

## Confucian Thoughts in Ezra Pound's *The Pisan Cantos*\*

WANG Gui-ming

Beijing Institute of Technology, Beijing, China

*The Pisan Cantos* (1948), Ezra Pound's great epic, which reflects major social, cultural, and historical themes, is based on Western and Chinese cultures, especially Chinese Confucian thoughts. This paper attempts to provide an analysis of Confucian classics and Chinese characters/ideograms as cited in *The Pisan Cantos*, and to present the unique way in which Pound expresses his emotions and enriches his poetic art. Since, Chinese culture that emphasizes such concepts as "benevolence" and "sincerity" offers a more philosophical and poetical foundation to the cantos, it is understandable that *The Pisan Cantos* embodies Pound's ambition to reestablish the war-ruined Western world by Chinese Confucian thoughts, which he regards as an important foundation stone for establishing an idealistic regime.

**Keywords:** Ezra Pound, *The Pisan Cantos*, Confucian thoughts, *The Book of Four*, Chinese ideogram

### Introduction

Pound's original intention for his poetic creation was to attenuate "a history of Western civilization in poetic form" (Nolde, 1984, p. 17). He expected *The Cantos* (1987) to be a morality tale and a mirror for people in the future to understand the truth of history. Therefore, in the opening Cantos, which were much influenced by Homer's *Odyssey* (1997) and Dante's *Divine Comedy* (1555), he illustrated some major events of self-destruction in Western history with similar themes to James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922) and T. S. Elliot's *The Waste Land* (1922). Because of Pound's early exposure to Chinese literature and philosophy through translating or adopting Chinese poetry and Confucian classics, the influence of Chinese culture on his poetic creation is visible as early as in 1915 with Cathay and Canto XIII of *The Cantos*. Pound was impressed by the "sage-king" conception of Confucius, from which he got to know what a wise emperor was like, what the situation of ancient Chinese civilization was like, and why Chinese feudal institution was able to last so long. After basically comprehending *The Four Books* 《四书》 (i.e., *Great Learning* 《大学》, *The Dialectics of Confucius* 《论语》, *The Doctrine of the Mean* (or *The Middle Way*) 《中庸》 and *Mencius* 《孟子》; they are, according to Pound's terms, *The Great Digest* or *Ta Hsio*, *The Dialects*, *Unwobbling Pivot*, and *Mencius*), he came to be a believer of Confucian thoughts. That may be the reason why in *The Pisan Cantos* (1948) Pound quoted more than fifty fragments from Confucian classics. Pound praised highly the governance theory with the values of Confucian philosophy and ethics, and believed that this system of benevolent politics and capable governance can be taken as the very foundation for establishing a Utopia. As early as in 1928, when being asked by T. S.

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\* Note: The author died of illness on October 4, 2013.

WANG Gui-ming, Ph.D., professor at School of Foreign Languages, Beijing Institute of Technology.

Elliot what "Mr. Pound believes in", Pound responded with little hesitation, "I believe in the Ta Hio" (Nolde, 1984, p. 19). There after, Pound's thinking integrated with the Confucian thoughts and there are more elements of Chinese culture can be found in his poetry.

### Confucian Philosophy and *The Cantos*

Pound managed to implement Chinese Confucian thoughts in his poetry by quoting statements and by comparing and criticizing the Western society with the key Confucian concepts. In *The Cantos*, Canto XIII presents us an image of Confucius as a sage through an adoption of Confucius' dialogue with his disciples; Canto ILVII describes a vivid picture of Chinese natural scene through which Westerners may get to know some typical Chinese traditional things; the China Cantos (Cantos LIII to LXI) gives a diagrammatic interpretation of Chinese history; and the second half of *The Cantos*, especially *The Pisan Cantos* (Cantos LXXIV to LXXXIV) fully expresses Pound's belief that Confucius thoughts can be adopted as the foundation for establishing an ideal state.

More importantly, Pound quoted in *The Cantos* all the main Confucian philosophical concepts through the ideograms with the key concepts of Confucian philosophy that he learned from his translation of *The Four Books*—"仁 ren/jen, benevolence or humanity"; "义 yi, justice, or equity, or righteousness"; "礼 li, rites"; "智 zhi, wisdom"; "信 xin, fidelity"; "诚 cheng/chung, sincerity"; "中 zhong, middle, or centre, neutrality, pivot, or point of balance"; "道 dao/tao, way/road or process, or course, or orientation, or morality, or doctrine"; "德 de, virtue or morality"; "正 zheng/cheng, correct"; and "名 ming, name(s)", the two ideograms form a phrase that means "define the correct terms" or in Pound's (1948) words "calling things by their names (see Canto LIII)". Based on the method of interpreting Chinese ideograms in Fenollosa's essay "The Chinese Written Character as a Medium for Poetry" (1920), Pound glossed some of the ideograms in *Confucius* (1951) as follows: "仁, 'Humanitas', humanity, in the full sense of the word, 'manhood'. The 'man' and his full contents" (p. 22); "信, Fidelity to the given word. The 'man' here standing by his word" (p. 22); "诚, 'Sincerity'. The precise definition of the word, pictorially, the sun's lance coming to rest on the precise spot verbally. The righthand half of the compound means: to perfect, bring to focus" (p. 20); "道, 'The process'. Footprints and the foot carrying the head; the head conducting the feet, an orderly movement under lead of the intelligence" (p. 22); and "德, What result, i.e., the action resultant from this straight gaze into the heart. The 'know thyself' carried into action. Said action also serving to clarify the self-knowledge" (p. 21). As for this aspect, Mary Paterson Cheadle (1997) commented:

Many Confucian concepts are presented in *The Cantos* in the form of Chinese words or phrases. Especially, when they are printed large, these words are visually striking and contribute dramatically to the sculptural effect of Pound's free verse. Pound himself appreciated the visual power of Chinese characters or ideographs and even believed that the conveyance of meaning depended in part on the skill with which word was drawn. (p. 222)

Tom Scott, a Poundian scholar, has written:

I predict that the next century will see, even be dominated by, a dialogue between the U.S. and China in which Pound's poetry will take on an importance and weight not obvious at the moment: That not only has he woven a new wholeness, or at any rate potential wholeness, out of European and American, but also of Chinese elements. (as cited in Cookson, 1985, p. 62)

Pound's *The Cantos*, especially, the second part beginning with *The Pisan Cantos*, exemplifies Scott's statement. "All told there are in the Pisan section more than fifty quotations or fragments from Pound's Confucian books, a number of which can simultaneously on several different passages or even different works" (Stock, 1967, p. 82). To a certain extent, *The Pisan Cantos* represents Pound's deepest understanding of Confucian thoughts and his re-imagination of an ideal world.

Pound devoted much of his life to studying Chinese culture, and disseminating Chinese culture, especially Confucian thoughts, to the Western world by his translation and poetry. His poetic idiosyncrasy is also embodied through Chinese poetics and the characteristics of Chinese language. "Pound and China" is an important subject in contemporary Sino-American intercultural relations, but the study and interpretation of Pound's poetry, which is composed with Confucian thoughts throughout the texts, remains barely being explored. Pound's eruditeness and the variety of Chinese Confucian thoughts have posed many difficulties to the research of this field in Poundian studies.

*The Cantos*, Pound's best poem, is also a testament to the strength and impact of his thoughts as expressed in the book *The Pisan Cantos*, which absorbed the essence of Western and Eastern cultures, was awarded Bollingen Prize for Poetry, even though Pound was then under indictment for treason in World War II. This paper attempts to explicate the Confucian thoughts being sprinkled fragmentarily throughout the *Cantos* with key concepts of the Confucianism as clues, so as to analyze Confucian thoughts and Chinese ideograms that Pound cited in *The Pisan Cantos*. With this approach, Pound strengthened the expressiveness of his thoughts, and it demonstrates how Chinese culture has made *The Pisan Cantos* more philosophical and poetical. The impact of Chinese culture on Pound's outlook and literary creation has even expanded to contemporary American poetry.

### **Pound's Application of Confucian Thoughts in *The Pisan Cantos* Through Understanding the Diagrams With Implication of Confucian Philosophical Concepts**

A good understanding of Confucian thoughts adopted in *The Pisan Cantos* can be the right way to interpret Pound's philosophy and passion in these cantos. Pound hoped to revive Western culture so as to rebuild a modern Western society modeled by Confucian ideals. The rationale for this statement will be further expounded in this paper with interpretation of Confucian texts as cited in *The Cantos*. Pound's adoration for Confucian thoughts and his fascination with the ideogrammic structure and its ideographic function are fully represented in his application of Confucian classics, which enhance the philosophical meaning of the cantos and the aesthetics of the poetic language.

In the summer of 1939, Pound completed "China Cantos" and "Adam Cantos", and was about to finish the last part of *The Cantos*. He wrote soon after the breakout of World War II that "I've got my time cut out now for positive statements. My economic work is done (in the main). I shall have to go on considering and restating, but am now definitely onto questions of belief" (Pound, 1950, p. 328). This last part was Pound's plan for *The Cantos* at that time, but due to the war experience and the jail experience in Pisa, the plan was changed to a certain extent. His subject in his poems, however, changed from worldly affairs to inner thoughts and the exploration of philosophy, and he mentally turned to study Confucian thoughts and their appropriation.

All of these have led to *The Cantos* as we know it today, and *The Pisan Cantos* is considered the peak of Pound's poetic creation.

The frequency of citation from Confucian thoughts in *The Cantos* increases as the poem develops from "Confucius" (Canto XIII), "The China Cantos" (Cantos LII-LXI) to *The Pisan Cantos* (Cantos LXXIV-LXXXIV) and other late cantos. In *The Pisan Cantos* alone, Pound cited twice from *The Great Learning*, four times from *The Doctrine of the Mean*, twenty times from *The Dialectics of Confucius*, and nine times from *Mencius*.

In Canto XII and Canto XIII, Pound compared the disorder of modern Western economy with the social order as described in Confucian classics, and thus, exemplified the darkness and corruption of the post-war Western society. *The Pisan Cantos*, which fully explicates this subject, indicates that after going through the thick and thin of life, Pound as a Confucian advocate judged the world with Confucius' and Mencius' thoughts. Pound believed that China prospered in the past because of the guiding principles of Confucius. He adored the Confucian pantheon, and regarded *The Book of Four* as his *Bible* in his late career, which offers foundation and guidance for his acts. The political ideas and morals of Confucianism are enlivened with Pound's paraphrasing and exposition in *The Pisan Cantos*. Pound's fragmented poetic style and his use of so many languages in *The Cantos* sometimes obscures the poems to such an extent that continuing reading seems impossible, but with scrutiny, we can always identify the rationale of his thoughts among fragments. The following part will scrutinize the key ideograms with connotation of Confucian concepts in the cantos, so as to provide a clear picture of the influence of Confucian thoughts on Pound's poetry and ideology.

"仁" jen, i.e., benevolence or humanity, is the keynote of Confucian thoughts. At the point of word formation, this ideogram can be divided two parts: "人 ren = man"; and "二 er = two", the symbolic meaning can be interpreted as: Two people live together friendly and help and love with each other. And such phrases as "仁 (ren) 爱" (ai = love), "benevolence and love", and "仁德" (de = morality), "benevolence and morality" have been important concepts in Chinese culture, which particularly stresses the importance of social harmony and world peace and eliminates any selfless and merciless action. The ideogram "仁" is used in *The Cantos* many times. In Canto LV of China Cantos, Pound quoted Tseng's comment on *The Great Learning*: "仁者以财发身, 不仁者以身发财", i.e., "The humane man uses his wealth as means to distinction, the inhumane becomes a mere harness, an accessory to his taking" (Confucius, 1928, 1951, p. 83), to condemn inhumane merchants and rulers. Also, he appreciated Confucian philosophy "仁者乐山, 智者乐水", which he translated and put in the lines of Canto LXXXIII: "the sage/delighteth in water/the humane man has amity with the hills" (Pound, 1998, p. 549). Although the ideogram "仁" does not appear in *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound frequently used the concept of benevolence to demonstrate his points on social and moral issues in this section.

At the beginning of Canto LXXIV, the opening canto of *The Pisan Cantos*, those Pound lamented, which he knows well and respected, are often disrespected after their death and even hanged for public display. Hence, he related to the leaders of ancient Mitiya, who were much esteemed by their people and to Mencius who said:

In the past, when Confucius passed away, his disciples packed to leave after three years of his death; they came to the house to say goodbye to Zi Gong (who would stay beside Confucius tomb for three years more) and cried so hard that not until they almost lost their voices did they depart. One day, Zi Xia, Zi Zhang, and Zi You (they were Confucius' disciples) found Zeng Zi (one of Confucius disples) looks like Confucius and forced him to accept their salutation like

that to Confucius. Zeng Zi said "No. Our tutor's thought has been purified in the Yangtze River and the Han River and exposed to the strong sunshine in the autumn, so his thought is so sublime and chastity that no one can be compared with". (ZHANG<sup>1</sup>, 1989, p. 359)

Thus, understanding why Zeng Zi's shows his humility when receiving people's respect for him, Pound wrote: "... and olive tree blown white in the wind/washed in he Kiang and Han/what whiteness will you add to this whiteness/what candor?" (Pound, 1998, p. 445).

Out of respect for and belief in Mussolini's economic socialism for governance, Pound expressed his sympathy to the tragic Mussolini in his poems with Mencius' words. It seems to Pound that such merciless treatment to the dead is not benevolent (仁). He drew a conclusion (virtually from Confucius's original words) that "What you depart from is not the way" (Pound, 1998, p. 445). Here Pound affirmed the moral thinking that social order should be maintained. Pound felt that the lack of normal social order in the post-war Western society and that of fundamental belief contributed to moral degradation and chaos.

Pound expressed eloquently in *The Cantos* his belief that economic rules govern politics, probably, due to his hatred for the Jewish usurers, and his belief in Mussolini's policy. He cursed Winston Churchill, because Churchill revived gold standard in 1925, and hence, caused economic catastrophes (see Pound, 1998, p. 446); he condemned the ruthless Stalin and Roosevelt, who belittles Eastern philosophy and whose policies he disdained, and for satirizing the leaders' unfaithfulness, he adapted the sentence in *The Dialects of Confucius*: "子曰: 君子怀德, 小人怀土", i.e., Confucius said: "While the gentleman cherishes virtue, the petty man cherishes the industries (of his own native place)" (ZHANG, 1989, p. 87), put this idea in lines: "... not words where to to be faithful/nor deeds that they be resolute/only that bird-hearted equity make timber/and lay hold of the earth..." (Pound, 1998, p. 446).

In these lines, Pound stated that governance comes first with benevolence and moral instead of economic industries, which may be developed through improper means, and what matters most with the governor is sincerity and benevolence. The principles of usury and gold standard reflect the government's insincerity and malevolence against the people and the dark side of human nature. Pound has always been concerned with the fate of human being and hoped to see the coming of a society with sincerity, peace, and tranquility. Pound wrote two essays: "Immediate Need of Confucius" (1937) and *Mensius* (1938) and urged the Western leaders to adopt the Confucian principles for governance, so much that he bashed Roosevelt: "... deification of emperor/snotty barbarian ignorant of T'ang history need not deceive one..." (Pound, 1998, pp. 445-446).

The imprint of war in Pound strengthened his sense of historical responsibility. Even if being condemned in Italy in the name of treason, Pound originally wanted to condemn the faithless politics and the politicians, especially those war-makers. But his lack of experience in war and his belief in the historical and economic problems, due to the war, led to his arrogant speech in Rome. Pound, to a certain extent, is not a war criminal, but a man with peculiar personality and ignorant political and economic concepts since he had always been condemning the war, and expecting a peaceful world where people are noble minded and states are governed by leaders with morality and benevolence stated in Confucian classics; and moreover, facing the appalling situation of the society destroyed by the two world wars in the 21th century, Pound has been "meditating his

<sup>1</sup> All the English versions of Confucian classical sentences in *The Four Books* edited by ZHANG are made by the present author. This note is also for all the following relevant quotations.

'paradise'" (Cookson, 1985, p. 68) and wished: "To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars" (Pound, 1998, p. 445).

*The Pisan Cantos* to a certain extent is Pound's last words, written under the shadow of cruel punishment. But Pound gradually regained his confidence, perseverance, and soberness after the initial depression and perplexity in jail. His writing changed from a lament on himself, "a sunseting man" to spiritual resurrection towards the end of *The Pisan Cantos*, reaffirming his faith in life and the future, "If the hoar frost grip thy rent/ Thou wilt give thanks when night is spent" (Pound, 1998, p. 560). In Canto LXXIV, Pound wrote down "莫" next to an ideogram that stands for OY TIS (nobody in Greek), and he interpreted the ideogram as "a sunseting man" (or "a man on whom the sun has gone down" (Pound, 1998, p. 450)). Despite of his misunderstanding of the meaning of the ideogram, Pound's interpretation chimes with the dilemma someone faces, referring to the hanged prisoner (his cell mate) and the unfortunate Odysseus, even to the poet himself. With the sadness of "莫", Pound also wrote that "OY TIS (no man)/ a man on whom the sun has gone down..." (Pound, 1998, p. 450). It indicates that he felt depressed but maintained his faith and spirit. Reading *The Pisan Cantos* is a process of resurrection, from the low pitch and disarray of Canto LXXIV to the passionate Canto LXXIX to the sober and strong Canto LXXX. While reading the cantos, the reader is likely to be aware that Pound probably absorbed the essence of *The Book of Four* and regained confidence, recounting the evolution of human civilizations as a philosophical poet and historian instead of writing down someone's last words. These changes occurred due to Pound's deeper understanding of the Confucian concepts of "benevolence", "fidelity" and "sincerity", and coming to epiphany of life in the end.

"Sincerity" (诚) is a key concept in Confucian thoughts, as the sentences in *The Doctrine of the Mean* read:

诚者, 天之道也; 诚之者, 人之道也。诚者, 不勉而中, 不思而得, 从容中道, 圣人也。 i.e., Sincerity is the code endowed by the heaven. Sincerity is the terminal goal of people's life. Those who are sincere can reach the goal without much efforts and meditation; and those who can reach the goal in an ease way are sages. (ZHANG, 1989, p. 43)

Pound interprets the concept in the following lines "...principio verbum/paraclete or the verbum perfectum: sinceritas..." (Pound, 1998, p. 447).

Pound adores Confucius and holds strongly to the Confucian belief that one should judge the world and people with sincerity as the criterion. So he writes: "... the word is made/ perfect 诚/ better gift can no man make to a nation/ than the sense of Kung fu Tseu/ who was called Chung Ni/ nor in historiography nor in making anthologies" (Pound, 1998, p. 474).

Pound extends his understanding the concept "sincerity" to Canto LXXIV, in which he recounted his Pisan jail life, self-reflection, and epiphany of sincerity. He alluded to parables in order to express his respect and holiness for the ancient Chinese sages. The lines say: "... Light tensile immaculate/ the sun's cord unspotted..." (Pound, 1998, p. 449); and he understood that sincerity brings out the most of human potential and pushes evolution as the sentence in *The Doctrine of the Mean* goes: "If the principle of 'sincerity' is strictly followed, an imprudent man will become wise, and a weak man will become strong" (ZHANG, 1988, p. 44); and in Canto LXXVII he wrote: "... only the total sincerity, the precise definition..." (Pound, 1998, p. 488). The concept "sincerity" has become his belief and philosophy, so his survival in the Pisan jail is to some extent much indebted to his study and translation of Confucian classics.

Sincerity means to keep the promise of what is said, and mutual trust is needed to keep it, or to practice what you preach. Pound's fascination with "sincerity" is also identified by his putting down the ideogram "诚" on the head page of *The Cantos*, the most admirable book of his literary composition.

Pound frequently cites "The Doctrine of the Mean" in *The Pisan Cantos*. He understood that *The Doctrine of the Mean* is Confucian scholars' basic course for self-improvement, and is familiar with the essence of the Doctrine. He alluded to the sincerity and holiness of the ancient Chinese sages on contrast to the narrow-minded Western leaders, while, at the same time, expressing his aspiration for a higher level of morality. The ideogram "中" (chung, meaning "middle or central state/position, neutrality") is an important Confucian concept. "中" refers to an unbiased stance, and "庸 yong = normal, commonplace" refers to normal and steady state, so "中庸之道" (i.e., the middle way) indicates a neutral stance on issues. Confucius believed that the "middle way" is the highest level of ethical and moral standards, and "excess equals to shortage" is against normal moral standard. Only those who deeply understand the principles and standards of nature and the world could reach the level of morality, and those unfaithful or indulgent government officials at that time could never reach this standard. In the opening Cantos of the "China Cantos", Pound praised the ancient Chinese sages for their philosophical and moral standards that were fundamental in the prosperity of Chinese civilization and thinking. The Western world at that time was chaotic and disintegrating and few people wanted to pursue the "middle way".

In Cantos LXXIV, LXXVI, LXXVII and LXXXIV, Pound presented "中" in Chinese handwriting and delicately alluded to his stance on governance and policy. Pound held doubt against the Western governments and uses "中" to caution their leaders. In Canto LXXIV, he told about Western political legislation and its consequences, and how the paranoia of Western philosophy is blurring people's collectivity and individuality, and wrote that "... Yaou chose Shun to longevity who seized the extremities and the opposites/ holding true course between them..." (Pound, 1998, p. 462). He believed that leaders must reinforce law with an "unbiased" stance and law reinforcement must obey the principles of "steadiness" and benevolence, and only in this way can a nation flourish as the ancient Chinese society did. In Canto LXXVI, Pound wrote that "... but to keep'em three weeks Chung 中/ we doubt it/ and in government not to lie down on it..." (Pound, 1998, p. 474). He felt that at that time Western governance was against their people's wish and the society was degrading, he hoped that people from the West could learn and understand the Confucian "middle way", and pursue higher morals to create a new Western Eden.

Pound believed that "Neutrality" is the highest level of morality, and the best criterion for judgment. A government will change legislations as they always do when implementing policies, but variations come to one principle, "neutrality". Therefore, he wrote in Canto LXXVII that "... le beau monde gouverne/ if not toujours at any rate it is a level of/ some sort whereto things tend to return/ Chung 中/ in the middle/ whether upright or horizontal..." (Pound, 1998, p. 484). And therefore, he adopted the ideogram in the last part of *The Pisan Cantos*, expressing his adoration to Confucianism "... our 中 chung/whereto we may pay our/homage..." (Pound, 1998, p. 560).

Pound paid too much attention to economic policies governance, but too little to economic struggles and wars, and not until the late period of World War II did he realize the devil of fascism. In the Pisan jail

self-reflection, what Pound felt strongest was his understanding of “义 justice/righteousness”, and he came to understand the injustice and devastation to human beings of World War II. He was in search of justice among bewilderment and felt that wars led to the stagnancy of the Western society, the degradation of the governments, the lost of human kindness and conscience, and the deviation of values, the void of human beings, and the whole Western world was turning into a “waste land” full of loneliness and thorns. Therefore, he restated “In ‘The Spring and Autumn’ there/are/no/righteous/wars” (Pound, 1998, p. 503) in Canto LXXVIII. To a certain extent the main theme of *The Cantos*, which reflects the moral degradation of the Western society and the spiritual void, corresponds to T. S. Elliot's theme in his *The Waste Land*. In other words, Pound and Elliot share similar outlooks though their poetic styles are quite different.

When talking about the injustice and horror of wars, Pound aligned two columns of handwritten characters with the writing on the shadow of war—“非其鬼而祭之，谄也” (ZHANG, 1989, p. 74), which comes originally from *The Dialectics*. Confucius's original meaning is to abandon the ceremony of worshiping gods and to turn to practical affairs in life. Pound alluded to this statement and aligns the two couplets with the shadow of war in order to insinuate that military interference in another country's internal affairs is an unjustifiable action. “... the god-damn wop is not, save by exception,/honest in administration any more than the Briton is truthful...” (Pound, 1998, p. 490), and Confucian thoughts is rightly meant to caution people to learn the historical lessons of warfare. It is significant that Pound promoted Confucian thoughts and the morals of ancient Chinese sages amidst the shadow of war as he wrote in Canto LXXXIII:

Boon companion to equity/ it joins with the process/lacking it, there is inanition//When the equities are gathered tighter/as birds alighting/it springeth up vital//If deeds be not ensheaved and garnered in the heart/there is inanition”. (Pound, 1998, p. 551)

In Cantos LXXVII, LXXXVI, and CXVIII, Pound focused on the relationship between justice and peace in Confucian thoughts. With the criterion of “justice” to review the Italian policy and war-makers' criminal action in wars. He scornfully wrote:

... For losing the law of Chung Ni, /hence the valise set by the alpino's statue in Brunik/and the long lazy float of the banners/and similar things occurred in Dalmatia/lacking tht treasure of honesty/which is the treasure of states/and the dog-damn wop is not, save by exception,/honest in administration any more than the Briton is truthful... (Pound, 1998, p. 490)

He even directly bashed the Mussolini government, “... Jactancy, vanity, peculation to the ruin of 20 years' labour” (Pound, 1998, p. 490), and gave out his sigh that: “For now so much as a just peace/That wd/obstruct future wars/as witness the bombardment at Frascati after the armistice/ had been signed...” (Pound, 1998, p. 494), as he wanted to explain that a gentleman will show his benevolence whenever the occasion arises, and his justice whenever the chance comes in.

Pound has been closely concerned with a nation's economic policy, with focus on monetary operation and loan policy, or what he referred to as “currency” economics. He frequently cited “justified benefits” from Confucian thoughts to condemn usurers and private banks. He praised the Chinese leader of the Shang Dynasty (562-1066 B.C.), who produced coins for his people to buy food and Emperor Kang Xi of the Qing Dynasty (1616-1911 A.C.), who implemented steady and transparent monetary management policies. In terms of



currency credit, Pound believed in the social credibility system, and regarded the private banks which make something out of nothing and only exploit on interests as evil as the Jewish usurers. He believed that to expand the scope of credit is state banks' privilege instead of the private banks', and therefore, he praised the ancient Athenian implementer (B.C. 527-460). He argued that now that wealth is created by the people, it should belong to the people, and the government should hold justice and represent the people, instead of a few individuals who can do "... the alternation of the value of money..." (Pound, 1998, p. 460). Besides, Pound frequently referred to Canto XIX in Leviticus of the *Bible* in *The Pisan Cantos*, cautioning people that unjustifiable practice is not allowed in people's economic life, and praising:

... And the two largest rackets are the alternation/of the value of money/(of the unit of money METATHEMENON TE TON/KRUMENON/and or lending/that which is made out of nothing/and the state can lend money as was done/by Athens for the building of the Salamis fleet/and if the packet gets lost in transit/ask Churchill's backers/where it has got to.... (Pound, 1998, p. 460)

The disorder of social economy and rampant private credit have contributed much to social corruption, how can it be avoided? It is not difficult to imagine a disordered society and an unsteady country of people struggling for a living. "Le Paradis n'est pas artificiel/nor does the martin against the tempest/fly as in the calm air/ 'like an arrow, and under bad government/like an arrow'..." (Pound, 1998:488). In *The Pisan Cantos*, Pound reiterated the importance of Confucian thoughts in the attempt of helping the rulers and people establish a righteous and peaceful world.

"道" is a concept that pervades all Chinese thought, moral, political, and metaphysical. In Canto LIIXIII, Pound put a big ideogram "道" to indicate that "... if it (money) be based on work done/inside the nation or system/and cancelled in proportion/to what is used and worn out/à la Wörgl" (Pound, 1998, p. 502). Pound understood that the connotation of the Confucian concept of "道" can be interpreted as the nature of evolution, the economic rules, the governmental rules, or the moral principles for interpersonal relationship, and thereby, he wrote that "rain also is of the process/... the wind also is of process" (Pound, 1998, p. 445), and if things develop against their natural rules, they will go down; a person who seemingly abides by the rules but twists the facts and goes against the norms can hardly win other people's trust. Here he alluded to a saying from *The Doctrine of the Mean* in Canto LXXIV that "... what you depart from is not the way..." (Pound, 1998, p. 445) to indicate his complaint against harsh practices against people.

Pound also regarded "道" as something mysterious and desirable. In Canto LXXXIII, he told about his observations of ants in the jail:

... And now the ants seem to stagger/as the dawn sun has trapped their shadows,/this breath wholly covers the mountains/it shines and divides/it nourishes by its rectitude/does no injury/overstanding the earth it fills the nine fields to heaven/Boon companion to equity/it joins with the process/lacking it, there is inanition.... (Pound, 1998, p. 551)

He also quoted from *Mencius* that "... When the equities are gathered together/as birds alighting/it springeth up vital/If deeds be not ensheaved and garnered in the heart/there is inanition" (Pound, 1998, 551) to state that the ants' discouragement goes against the principles of "justice" and "a justified path", and he hoped that the leaders will grasp the essence of a "justified collection" and things prosper or degrade in accordance with a "justified path".

### Pound, a Confucian in the West

The above analysis of Confucian classics in *The Pisan Cantos* indicates that Pound attempted to reverse the chaotic order of Western society with Confucian thoughts and turn it back into a new Eden. Pound seemed to regard the Confucian thoughts as the panacea to save the war-ruined and down-turned Western world.

Pound is an avant-courier pioneer of the 20th-century modernist poetry, and his eruditeness and rich thinking have contributed to the formation of *The Cantos* which combines Western and Eastern cultures. Throughout the 117 Cantos in *The Cantos*, China is the main theme, from the "Confucius Canto" (Canto XIII) to "China Cantos" (Cantos LII to LXI), especially from *The Pisan Cantos* (LXXIV-LXXXIV Cantos) to the end, Confucian thoughts becomes the main theme, including the Cantos of LXXII and LXXIII which are written in Italian. These are Pound's spiritual achievements after fully comprehending Confucian thoughts and morals.

*The Pisan Cantos* stands for an integration of poetry, history, and philosophy with a loose structure but a coherent spirit; it also exemplifies Pound's "fragmented poetic features", which is typically an approach of open poetic creation and exerted significant influence on American modernist and postmodernist poetic creation. In the history of American literature, Pound in the 1950s and 1960s became a spiritual leader for young American poets as he has offered not only guidance but also preaching of Chinese culture and Confucian thoughts to them. Even though, many of the young poets were only following the popular fascination with Taoism and Buddhism, Pound's preaching and the translation of Confucian classics in his *The Cantos* has exposed the Western readers to the world of Chinese philosophy and ancient civilization.

In *The Pisan Cantos*, the reader is introduced to world civilizations from the past to present and the preaching of ancient sages. In the cantos, Pound expressed his admiration for ancient Chinese sages and prosperity, his ideals for constructing a new Utopia and his self-reflection and desperation when depression prevails and hope diminishes. *The Pisan Cantos* is a re-creation of world history and a confluence of Western and Chinese cultures with Confucian thoughts running through the lines as the poet's main form of expression. Just because of his devotion to the study and application of Confucian thoughts, Pound has been named by Poundian scholars as Confucian Pound.

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