, and this stance was reiterated in his mature philosophical poetry. In other words, the impossibility of definitive statements was made possible by a self-conscious embrace of the subjective elements of language -- a vision that was noticeably consistent with his early philosophy.

¹⁵⁸ see Frye, N. (1963). T.S. Eliot. Edinburgh and London, Robert MacLehose and Co. Ltd, p. 50

¹⁵⁹ Kenner, H. (1965). The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd , p. 50

¹⁶⁰ Lobb, E. (1981). T.S. Eliot and the Romantic Critical Tradition London, Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, p. 94

Eliot “breaks open” the semantic possibilities of his poems by employing contradictory or logically inconsistent pairings of terms -- a technique he also admired in the work of Donne. This recalls his rejection of the correspondence theory of truth, and his support for *feeling* which would be the ultimate criterion of truth claims. His poetic tendency is to leave the reader with a *sensibility* or *feeling* of a precise meaning, but without a *definite* “*external*” or “*public*” *reference point* for this meaning -- without, in other words, a means of translating this precise feeling into *something else* -- something more literal. In “Ash - Wednesday”, as Kenner explains, “every noun, verb and adjective pulls two ways”.¹⁶¹ We read of an “End of the endless / Journey to no end / Conclusion of all that / Is inconclusible / Speech without word and / Word of no speech” (lines 91-96), and of that which exists “In ignorance and knowledge” (line 127). Language, here, is working *against* definition in one sense, and *towards* it in another -- but the definiteness sought can only be described in terms of mood, tone, or feeling. Eliot’s use of contradictions often reappear in tandem with an almost supersaturation of language-focused terms: words, whispers, speech, and silence, feature as the obsessive leitmotifs. One *feels* that there is something on the horizon -- an “end to the journey”, but at the same time, experiences the frustration of this very end being denied (“no end”).

Eliot’s work exemplifies, in William Empson’s mind, the second form of his seven types of ambiguity, wherein opposite meanings combine to create a new meaning by being “resolved into one”.¹⁶² In *Four Quartets* this technique thoroughly dominates the poem -- birth and death are joined, light and dark, old and new, thought and action, and a plethora of other abstract contrasts are deliberately conflated, often alongside an underlying search for a semantic stopping place. Ideas appeal over and over to phenomenal experience. What is taken for granted as absolutely defined is thrown into question by the poem, which insists on uniting

¹⁶¹ Kenner, H. (1965). *The Invisible Poet: T.S. Eliot*. Great Britain, Methuen & Co Ltd, p. 226

¹⁶² Empson, W. (1970). *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Great Britain, Chatto and Windus Ltd, p. 48

oppositions for a moment's insight. Rather than diminishing one term to the other, or predicating them more extensively, the reader is asked to hold contradictory points of information together in a fragile unity. The unification of opposites often emerges concurrent with philosophical musings on language. Consider:

What we call the beginning is often the end
And to make an end is to make a beginning.
The end is where we start from. And every phrase
And sentence that is right (where every word is at home,
Taking its place to support the others,
The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of old and new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together)
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,
Every poem an epitaph..." ("Little Gidding", lines 217-230).

This sort of ambiguity is characterised by a "degree of logical or grammatical disorder".¹⁶³ In other words the "what" Eliot seeks -- a "home" where "every sentence is right" remains illusive. One is left only with the sense of a search: what is this the beginning *of*? Whatever this "it" is, "it" flourishes precisely where definition fails. As Empson explains, in this form of descriptive ambiguity, "the thought is complicated or at least doubtful, whereas the feeling is very direct".¹⁶⁴ Here, the feeling seems hopeful, harmonious, musical, almost hypnotic. Elsewhere, it is found to be depressive, anxious, hurried. Eliot's search for the "Word" -- for the universal signifier of metaphysics -- is married to points of view in his poetry, and to singular moods.

Northrop Frye calls Eliot's poetry "allusive and echoic".¹⁶⁵ Eliot's use of evocative language is not concerned with meaning anything *specific*, in his view, but with "articulating rhythms".¹⁶⁶ Frye states that "Eliot has achieved his hold on the modern reader's imagination

¹⁶³ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Frye, N. (1963). *T.S. Eliot*. Edinburgh and London, Robert MacLehose and Co. Ltd, p. 28

¹⁶⁶ *ibid.*, p. 30. Here, a broader discussion of the relations between music, mysticism, and meaning, is warranted.

not by clear visual images, but by uniting the extremes of incantation and meaning”.¹⁶⁷ The fact that the reader does not “understand” the *definite description* or *correct reference* for Eliot’s poetic contrasts does not necessarily mean that the reader does not understand them *at all*. It is necessary, if one wishes to espouse a phenomenological reading of Eliot’s poetry, to disagree with the author of the *Times Literary Supplement* 1940 review of Eliot’s *Four Quartets*: “knowledge gained from experience has only a limited value. We are in a dark wood, in a bramble, our foot-hold never secure”.¹⁶⁸ After all, what the poems confess in conclusion is: “All manner of thing shall be well / When the tongues of flame are all in-
folded / Into the crowned knot of fire / And the fire and the rose are one” “Little Gidding”, lines 268-270). If anything, Eliot’s own philosophy would espouse the belief that knowledge, because it is based on experience of meaning which is *nuanced and varied* -- unities of consciousness are to be sought, rather than sublated or deferred. Eliot enacts a “tone of meaning” or a “sound of sense”.¹⁶⁹ Language which embraces and explores ambiguities is, in both Eliot’s philosophy and his poetics, *more authentic* than language which resists them. Following from his rejection of Russell, Eliot argues instead that “when the meaning assigned is too clearly formulated, then one reader who has grasped a meaning of a poem may happen to appreciate it less exactly, enjoy it less intensely, than another person who has the discretion not to inquire too insistently.”¹⁷⁰ The ideal mode of poetic interpretation is not a translation from one description to a more precise or literalist one, but an exploration of the fullest range of meanings.

Eliot extends the horizons of language by conflating logical opposites in his work -- by “opening up” or “breaking” a word’s conventional meaning, and forcing it back into a

¹⁶⁷ *ibid*, p. 33

¹⁶⁸ *TS Eliot Four Quartets*, p. 34

¹⁶⁹ *ibid*, p. 156

¹⁷⁰ Eliot, T.S. Introduction to Knight, W. G. (1930). *The Wheel of Fire*. Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. xviii-xiv

commerce with the activity of interpretation. Empson writes: “this use of a word with several extended meanings so as to contract several sentences into one, is the fundamental device of the Augustan style. The word is usually a verb precisely because the process is conceived as an activity, as the work of digesting and controlling mind”.¹⁷¹ This form of ambiguity is also described as “a statement of the limitations of the human situation” (recalling Wittgenstein’s famous aphorism: “the limits of my language mean the limits of my world”).¹⁷² Empson perceives where Eliot contrasts scientific and sensational diction in *The Waste Land*.¹⁷³ However, he notices the poem “loses nothing in definiteness” -- perhaps, as has been suggested, this is because Eliot was looking for *emotional* or *intuitive* precision, rather than atomistic precision.¹⁷⁴

Eliot tends to *marry* opposites in his poetry -- a technique that mirrors the “violent” blending together of opposites he describes in The Clark Lectures as indicative of a metaphysical poet. Reliance on the genitive (“of”) appears throughout *Four Quartets* -- for example: “In appetency, on its metallated ways / Of time past and time future.” (“Burnt Norton”, lines 125-126). The syntax here suspends the subject until the end of the thought: time comes “after”, which gives priority to the impression of time, rather than time as a category term. The phenomenal precedes the conceptual. The use of double negatives also highlights Eliot’s specific form of ambiguity: “Neither flesh nor / fleshless; / Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance / is,” (“Burnt Norton”, lines 62-65). Eliot relies not on the “either / or” of Russell’s philosophy -- on categorical literalism -- but on the “both / and” of hermeneutics. The final section of *Four Quartets* is “devoid of modifiers” altogether,

¹⁷¹ Empson, W. (1970). *Seven Types of Ambiguity*. Great Britain, Chatto and Windus Ltd, p. 70-71

¹⁷² *ibid*, p. 73

¹⁷³ *ibid*, p. 77-78

¹⁷⁴ *ibid*.

as Spurr points out.¹⁷⁵ The sense that *something* is meant, but that “*what*” is meant intensifies throughout Eliot’s poetic trajectory -- the most intense experience of the evasion of definite sense is found in *Four Quartets*.

Perhaps one of the most striking features of *Four Quartets* is a reliance on the definite article, which, by a typical logic of contradictions, lends an indefinite quality to the poem. In the first two sections of “Burnt Norton” alone, the definite article appears 73 times, and in *Four Quartets* as a whole it appears more frequently than any other word. *Four Quartets* appears to insist on singular reference. Although the definite article plays a central role in Eliot’s earlier poetry (for instance, it is also the most frequently used term in “Prufrock”), the margin between the definite article and the indefinite article in “Prufrock” is much narrower (with the indefinite article repeating itself roughly half as many times as the definite); in “Burnt Norton”, the ratio is 134 definite articles/14 indefinite. Given the heavy reliance on the definite article, what does the term accomplish, poetically?

Eliot’s poetry performs his early philosophical contention that definiteness in language is founded upon point of view. In *Four Quartets*, process, cycles, and endless attempts at understanding are given priority over descriptive solidity. As Louis Menand points out, the search for a “*mot juste*” as a fool’s errand is a conception that came to dominate modernist poetics.¹⁷⁶ Whereas a statement like “The present King of France is bald” asserts a shared reference for negotiation, lines like “Footfalls echo in the memory / Down the passage which we did not take / Towards the door we never opened / Into the rose-garden...” refer themselves to an individuated consciousness (“Burnt Norton” lines 11-15). Here, the definite article is joined with an occasional reference (memory, passage, door, and rose-garden remain indefinite -- whose memory? Which passage?). Eliot immediately engages the experience of reading -- the poem is *a form of consciousness* (line 15). The nouns Eliot often selects are

¹⁷⁵ Spurr, D. (1984). *Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism*. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 52

¹⁷⁶ Menand, L. (2007). *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* USA Oxford University Press, p. 59

unspecific specifications. This indefiniteness is further enhanced by claims to ignorance or a suspension of definite knowledge: “I do not know”, or “I do not know much about the gods”, for instance (“Burnt Norton”, line 18, “The Dry Salvages”, line 1). Knowledge is “bracketed” or suspended, and the investigation of meaning *itself* championed. This suspension recalls Eliot’s early exasperated philosophical declaration: “Oh, do not ask, ‘What is it?’ / Let us go and make our visit.” (“Prufrock, lines 11-12). Such a declaration is a phenomenological one -- it prioritizes the activity of consciousness as the location of meaning.

Eliot’s poetry, in keeping with his early philosophical positions, traffics in the not-yet expressed and the not-quite understood. Words never quite manage to define -- they *aim* at definition -- but they might *mean more* than their definitions would allow. Russell’s philosophy would not be able to discuss how two *entirely different* statements could “mean the same thing”, for instance, because he assumed that eccentric interpretation or occasional meaning were incidental or ancillary to expressions of truth.¹⁷⁷ “Meaning” within Eliot’s mature poetics is specifically not the transmission of singular logical identities. Meaning is subject to constant revision: “That was a way of putting it -- not very satisfactory:” (“Burnt Norton”, line 69). In *Four Quartets*, Eliot “repeats”, altering the words he uses: “You say I am repeating / Something I have said before. I shall say it again. Shall I say it again?” (“East Coker” lines 138-139). This line is followed by an entirely new sentence. Just as he uses the same words to highlight different meanings, he uses “repetition” which employs entirely different words. One of the major questions of Eliot’s poetic vision of language, we might recall, was the relationship between truth and meaning: does one’s own meaning (or eccentric interpretation) engage truth claims? Meaning is constantly returning to the phenomenal for its justification: “We had the experience but missed the meaning, / And approach to the meaning restores the experience / In a different form, beyond any meaning / We can assign to

¹⁷⁷ Russell’s theory of definite descriptions, restated:
There is an F.
At most one thing is F.
Something that is F is G.

happiness. I have said before..." (The Dry Salvages, 95-98). Levina puts this somewhat more abstractly: "Through the process of this reconstitution, the reader will relive the emergence of those existents — in this and every other act of reading — as they appeared to the poet, in his turn reliving this experience as the memory he speaks".¹⁷⁸

Much of Eliot's poetry involves a search for "the Word" -- for meaning that is permanent, universally accessible, and crystalline, symbolically (this expression also has obvious theological connotations, which will not be taken up here). Nearly every time the timeless symbol appears, however, it is in dialogue with the phenomenal experience. In "Mr. Eliot's Sunday Morning Service", for instance, it is asserted that "In the beginning was the Word. / Superfetation of to en, / And the mensual turn of time / Produced enervate Origen" (lines 5-8). Here, the allusions are layered. The Word incarnate, can be read as Christ, who is the divine embodiment, in time, of eternal meaning. Taken somewhat differently, though, the statement concerns signification itself. The term "superfetation", which implies a double fertilisation -- or two ages of a life within the uterus -- and is applied to "The One", which can be read either as a Platonic symbol, as "the one" of Eliot's notes (the "one" of Atomism, as discussed in Chapter 2) or from a Christian perspective. "One" truth is always double -- truth is pregnant not only with shared knowledge of language, but with individual interpretation (two modes are present in one, and the origin can deviate from the source code). The poem ends with a phenomenal, all too human moment -- Sweeney in the bathtub.

Four Quartets

If by eternity is understood not endless temporal duration but timelessness, then he lives eternally who lives in the present.

(Ludwig Wittgenstein, Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus)

In many ways, *Four Quartets* represents the culmination of Eliot's philosophical views on meaning, language, consciousness, and metaphysics. The poems, as read

¹⁷⁸ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." Journal of Modern Literature 36(3), p. 202

phenomenologically, explore the notion of Time and the possibility of permanent meaning by engaging the processes or acts of consciousness (memory, expectation, interpretation, and so on). In Pound's method, the young Eliot found "a final concentration of the entire past upon the present".¹⁷⁹ So too, *Four Quartets* explores the way memory and projection come to play upon the sensibilities of a present moment, and dramatizes the inner workings of consciousness through an exploration of the mind focused on itself *in the act of interpreting*.

They begin:

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.
 But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.¹⁸⁰

Immediately, we notice occasional expressions ("what", "the memory", "the passage", "the door", "your mind"). We notice a linking of the abstract register with the physical that Eliot admired in Donne during his middle period, a desire to understand the purpose of language, as experienced by the active consciousness, and a return of "dust" found in earlier, similar moments: "to what purpose / Disturbing the dust". There exists a horizon of "perpetual possibility" and a "Pointing" to an end -- an orientation towards something, but not an arrival at its resting place (an orientation of consciousness). The orientated gesture appears repeatedly in the poem, for example: "Dawn points, and other day / Prepares for heat and

¹⁷⁹ Eliot, T.S. CP II, "The Method of Mr. Pound. A review of *Quia Pauper Amavi*", p. 144

¹⁸⁰ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Burnt Norton", p. 171, lines 1-18

silence. / Out at sea the dawn wind/Wrinkles and slides. I am here / Or there, or elsewhere. In my beginning.” (“East Coker”, lines 48-51). The word “point”, which reappears throughout the poem, can be read in terms of orientation -- that is, as a gesture, rather than a data point, as in “Little Gidding”, when it appears as a form of conscious activity: “That pointed scrutiny with which we challenge / The first-met stranger in the waning dusk” (lines 92-93). Words are located -- they echo in the mind. They are not abstract, but living, breathing life into dust. The first lines of the poem are full of the indefinite (Time, All, an abstraction, possibility), but this indefiniteness is immediately referred to the phenomenally definite (“Down the passage, Towards the door, Into the rose-garden”). Which passage? What door? Whose rose-garden? The lacuna of meaning invites the reader to interpret. The opening of Husserl’s meditation on time, with its emphasis on *time as it appears to us*, introduces the suspension of objective time in the same manner: “That the consciousness of a tonal process, of a melody I am now hearing, exhibits a succession is something for which I have an evidence that renders meaningless every doubt and denial”.¹⁸¹

Four Quartets represents Eliot’s most explicitly philosophical poetry. In a 1959 “Paris Review” interview, Eliot spoke frankly of *Four Quartets* as the mature expression of a thematic scheme he had been refining for a long time. The poems entail a:

greater simplification of language and to speaking in a way which is more like conversing with your reader. I see the later *Quartets* as being much simpler and easier to understand than *The Waste Land* and “Ash-Wednesday.” Sometimes the thing I’m trying to say, the subject matter, may be difficult, but it seems to me that I’m saying it in a simpler way.

The other element that enters into it, I think, is just experience and maturity. I think that in the early poems it was a question of not being able to—of having more to say than one knew how to say, and having something one wanted to put into words and rhythm which one didn’t have the command of words and rhythm to put in a way immediately apprehensible.

That type of obscurity comes when the poet is still at the stage of learning how to use language. You have to say the thing the difficult way. The only alternative is not saying it at all, at that stage. By the time of the *Four Quartets*, I couldn’t have written in the style of *The Waste Land*. In *The Waste*

¹⁸¹ *ibid*, p. 5

Land, I wasn't even bothering whether I understood what I was saying. These things, however, become easier to people with time. You get used to having *The Waste Land*, or *Ulysses*, about.¹⁸²

In other words the “what” introduced by *Four Quartets* -- the thematic focus, was something Eliot was clearer about later in life. And, I suggest, this focus appears to be intimately connected to his lifelong concern for how what we mean can be said to be verified.

Critics have long searched for the philosophical underpinnings of Eliot's *Four Quartets*. Northrop Frye writes: “when we read *Four Quartets*, whatever influences there may be from Bradley or Patanjali or St John of the Cross or Heraclitus, we darkly suspect Eliot too of indulging in a philosophy of his own.”¹⁸³ Scholarship has tended to focus on Eliot's apparent debt to Heidegger. For example, Louis Menand writes: “The ghost in the fourth ‘Prelude’ is the soul of the world, and the rationale behind the poem's method seems to be the sort that would be articulated by Heidegger in *Being and Time*”.¹⁸⁴ Harriet Davidson provides a thoroughgoing reading of Eliot's work through the lens of Heidegger's thought, and Dominic Heath Griffith's 2012 thesis interprets Eliot's vision of language as distinctly Heideggerian. Likewise, early Eliot scholarship, because of its own historical moment -- located in the transition from the modern to the postmodern, found easy connections between *Four Quartets* and *later* phenomenology. A.J. Weideman aligns Eliot with Kierkegaard, noting the way Eliot places the infinite within the finite, suggesting “overtones of Heidegger”.¹⁸⁵ Meanwhile, the postmodern reading of *Four Quartets*, as articulated, for instance, by Alireza Farahbaksh, would conceive of Eliot's “raid on the inarticulate” as an acknowledgment of the *difficulty of unifying meaning with truth* -- a resignation to the futility

¹⁸² Hall, D. (1959). "Interviews: T.S. Eliot, The Art of Poetry No. 1." *The Paris Review* 21(Spring-Summer)

¹⁸³ Frye, N. (1963). *T.S. Eliot*. Edinburgh and London, Robert MacLehose and Co. Ltd, p. 49

¹⁸⁴ Menand, L. (2007). *Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context* USA Oxford University Press, p. 27

¹⁸⁵ Weideman, A. J. (1977). "Philosophical Elements in Four Quartets." *Koers: Bulletin for Christian Scholarship* 42(6), p. 531-532

of meaning creation as-such.¹⁸⁶ This is done by way of Derrida: the “darkness” of the poem is the centre of meaning. In Farahbaksh’s reading of the poem, Eliot “asserts that the meaning of a concept always exceeds the idea and can be indefinitely extended”.¹⁸⁷ William Spanos, to take another example, reads *Four Quartets* as essentially deconstructive, tying the “failure” of recollection to Derridian (i.e. late) phenomenology.¹⁸⁸ In *Four Quartets*, Spanos sees the essential metaphor of the postmodern phenomenological imagination.¹⁸⁹ With this framework in mind, Spanos reads the poem against the entire pantheon of postmodern phenomenologists and language philosophers: Foucault, Gadamer, Kierkegaard, and Derrida, with reference as far backward as Heidegger. In this reading, Eliot’s concern for language terminates in a failure to articulate universal truths.

Nothingness, argues Spanos, is posited as the centre of *Four Quartets*, not presence.¹⁹⁰ David Spurr calls the poem “a drama of consciousness”.¹⁹¹ However, in a typically postmodern turn, Spurr interprets Eliot to be signaling the “death of language”.¹⁹² Although he notices the hermeneutic plasticity of Eliot’s style, he insists that philosophically, the poem “lay[s] siege to the very idea of language itself”.¹⁹³ This reading, I would argue, is a result of the specific postmodern framework imposed upon the work, and overlooks Eliot’s

¹⁸⁶ Farahbaksh, A. (2007). "Postmodern Word in Eliot's Four Quartets." Journal of the Australian Universities Language and Literature Association **2007**(107), p. 65

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*, p. 66

¹⁸⁸ Spanos, W. V. (1978). "Hermeneutics and Memory: Destroying T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." Genre **11**(4) p. 529-530

¹⁸⁹ *ibid*, p. 552

¹⁹⁰ *ibid*, p. 547-548

¹⁹¹ Spurr, D. (1984). Conflicts in Consciousness: T.S. Eliot's Poetry & Criticism. Chicago, University of Illinois Press, p. 93

¹⁹² *ibid*, p. 106

¹⁹³ *ibid*, p. 103

own historically philosophical heritage.¹⁹⁴

While amenable to this reading, *Four Quartets* seems to follow a more classical phenomenological vein -- a vein which Spanos mentions only briefly, and is altogether undervalued by other critics, apart from the recent work of Levina. In his reading of “Burnt Norton”, Spanos briefly mentions, “something like what Husserl called the phenomenological reduction -- the bracketing of the ‘natural standpoint’ in order to arrive at ‘the things themselves’ -- this ‘descent’ does not terminate in the verification of presence at the center and thus of the *expected* continuity in time that neutralizes its disturbances”.¹⁹⁵ Getting back to the “things themselves” is a familiar theme to modernist literary theorists. What is perhaps surprising is the connection between the poem and a specific philosophical method -- a method whereby phenomena are encountered directly via the apprehension of unique conscious experiences. In fact, the phenomenological epoché is espoused explicitly in the poem: “In order to arrive at what you do not know / You must go by a way which is the way of ignorance... And what you do not know is the only thing you know”.¹⁹⁶ It is the same thesis

¹⁹⁴ Svarny, E. (1988). *The Men of 1914: T.S. Eliot and early Modernism*. Philadelphia, Milton Keynes, Open University Press, p. 55 Other critics have repeatedly emphasised that the centre of the poem’s concern is the human subject’s struggle with categories of understanding or meaning. The “conceptual frame-work upon which *Four Quartets* is built”, according to Herman Servotte, is the fact that “the transfiguration of the world is correlative with the transfiguration of the perceiving subject; the one determines, and is at the same time determined by, the other” (385). This centre, then, determines the move away from descriptive priorities, as the “inner contradictions” of the poem feature double and triple negations, which cause the reader to lose their foothold on descriptive truth (382-383). Examples Wight argues that *Four Quartets* functions using a “poetic logic” of paradox (63). Farahbaksh, like Alldritt, reads *Four Quartets* as articulating layers of consciousness grappling with the limits of signification (64). Knox describes how the dream vision of the poem “allows for simultaneously existing and functioning planes of meaning”; he calls Eliot’s language “the perfection of the common language” (310-311, 312). Svarny discusses at length “the socio-literary premise for that gradual shift from a communicatory to a presentative function which can be seen as the underlying tendency of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century avant-garde art and writing” (28). Verheul goes a long way towards describing how the gestalt works in *Four Quartets* -- how the meanings of a term are “built up” -- “added to” and “revised” in each section of the poem. Verheul analyses the term “dancing”, for example in its various iterations as an example of this technique (290). Eliot’s “radical pessimism concerning the possibility of communication”, witnessed by critics in “Prufrock”, might also be re-imagined as a gestures towards private meaning, or as a comfortable stance towards ambiguity itself -- an ambiguity that would contradict the project of definite description, since it allows for irreducible contrasts, even contradictions, to exist comfortably alongside one another.

¹⁹⁵ *ibid*, p. 541

¹⁹⁶ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “East Coker”, p. 181, lines 143-144, 149

found in Eliot's early successful poetry -- the "'Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?' / Let us go and make our visit.'" of "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock".¹⁹⁷

While it is true that *Four Quartets* can be fruitfully read against the work of Heidegger, Sartre, Kierkegaard, and other late phenomenologists or existentialists, Eliot's own biographical and scholarly encounters dictate that closer attention be paid in particular to his poetic interpretations and integrations of Husserl. Heidegger's main task, like Eliot's thematic impulse in *Four Quartets* was to examine the *internal relationship* between being and time, just as it was Husserl's task before him. But another major centre of focus of the poem is the attempt to align truth and meaning. There are many parallels between Eliot and Heidegger, probably because Eliot and Heidegger both read Husserl closely. Eliot's descriptions of human experience in *Four Quartets* are decidedly Heideggerian *in theme*, and harken back to his earliest impulses concerning his vision of language and experience. They are Heideggerian in the loose sense, in terms of shared thematic interests (in time, authenticity, anxiety, and located consciousness). But their emphasis on meaning and interpretation, and their method, seems to come directly from the early language debates Eliot studied in his youth.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁷ *ibid*, "Prufrock", p. 13, lines 11-12

¹⁹⁸ This is not to undermine the value and validity of late phenomenological comparisons, however, particularly as they relate to Heidegger. Reading Eliot's work from the late phenomenological standpoint, we can compare, to take only one thematic example, Heidegger's critique of unreflective distraction: "Over the strained time-ridden faces / Distracted from distraction by distraction / Filled with fancies and empty of meaning / Tumid apathy with no concentration / Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind" ("Burnt Norton", lines 99-104). Likewise, Eliot poetically visits the "partial" or half-hearted experiences that prevent human beings from realising a more authentic form of being-in-the-world; he describes the "partial ecstasy" and "partial horror" that make up human experience, and contemplates: "human kind / Cannot bear very much reality" ("Burnt Norton" lines 77-78, 40). There are at least two senses, then, in which *Four Quartets* can be phenomenologically interpreted: the first is more broadly or thematically, in line with Spanos and Davidson, who seek to compare Eliot's poetry with a popular form of postmodern philosophical scholarship. The second approach, taken here, is to highlight the specific overlaps between Eliot's early philosophy of language and his late philosophical poetics, by attending to the role Husserl's work, and to consider them in light of Eliot's reaction against Russelian definite description. How might these early influences have shaped the method and content of the poem? This question is undertaken because, while Eliot would have certainly been *aware* of Heidegger's work, he was clearly invested in *reading* the work of Husserl from an early age, and continued to do so later in life.

As Christopher Ricks explains, *Four Quartets* signals a return to Eliot's earliest philosophical inklings.¹⁹⁹ "From the poems of 1941 to the criticism of 1933: and, then, far nearer the original exceptional child of ten, there is the philosophy student of 1911-16", writes Ricks.²⁰⁰ As Jūratė Levina notes, "The general view is that Eliot began as a philosopher and gave up his academic training to write poetry and drama. *Four Quartets* complicates this story... this poem sometimes reads as a tentatively versified philosophical treatise".²⁰¹ Levina is one of the only critics who has noticed (recently, as of this writing) the distinctly Husserlian themes of the poems. She notes that "Eliot presents a philosophical vision that is phenomenological at its core".²⁰² It is probably not an overstatement, for those familiar with phenomenological writing, to suggest that *Four Quartets* expresses a "quintessentially phenomenological statement about the nature of experienced reality".²⁰³ Levina gives a very thorough reading of the philosophical implications of *Four Quartets*. She argues that "All values perceived as the poem's meanings ... emerge from the mutually formative interaction between (1) the linguistic structure as a relational whole of significative units that articulate meaning and (2) the experience of meaning as the process in which meaning actually constitutes itself."²⁰⁴ Further to her theoretical framework, and assuming, as I do, that her interpretation of Eliot as quintessentially a phenomenological poet is correct, we can ask: why has it taken criticism so long to locate this central influence? To this question we might respond that Eliot was a great master of studied impressionism and borrowing.

¹⁹⁹ Ricks, C. (1988). *T.S. Eliot and Prejudice*. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 260

²⁰⁰ *ibid*, p. 279

²⁰¹ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36(3), p. 194

²⁰² *ibid*, p. 195-197

²⁰³ *ibid*, p. 198

²⁰⁴ Levina, J. (2013). "Speaking the Unnamable: A Phenomenology of Sense in T.S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*." *Journal of Modern Literature* 36(3), p. 199

When it comes to the philosophical investigation the poem employs, critics have tended to view Bradley as Eliot's primary influence. Ricks traces Bradley's "scepticism" forwards to "Burnt Norton", stating that the dogmatic scepticism of Bradley, which assumes a conclusion in a hypothesis, is the most obvious philosophical register active in the poem.²⁰⁵ This is to trust Eliot's public statements about his philosophical progenitors too much. The phenomenological reduction proves a much more straightforward frame of reference for the poem. James Mensch describes how Husserl's *method* in The Phenomenology of Internal Time Consciousness is to interweave descriptive passages and active thought experiments -- to attempt to consider all logical possibilities of time thematically, and by doing so to arrive at "essential necessities".²⁰⁶ Notions of time are bound up with time-consciousness -- with memories, projections, retentions, expectations, and other states of mind. It is not possible to account for "Time" in the ultimate sense without also accounting for these experiences. Eliot's poems follow the phenomenological method, by submitting "Time" to an investigation which indulges all its known variations: "Time present and time past... time future ... eternally present".²⁰⁷

Despite being an overtly philosophical set of poems, *Four Quartets*, as with Eliot's early philosophical conclusions, articulates a reticence to return to theory as-such, in order to descriptively render a set of axiomatic truths. When he meets himself as a stranger, the voice of *Four Quartets* remarks: "I am not eager to rehearse / My thought and theory which you have forgotten. These things have their purpose: let them be...For last year's words belong to last year's language / And next year's words await another voice... Since our concern was speech, and speech impelled us / To purify the dialect of the tribe".²⁰⁸ However, there is a

²⁰⁵ Ricks, C. (1988). T.S. Eliot and Prejudice. London and Boston Faber and Faber, p. 106

²⁰⁶ Mensch, J. (2014). "A Brief Account of Husserl's Conception of Our Consciousness of Time." Academia.edu, p. 1

²⁰⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Burnt Norton", p. 171, lines 1-4

²⁰⁸ "Little Gidding", p. 194, lines 111-128

suggestion that language is a primary focus of the poem. He speaks to himself of a life project, a “forgotten” (though recalled) desire to refine language *from within* -- hearkening back to his essays on comparative religion, wherein he argued that meaning had to be understood from inside a point of view. It is impossible not to hear echoes of Eliot’s early engagement with the linguistic philosophers, and his attempt, in the Royce seminars, to highlight the significance of language “for the tribe” -- language for the ordinary speaker, with his ordinary associations and feelings. The argument in Eliot’s 1913 and 1914 essays, we should recall, was that “internal values are part of external description”.²⁰⁹ Here, then, is an Eliot reliving his earliest interests through poetry -- attempting to recommence a dialogue between the two extremes of the linguistic turn: between a picture of language that is definite, universal, and static, and a picture of language as at times private, interpretive, and subject to the contingencies of shifting consciousness.

As Philip Turetzky explains, “the problem of time consciousness was not only thought by Husserl to be the most difficult problem of phenomenology, it may legitimately claim to be ... at the root of the phenomenological problem itself”.²¹⁰ Like Eliot’s poems, Husserl did not present one definitive statement on time, but rather his work on time is woven throughout his oeuvre, often with various and even contradicting claims about the nature of time consciousness.²¹¹ His thinking can be broadly described as “the transcendental project ... which seeks to discover under what conditions objects can be given to consciousness as being so-and-so, as given in a unity with an open system of possibilities, and thereby constituting the intelligibility of the world”.²¹² The “openness” or phenomenological possibilities of language (alluded to in the opening passage of *Four Quartets*) can be read against the

²⁰⁹ Eliot, T.S. (1913). CPI, “The Interpretation of Primitive Ritual”, p. 170

²¹⁰ Turetzky, P. (2011). "Husserl and the Promise of Time: Subjectivity in Transcendental Phenomenology, by Nicolas de Warren." *European Journal of Philosophy* **19**(4), p. 654

²¹¹ *ibid.*

²¹² *ibid.*

“nothingness” Spanos finds -- words break with convention in order find a home on new horizons, not to stop signifying altogether. On the other hand, Eliot’s poem does not reveal a comprehensive and linear philosophical narrative concerning a definition of time, though there is a sense in which *Four Quartets* entertains essentialism. As Gardner points out, the poem engages *essential moments*, rather than absolute descriptions.²¹³

The term “Erhebung” is used in the “rising action” of the poem’s first movement: “The release from action and suffering, release from the inner / And the outer compulsion, yet surrounded / By a grace of sense, a white light still and moving, / Erhebung without motion, concentration / Without elimination, both a new world / And the old made explicit, understood... Yet... Only through time time is conquered.”²¹⁴ “Erhebung” can be translated roughly as “elevation”, “exaltation”, “survey”, or “transcendence”, but also “inquiry”, “survey”, related to a gathering or collecting. Eliot, like Husserl, refers the hope for “Erhebung” to consciousness of time, and to the finitude of human understanding: “Time past and time future / Allow but a little consciousness”.²¹⁵ Husserl’s use of the term may be significant to the poem’s interpretation. In his later work, when outlining the future phenomenological prospects of philosophy, Husserl spoke of philosophy’s ability 'zur Erhebung und Herzerquickung' (to fill us with enthusiasm and strengthen / elevate our hearts).²¹⁶ This gives a slightly more human-centered flavour to the use of the term. Eliot certainly has an interest in transcendence and metaphysics, despite the obvious fact that he is not, strictly speaking, an idealist, and the search for this transcendental perspective is subjected to phenomenological investigation.²¹⁷

²¹³ Gardner, H. (1978). *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London, Oxford University Press, p. 68

²¹⁴ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p. 173, lines 74-79, 82, 93

²¹⁵ *ibid*, lines 86-87

²¹⁶ Husserl, E. (1965). *Philosophie als strenge Wissenschaft*. Frankfurt Klostermann, p. 66

²¹⁷ Davidson, H. (1985). *T.S. Eliot and Hermeneutics: Absence and Interpretation in The Waste Land* Baton Rouge and London, Louisiana State University Press, p. 40-66

Revealing the conditions of meaning -- the essential underpinnings of expressions of truth -- is a quiet goal of *Four Quartets*. This was also the goal of Eliot's early language philosophy -- to apprehend / The point of intersection of the timeless / With time".²¹⁸ What is sought is the still point of intersection between timeless with what is in time -- "Here, the intersection of the timeless moment / Is England and nowhere. Never and always."²¹⁹ The Word with the word -- the eternal movement between what we think we already know and what we are trying to articulate, as it were, "from within" -- from a particular point of view.²²⁰ The poems insist on the present even at its very end, often urging the reader to be present in the moment -- guiding the reader, as if through meditation: "Quick now, here, now, always -- / A condition of complete simplicity / (Costing not less than everything)".²²¹ What is significant about time and the abstract terms or symbols Eliot presents is the way these are experienced, not the way they are defined. The famous motto of phenomenology, embraced by many 20th century authors, is of critical importance: "Zu den Sachen", which, as Maura Dowling explains, "means both 'to the things themselves' and 'let's get down to what matters!'"²²² Thinking is rendered in the poem as an ongoing process, deeply connected to human values and meanings.

²¹⁸ Eliot, T.S. CPP, p. 190, "The Dry Salvages, lines 203-206

²¹⁹ *ibid*, "Little Gidding", p. 192, lines 47-55

²²⁰ Knox, G. A. (1951). "Quest for the Word in Eliot's Four Quartets." *English Literary History (ELH)* 18(4), p. 317

²²¹ Eliot, T.S. CPP, "Little Gidding", p. 198, lines 252-254

²²² Dowling, M. (2007). "From Husserl to van Manen. A review of different phenomenological approaches." *International Journal of Nursing Studies* 44(1), p. 21 Here one might also want to trace the parallels between this founding statement of phenomenology with the Imagist movement, with which the statement "back to the things themselves" is more commonly associated. T.E. Hulme's work in mathematics and philosophy is also central to this crossroads of philosophy and literary theory. One would start with F.S. Flint's description of Imagism in *Poetry* (see bibliography). The essay states that the Imagist attempts to provide a poetry that follows the rule "1. Direct treatment of the 'thing,' whether subjective or objective" (199). Further research on the connections between Imagism and Husserl's work fall outside the scope of this thesis, but such research is somewhat underrepresented in the field and would provide valuable new insights into Modernism.

Horizons of Meaning

Horizons of meaning, and the impossibility of definitional “stopping places” are formally and thematically central to *Four Quartets*. The quartets use simple, direct language, while emphasising the process of definition as perpetually in flux. These interests appear to reassert Eliot’s phenomenological vision of an experience of language: the form of the poem is meant to dramatize a paradigm of experience and is constantly returning to the ground of phenomenal reality for its authenticity. Eliot’s poems suggest that language must always return to its origins in experience. There is, in other words, no “still point” or “stopping place” for the process of meaning-making. The poem performs this hypothesis as much as it affirms the hypothesis thematically. In other words, the form of the poem -- while using the freer stylistics of his earlier work (with its freer meter, rhyme, and symbolic references, its heavy use of allusion and contrast ambiguity) is an analogue for his earlier philosophical thought, which was invested in the search for ideal signification. This search, however, is always submitted, in Eliot’s work, to a scrupulous phenomenological frame of reference or point of view: signification never escapes the actual context of a lifeworld.

Four Quartets engages echoes, bells, cries, voices, and musical notes, tangled up with “the common wind,” and “aftersight and foresight”.²²³ “[T]he passage” that “now presents” is sandwiched between “next year’s words await[ing] another voice” and “the spirit unappeased and peregrine / Between two worlds become much like each other, / So I find words I never thought to speak / In streets I never thought I should revisit / When I left my body on a distant shore”.²²⁴ As with “The Waste Land”, *Four Quartets* weaves one perspective out of seemingly incongruous impressions, but his leitmotifs are reiterative. Gardner points out that Eliot wished the poem to be a weaving together of unrelated themes --

²²³ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Little Gidding”, p. 194, lines 105, 130

²²⁴ *ibid*, lines 122, 120, 123-126

the deeper themes were to *emerge* as the new unified whole.²²⁵ But *what* emerges? The poem dives *inward* into the consciousness of the present, even as it gestures *outward*, to investigate the manifold phenomena that make up a lifetime.²²⁶ To transcend, the phenomenological poet must first descend, as Dante and Donne, each in their particular way, descended, poetically. The descent is a descent *into the present*, which is pregnant with memory and projection: “Where past and future are gathered ... there is only the dance.”²²⁷ In all four of the quartets, Servotte notices, “it already becomes clear that ‘there’ is ‘here’ transformed through the creative activity of the subject when he creates a movement forward in which the subject is willing to expose himself to all the dangers of the voyage”.²²⁸ In this sense too, the poem is phenomenological.

The early question of Eliot’s career, Denis Donoghue argues, concerned “the status of words. Is it their main duty to signify, to refer to things in a world at large deemed to be autonomous in whole and in every part? Have they an interest in conveying the impression that the given world is stable?”²²⁹ Or, on the other hand, did Eliot want to affirm that the *life* and *activity* of language was never ultimately fixed? Did he believe that meaning was time-contingent, and therefore caught up in perpetual flux? Donoghue argues that the *object* of Eliot’s poetry is a “new aspect” or “new feeling”, which recalls his early vision of language.²³⁰ Eliot’s poetry moved, from the beginning, by “associations and contrasts”.²³¹ It pushed the boundaries or limits of language by appealing to local language -- language

²²⁵ Gardner, H. (1978). The Composition of Four Quartets. London, Oxford University Press, p. 26

²²⁶ Herman Servotte calls the poem “a meditation on a series of interconnected themes”. He notes that “the way up is indeed the way down”. Servotte, H. (1991). "The Poetry of Paradox: 'Incarnation' in T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets." English Studies 72(4), p. 377, 383

²²⁷ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p. 173, lines 67, 70

²²⁸ *ibid*, p. 385

²²⁹ Donoghue, D. (2000). Words Alone: The Poet T.S. Eliot. New Haven & London, Yale University Press, p. 36

²³⁰ *ibid*, p. 37

²³¹ *ibid*, p. 47

expressed in bars and museums, not in dictionaries. “We generally neglect this form of understanding. We are so concerned to correlate words with sense and sense with words that we are sluggish in dealing with signs that come before, after, or beneath the words”.²³² If this description holds true of Eliot’s mature work, wherein these themes take on central significance, then there is remarkable consistency between Eliot’s mature poetical philosophy and his philosophy of language, as expressed by this thesis. Gardner insists that Eliot is, in the quartets, “an explorer, not an expounder, discovering truth of feeling, and the truths that feelings point to, in the process of exploration; and discovering also connexions and new meanings in poems or passages of poems written without thought of their coherence with each other”.²³³ These critical descriptions unproblematically align themselves with a phenomenological approach to language. Eliot’s heavy methodological reliance on ambiguity and process-orientated diction follows from his early vision of language -- tentative poetically at first, but more robustly evident in his later poetry.

Conscious experience is performed in *Four Quartets* by the scrupulous, playful undermining of absolute or definite reference, and repeated gestures towards active processes. Eliot explores how consciousness is oriented towards the world, by highlighting the nuances of memories, projections, and aspirations, rather than by relying on definitions, names, or absolute descriptions that attach universally to objects. The mind is “Caught in the form of limitation / Between un-being and being. / Sudden in a shaft of sunlight / Even while the dust moves”.²³⁴ The experience of the poem, by the second movement is still “Leaving one with the intolerable wrestle / With words and meanings. The poetry does not matter / It was not (to start again) what one had expected”.²³⁵ Here again, a phenomenological reading is relevant:

²³² *ibid*, p. 49

²³³ Gardner, H. (1978). *The Composition of Four Quartets*. London, Oxford University Press, p. 15

²³⁴ Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p.175, lines 167- 170

²³⁵ *ibid*, “East Coker”, p. 179, lines 70-73

“For the pattern is new in every moment / And every moment is a new and shocking / Valuation of all we have been...”²³⁶ Suspended knowledge is required for embodied understanding to grow. This sort of suspension -- of all logical, abstract, scientific descriptions -- is a central tenet of Husserl’s work (he calls the suspension of preconceived notions the “phenomenological epoché”, and it is sometimes also referred to as the phenomenological reduction or “bracketing”): “In order to arrive there, / To arrive where you are, to get from where you are / not... You must go through the way in which you are not. / And what you do not know is the only thing you know”²³⁷ These lines, and others, explicitly argue phenomenological points. Human context, because it is always liminal, requires active questioning -- it requires the negotiation between what is known and what is felt.

In On the Phenomenology of Consciousness of Internal Time, Husserl’s major work on inner time consciousness, he argues not for Presentism (a timeless time that is indifferent to human duration), but for a present that is replete with past and future at once: “a discrete succession can be held together ... by a unitary act of apprehension”, or as he sometimes calls it “this constituted unity of experience”²³⁸ He argues “That several successive tones yield a melody is possible only because the succession of psychic events is united ‘at once’ into a total formation. They are in consciousness successively, but they fall within one and the same total act”²³⁹ Husserl notices that we can be conscious of the timeless or transcendental *within* our experience of time -- that is, we can notice ourselves unifying protentions and retentions in the single moment. Classical phenomenology posits an eccentric, contingent sense of the transcendental. Likewise, Husserl’s notion of the past is not of a “dead” past -- but of a living,

²³⁶ *ibid*, lines 86-88

²³⁷ *ibid*, p. 180, lines 135-143

²³⁸ Husserl, E. (1859-1938). On the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time: Lectures on the Phenomenology of the Consciousness of Internal Time. The Netherlands, Kluwer Academic Publishers, p. 54

²³⁹ *ibid*, p. 22

speaking past, “in relation to the actually present now”.²⁴⁰ Husserl’s treatment of time is complex, but this essential feature of his theory -- the interpenetrating “spheres” of time is found throughout the work -- it is stated in a denser way: “The consciousness of the now, which becomes constituted on the basis of material ‘A,’ is continuously transmuted into a consciousness of the past while simultaneously an ever new consciousness of the now is built up ... Every original temporal field contains the continuous modification with respect to the act-characteristics constituting the field”.²⁴¹ The present, for both Husserl and Eliot, is continually modified by the past and future. Eliot asks the reader to “follow the sound” of language *in real time*, to pattern one’s thought along the durational thinking of the poem, even as he repeatedly muses over memory and future expectations.

It seems a phenomenological epoché is performed throughout Eliot’s *Four Quartets*. The sense of individual identity through time is the means by which the poem’s insights are highlighted. The “before” and “after” experience of time blends into shadowy pensiveness. Time and the experience of time is referred and re-referred to a sensual, pregnant “present” with all its phenomenal fluctuations (“this twittering world”), even as the world is bracketed or held at arm’s length for examination. Formally, the poem returns to its “Prufrock” heritage, with its central persona and shifting timescape, but the exploration of time is explicit -- philosophical. Like the phenomenologist, Eliot’s poems seek transcendental understanding through a process of *bodily, located* reflection: “The release from action and suffering...both a new world / And the old made explicit, understood...Woven into the weakness of the changing body”.²⁴² The persona attempts to eternize experience: “The faces and places, with the self which, as it could, loved / them / To become renewed, transfigured, in another pattern... A

²⁴⁰ *ibid*, p. 62-63

²⁴¹ *ibid*, p. 64

²⁴² Eliot, T.S. CPP, “Burnt Norton”, p. 173, lines 71-80

symbol perfected in death.”²⁴³ Even as one watches the faces disappear *in real time*, Eliot is weaving them into a semantically pregnant timelessness.²⁴⁴

The epoché can be read throughout the poem -- small case studies of the dance between the deeply-felt experience, and the suspended and examined experience. For example, in “The Dry Salvages” Eliot writes: “The moments of happiness -- not the sense of well-being, / Fruition, fulfillment, security, or affection, / Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination- / We had the experience but missed the meaning, / And approach to the meaning restores the experience / In a different form, beyond any meaning / We can assign to happiness...The backward look behind the assurance...are likewise permanent”.²⁴⁵ First the experience of happiness is presented as an abstraction, and then witnessed in a phenomenally specific instance: “a very good dinner” and finally examined for its philosophical implications or meaning, to become “permanent” in the backwards glance, after reflection. Eliot inquires after meaning -- the historical meaning that remains after the dinner and its specific bodily happiness has passed. Breaking the term “illumination” into parts highlights its double sense and simultaneously elongates the term, so that its durational quality is made self-apparent, and becomes a kind of experience. Time and meaning are bound up together, and a moment longer -- a syllable removed -- lends the term its second sense. All that is required for the reader to accept a second sense is a little more time -- a little more reflection.

Eliot uses the motion of walking or moving *through* impressions repeatedly, aligning mental or physical acts with the consciousness of the poem: “Every poem an epitaph. And any action / Is a step to the block, to the fire, down to the sea’s throat / Or to an illegible stone: and that is where we start”.²⁴⁶ Activity swirls around the search for meaning, *but does not*

²⁴³ *ibid*, “Little Gidding”, p. 195-196, lines 164-197

²⁴⁴ *ibid*, p. 195, “See, now they vanish”, line 166

²⁴⁵ *ibid*, “The Dry Salvages”, p. 187, lines 92-108

²⁴⁶ *ibid*, “Little Gidding”, p. 197, lines 237-240

necessarily negate the legitimacy of our need for meaning, as Spanos' late phenomenological interpretation might suggest. The irony of a semantic stopping point, however, is underscored by the movement of the narrative; the poem mirrors conscious activity, which must constantly negotiate between abstraction and objects or semantic "still points" of consciousness, and *cannot help but do so*. Eliot alludes to an emerging *horizontal* vision of language -- something that sits between philosophy and poetry, and would celebrate:

The word neither diffident nor ostentatious,
An easy commerce of the old and the new,
The common word exact without vulgarity,
The formal word precise but not pedantic,
The complete consort dancing together
Every phrase and every sentence is an end and a beginning,"²⁴⁷

This passage can be read philosophically; it agrees with Eliot's lifelong defense of "ordinary" or "living" language.

²⁴⁷ *ibid*, lines 219-229

Conclusion

Eliot has been seen as “the acknowledged master of a new synthesis that successfully combined philosophy and poetry”.²⁴⁸ As, I have argued, he is also a poet who espoused a philosophy of language -- a vision of the purpose and function of language that was remarkably aligned with phenomenological philosophy against the threat of literalism. His thinking about language and form was self-conscious from a young age. The themes and instincts of Eliot’s early philosophical writing concerning language are echoed in his later critical and poetic work, which sought a method that could ground the metaphysical within the physical ongoing *now* of experience.

Eliot’s own philosophy is too often viewed as “difficult”, “antiquated”, “stylistically dense” or “not so useful”.²⁴⁹ It is a mistake, I would argue, to overlook Eliot’s young philosophical work or to deny its influence on his poetic method, regardless of his dismissive attitude towards philosophy much later in life (such as the commonly cited statement made in the preface to his graduate thesis).²⁵⁰ Of the philosophical work done in his graduate years, Kristen Smidt notes “in conversation Eliot said that [his philosophical studies] *were* him at this time”.²⁵¹ It is worth recognising and taking account, then, of Eliot’s positive philosophical interests alongside his animosities and disapprovals, since these interests informed his development as a thinker and writer, and gifted him with a distinct self-consciousness concerning the purpose and forms of language. Eliot’s thinking did not exist in a philosophical vacuum. And as he himself opines: “I have held the view, and expressed it here

²⁴⁸ Dale, A. S. (1988). T.S. Eliot: The Philosopher-Poet. Wheaton, Illinois, Harold Shaw Publishers , p. 56

²⁴⁹ Menand, L. (2007). Discovering Modernism: T.S. Eliot and His Context USA Oxford University Press, p. 31. I cannot fully agree with the claim that the most important arguments of his philosophical thesis “amount to a demonstration of the pointlessness of doing, for any traditional philosophical reason, philosophy” (p. 42).

²⁵⁰ “Forty-six years after my academic philosophizing came to an end, I find myself unable to think in the terminology of this essay. Indeed, I do not pretend to understand it.” Preface to Eliot, T. S. KAE, p. 10

²⁵¹ Behr, C. (1983). T.S. Eliot: A Chronology of his Life and Works. London and Basingstoke, The Macmillan Press, Ltd., p. 6

and there in essays for many years past, that a poet does better to take over his ‘philosophy’ from the philosophers, than when he invents his own”.²⁵² The same essay argues that the poetic value of a poem depends on *meaning*, not on ideas, and that the meaning of a word, in turn, involves associative resonances. Eliot considered there to be a category of “philosophical poets”, and saw himself as belonging to this category explicitly, even after he had moved beyond the parlance of the discipline. Though he saw the methods of the respective fields as engaging different faculties, these faculties “spoke” to one another in curious ways.²⁵³ He writes that “the greatest poetry, like the greatest prose, has a doubleness; the poet is talking to you on two planes at once ... I prefer poetry with a clear philosophical pattern”.²⁵⁴ When approaching a philosophical poet, Eliot writes that “it is necessary to read the philosophical passages ... with the humility of a person visiting a new world, who admits that every part is essential to the whole”.²⁵⁵ Though I have not expressed the whole of Eliot’s philosophical position, it is my hope that I have succeeded in expressing a few of its parts, albeit in “inferior conceptual philosophy”; to fully engage Eliot’s philosophy, it is necessary to *experience* its performance within his poetry.²⁵⁶

Eliot’s philosophy of language, as articulated by this thesis, should have implications for his literary critics -- past and present. Since an emphasis on the *horizon* of truth -- for its

²⁵² Eliot, T. S. (1952). "Scylla and Charybdis " *Agenda: An Anthology (The First Four Decades 1959-1993)*, p. 292

²⁵³ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p. 136. Eliot may have also been inspired by *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*, on this count, wherein poets were praised for integrating the two disciplines, because: “philosophy is but another form of poetry” (18). Poetic craft is often compared to philosophers in the piece; Mallarmé, for example, uses “a logical sequence of meditation” (Symons, A. (1919). *The Symbolist Movement in Literature*. New York, E.P. Dutton & Company, p. 201). There is also a repeated insistence on poetry’s resistance to analysis (*ibid*, 216). Of Dante, for instance, Eliot writes “it is great poetry, and there is a great philosophy behind it” *ibid*, p. 222. He calls Dante a “philosophical poet”, and also notes that “a straightforward philosophical statement can be great poetry”. *ibid*, p. 217

²⁵⁴ Eliot, T.S. Introduction to Knight, W. G. (1930). *The Wheel of Fire*. Oxford, Oxford University Presse, p. xvii-xviii

²⁵⁵ Eliot, T. S. (1951). *Selected Essays*, p. 222. The language of “parts” and “wholes” also belongs to Husserl.

²⁵⁶ Eliot, T. S. (1952). "Scylla and Charybdis " *Agenda: An Anthology (The First Four Decades 1959-1993)*, p. 293

own sake (that is, truth as-yet indeterminate, truth which requires interpretation and so on) -- is significant to Eliot's own philosophy, critics who primarily attempt to "decipher" or "translate" Eliot's poetry, by, for instance, uncovering all of the definite references within his poems, are engaged in an activity that Eliot's own thinking concerning language would probably have rejected. It was my goal in this thesis to lay out some of the principles which Eliot may have adopted directly from philosophy of language for the purpose of literary criticism and poetic methods: principles of "indefinite definiteness", object-oriented consciousness, point of view, emotional thought, and a quest for transcendental meaning and permanence which could be stubbornly "clothed" in the occasional aspects of the present moment.

Though the pantheon of Eliotic influences may be vast, I have argued that two particularly lasting influences have been under-appreciated by mainstream Eliot scholarship.²⁵⁷ Eliot gives credence to the work of culling a philosophy from a philosophical poetics, though he writes that such an activity "would mean doing two men's work: first, to think out the system solely with the aim of finding abstract truth, and second to examine what it feels like to believe that system...".²⁵⁸ By attempting to lay bare those aspects of Eliot's vision of language derived from the philosophical difficulties of his time, we can recalibrate working definitions of modernist poetry, and ask questions concerning the techniques of other poets and critics of the twentieth century. As Michael Whitworth has pointed out, modernist poetics has long been assumed to be marked primarily by a drive towards steely objectivism, but there runs alongside this trend another, equally relevant one: "in many cases the subject matter of the [modernist] poem was the subjective state of consciousness, or a more complex

²⁵⁷ Time would fail to fully engage the entire pantheon of philosophy examined by Eliot in his studies, though Manju Jain's book, *T.S. Eliot and American Philosophy*, has gone a long way in this direction. The influences of Henri Bergson, T.E. Hulme, and I.A. Richards on Eliot's vision of language, in particular, ought to be considered as part of a wider-ranging discussion.

²⁵⁸ Eliot, T. S. (1943). Unpublished lecture. P/33 'Poetical and Prosaic Use of Words' Typescript, uncorrected, 20 pp. Delivered at Reading University, 1943. The Hayward Bequest, King's College Library, Cambridge University, p. 4

and teasing blend of subjective and objective”.²⁵⁹ How does occasional or definite reference work in modernist poetry more broadly, to enact this blurring of the lines between subject and object, or to perform “the dissolution of clear boundaries and clear relations”?²⁶⁰ Is the insistence on suspended definiteness or on a subject constituting its world a general pattern during this period of writing (one might consider, for instance, Gertrude Stein’s avoidance of definite reference, or I.A. Richards’ withholding of a poet’s name, to benefit practical criticism)?²⁶¹ If so, does our definition of what constitutes a modernist poetic need to change? What does this suspension accomplish, cognitively, that a descriptivist, literalist, or straightforwardly narrative poetics might not? Every discovery gestures towards another horizon of inquiry.

²⁵⁹ Whitworth, M. H. (2010). Reading Modernist Poetry. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, p. 44

²⁶⁰ *ibid*, p. 51

²⁶¹ Questions such as these would speak directly to other contemporary conversations about modernist poetics -- see, for instance, the work of Donald Childs, who describes the way the “one word, one meaning” model breaks down more generally in modernist poetry and theory. See Childs, D. J. (2013). The Birth of New Criticism: Conflict and Conciliation in the Early Work of William Empson, I.A. Richards, Robert Graves, and Laura Riding London & Ithaca McGill-Queen's University Press, p. 75

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