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Philosophical ideas common to the writings of Henri Bergson T. E. Hulme and T. S. Eliot

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PHILOSOPHICAL IDEAS COMMON TO THE WRITINGS
of
HENRI BERGSON, T. E. HULME, and T. S. ELIOT

by

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B.A., Montana State University, 1947

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Master of Arts

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

When Henri Bergson's last book, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion (Les Deux Sources de la Religion et de la Morale), appeared in 1935, few readers would have found in it any considerable element of philosophy which might be demonstrated as identical or even similar to the ideas expressed in a book published in the United States the previous year, T. S. Eliot's After Strange Gods. True, both works are strongly anti-materialistic. Both insist upon the recognition of a reality unprovable by the positivist scientist. Both are in one sense apologies for Christianity. Yet when Bergson writes, "It matters little whether Christ be called a man,"¹ and when he considers Christianity great among many religions precisely because of its super-intellectual quality, because the most "complete mysticism is that of the great Christian mystics,"² he is expressing opinions far different from Eliot's opinion that "the maintenance of orthodoxy... which calls for the exercise of all our conscious intelligence,"³ is nec-

¹Henri Bergson, The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, p. 228.
²Ibid., p. 216.
essay and his statement that the basic doctrines of Christianity are Original Sin and the Incarnation. It might be incomprehensible to a reader familiar with these two books and with similar statements in other writings of the two men to say that there is a close correspondence between some of the ideas expressed by Bergson and by Eliot and that in some cases Bergson has strongly influenced Eliot's writing.

Not only upon the subject of Christianity do the two men seem to differ strongly. It is a far cry from the distrust of intellectualism to be found both in the writings of Bergson and in the commonly accepted popularization of his philosophy, to the intense use of and respect for intellectuality in the writings of Eliot. Even if there is some ambiguity and perhaps unfairness in a description of Bergson as "romantic, almost a German romantic," still there is in his philosophy a quality which is very different in temper from Eliot's classicism. In fact, upon first acquaintance with the majority of the writings of the two men, one finds difficulty in understanding how Bergson could to any considerable extent have influenced Eliot, the man who summed up his own point of view in the well known phrase, "classicist

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4Ibid., p. 45.

5Irwin Edman, "Introduction" to Henri Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. xii.
in literature, royalist in politics, and anglo-catholic in religion."6

Admittedly, then, there are many philosophical ideas and attitudes held by Bergson and Eliot which are not common to both. Still, by introducing into consideration the ideas of a third writer, it might be demonstrated that there are similarities and correspondences which may well be traced from Bergson to Eliot. This third writer is the comparatively little known philosopher-critic of England before the first World War, T. E. Hulme, who derived a great deal from Bergson and expressed ideas later adopted by Eliot.

Just how far we can go in saying that Bergson through Hulme influenced Eliot is difficult to determine. Probably a more modest project of simply citing ideas common to the writings of the three men is more in keeping with the scope of this paper. A student is apt, upon running onto a segment of idea or turn of phrase similar in the works which he is comparing, to credit the later directly to the earlier, saying that Author One has influenced Author Two, ignoring the possibilities that Author Two found his material in writings of Author Three, Four or Sixteen, in works of disciples of

Author One, or simply in the normal observation of the world and absorption of thought common in his day. The opposite extreme is of course also dangerous. To let timidity prevent one from admitting in the face of good evidence that one idea is obviously derived from another is to risk passing up many fruitful leads which might direct one's attention to unforeseen evidence and new evaluations. It is to blind oneself deliberately in order to prevent the seeing of hallucinations and mirages.

We start, then, by disavowing any claims of a "discovery" of a direct influence, or even of theories which may lead to a new or revised interpretation of some piece of literature. We will, wherever possible, trace Bergson's influence on Eliot through Hulme as a conscious or obvious borrowing of ideas. We will also try to show how a study of these ideas may cast some light upon passages and methods which in Eliot, and to some extent in Hulme, have been discussed, interpreted, questioned, or even completely condemned by various critics. But it is primarily an attempt to show, by examination of various aspects of thought in the work of the three writers, that the same or very similar ideas may be used by men of very different views of life, and fitted into dissimilar contexts, in each of which they work as solid and cohesive factors, contributing materially to the effect and
meaning of the whole. Briefly, these ideas may be grouped together into three categories as those dealing with (1) the problem of language as it is manifested in poetic images, (2) the problem of language and thinking as it is manifested in the syntax of modern poetry, and (3) the problem of tradition and history.

With a caution perhaps overdeveloped, we want first to recognize the difficulty of crediting any writer—philosopher, statesman or literary figure—with origination a system of ideas. Certainly individual men do sometimes develop and explain original thoughts, techniques, or ways of looking at the experiences of man, but even with such a creative individual part of the achievement may usually be explained by the work of predecessors who built a foundation from which he could advance, and by the temper of the time, which was ripe for the discovery. Frequently we find that men have perfected an idea simultaneously by building upon each other's work, or even by working on the same material in complete isolation from each other; again we find that the man who has received recognition for fostering a new theory has merely rediscovered the thought of some more obscure man, or perhaps several men, and taken over the thought as his own.

The futility of ascribing a particular theory to any one writer as offspring solely of his own cerebral processes
is obvious; there are, however, certain men at certain times who have concocted, adopted, or revised certain ideas, and have, in voicing those ideas, struck latent affinities in the minds of other men, and have there excited the imagination to such a degree that the influence of their ideas, whether original or not, can hardly be disputed. Such men, then, if they may not be considered primarily as creative thinkers, must be considered powerful voices of their generations. And such men, in varying degrees, are the three writers with whom this paper will deal: Henri Bergson, French philosopher; Thomas Ernest Hulme, English philosopher and critic, and Thomas Stearns Eliot, Anglo-American critic and poet.

To consider Bergson, Hulme and Eliot, in that order, "consecutive", is something of a misstatement. Henri Bergson was born on October 18, 1859, a generation before the birth of Hulme and Eliot, but he did not die until January 4, 1941, having outlived Hulme by almost twenty-five years. Hulme and Eliot, too, might not be considered chronologically consecutive, since they were in age close to contemporary; T. E. Hulme was born on September 16, 1883, and T. S. Eliot on September 26, 1888. In point of influence of their work, however, and of their relation to each other, they are and may well be considered, consecutively important.

Bergson's death came long after the bulk of his work. As Irwin Edman says, in a foreword to a 1944 edition of the
Creative Evolution,

The general public, and that relatively private clique known as the philosophical public, had long ago fallen into the habit of thinking of Bergson as dead. Only on the publication of the dramatic news of Bergson's decision to renounce all posts and honors rather than to accept exemption from the anti-Semitic laws of the Vichy government was the world reminded that he was still alive.  


Not until 1925 after "long and painful years of paralyzing illness" did he publish his next (and last) major philosophical work, *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion* (*Les Deux Sources de la Religion et de la Morale*). Although in this book "all the masteries and subtleties of analysis were still

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7Eden, *op. cit.*, pp. ix-x.
8Bergson, *Time and Free Will*, pp. ix-x.
9Eden, *op. cit.*, p. xi.
there, extended now to morals and religion, and to art as well;"¹⁰ it stirred comparatively little philosophical interest; it was his earlier work, Creative Evolution in particular, which gave him his world-wide reputation, among laymen as well as philosophers. Edman says,

Creative Evolution, with its gleaming mellifluous stream of thought, entranced many more than could understand it, and many readers, too, of many different worlds: the fashionable dowagers who found refuge from boredom in his elan vital, the religious liberals welcoming a philosopher who seemed to have found critical circumvention of mechanistic science and a new and poetic support for a belief in God, in free will, and even, though in a somewhat Pickwickian sense, in immortality.¹¹

Although without unqualified acceptance of his ideas, historians of philosophy and his colleagues alike have allotted to him a high place. Upon the publication of Creative Evolution, William James wrote to him, "Oh, my Bergson, you are a magician and your book is a marvel, a real wonder. . . . But, unlike the works of genius of the Transcendentalists movement, a pure classic in point of form. . . ."¹² Bertrand Russell called Bergson "the leading French philosopher of the

¹⁰ Loc. cit.
¹¹ Ibid., p. x.
¹² William James, quoted by Edman, op. cit., p. x.
present century." Will Durant has said that he "almost converted a sceptical world... by force of his sincerity and his eloquence." B. A. G. Fuller wrote in 1938, "Bergson is easily the outstanding thinker of the century in France, so far at least, and is perhaps the most eminent of contemporary philosophers." Certainly Bergson was, at least in the early years of the century, an intellectual figure of international repute.

Inevitably, it seems, the enthusiasm and the vitalism of Bergson's philosophy would attract a young man like T. E. Hulme. Hulme was brilliant, with rare vigor of body as well as mind; he was six feet two inches, and weighed thirteen stone, seven pounds (187 pounds). He was given to fighting, and although he would not drink, he was often engaged with his friends in drunken brawls and bar room knock-down-drag-outs. He "persuaded Gaudier-Brzeska to make him a knuckle-duster, carved out of solid brass, and this he afterwards carried about with him wherever he went." Twice he was

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13 Bertrand Russell, A History of Western Philosophy, p. 791.
14 Will Durant, The Story of Philosophy, p. 337.
16 Michael Roberts, T. E. Hulme, p. 16.
17 Ibid., p. 24.
sent down from Cambridge as a result of his fighting, the first time for "overstepping the limits of the traditional licence allowed by the authorities on Boat Race night." According to J. C. Squire, Hulme was given the longest mock funeral ever seen in the town."18 After this occasion he became acquainted with Bergson and studied with him in Paris. He was readmitted to Cambridge partly because of the influence of a personal letter from Bergson, in which the philosopher said, "Either I am very much deceived, or he is destined to produce interesting works in the field of philosophy in general and more particularly perhaps in the philosophy of art."19 Hulme was greatly impressed by Bergson's thought. He lectured and wrote several times about the French philosopher as early as 190920 and a couple of years later brought out a translation of the Introduction to Metaphysics. A large portion of his own writing is devoted to a discussion and evaluation of Bergson. They evidently remained on friendly terms until Hulme's death.

The intelligence which Bergson recognized, combined with the vitality of body and spirit displayed to his college

18 Ibid., p. 15.
20 Jacob Epstein, Let There Be Sculpture, p. 53.
friends made possible for Hulme the widespread influence which he wielded for his few adult years. The sculptor, Jacob Epstein, who begins his foreword to Hulme's volume, "Hulme was my very great friend, and what I can say about him is entirely personal," goes on to say,

What appealed to me particularly in him was the vigour and sincerity of his thought. He was capable of kicking a theory as well as a man downstairs when the occasion demanded. . . . Like Plato and Socrates, he drew the intellectual youth of his time around him. We have no one quite like him in England today.21

People who were not in contact with Hulme's personal attraction have found serious deficiencies and some contradictions in his work, which is known through only a few miscellaneous short pieces published during Hulme's life, some translations from French and German, and one posthumous volume, Speculations, collected and published by Herbert Read. In his thirty-four years Hulme did not develop a systematic philosophy; he did, however, plan several books (on one of which Read based his arrangements of the fragmentary pieces in Speculations)22 and had almost completed a book about Jacob Epstein which was lost with him in the first world war.

21 Jacob Epstein, "Foreword" to T. E. Hulme, Speculations, pp. vii-viii.

22 Herbert Read, "Introduction" to Hulme, op. cit., pp. xii-xiii.
In the limited remains of the ideas which Hulme expressed, and with which he so enthusiastically imbued his friends and acquaintances, critics have since found a lack of unity which he may or may not have repaired had he lived longer. Dixon Wecter, in an article published in 1939, repeats a more or less common criticism of Hulme's work:

His ideas were almost wholly derivative. . . .
Hulme's posthumous volume is in fact the notebook of a keen mind dredging the depths of modern German and French speculation about which most Englishmen of his day knew nothing, and gathering into his net a variety of fish which he did not have time really to sort or appraise.  

His biographer, Micheal Roberts, compares him to Pascal and Sorel, both of whom Hulme admired, as an unsystematic thinker, and admits that "a hostile critic might say that Hulme's sole merit was that he could read French and German. He was not an original thinker, he solved no problems and made no startling observations or distinctions, and his ideas were sometimes expressed untidily and incoherently." A more complimentary critic, David Daiches, also notes the sweeping eclecticism of Hulme:

24 Roberts, op. cit., p. 12.
Hulme's philosophical position was... elastic and many sided. .. he combined a strong anti-romanticism with an anti-rationalism derived largely from Bergson, a vague religious attitude with a strong vein of cynicism, a pragmatism in politics combined with a species of proto-fascism derived in part from the French Syndicalist, George Sorel.25

To do Hulme justice, we must remember that he never made claims to a position as a systematic philosopher and as Roberts says, he "believed that the work he was doing was important, but he knew that he had added very little to the ideas he had borrowed, and that his real work remained to be done."26 It is useless to argue now what he might have done had he returned from World War I; he had no opportunity to mature his work, for after being once wounded he returned to the lines and on September 28, 1917, "just when everybody seemed to have knocked off for lunch, there was an unexpected burst of shell-fire and Hulme was killed."27

But whatever the deficiencies in his philosophy discoverable now by an examination of his extant works, no one can deny the evidence left by his friends of his great personal magnetism. "The news of Hulme's death," Epstein writes,

27Ibid., p. 36.
"caused widespread pain and sorrow; he had been so much and so strongly alive." And it was this enthusiasm of personality which exerted itself upon the artistic and philosophic minds around him to such an extent that all of them remember him vividly and many of them credit him with a large share of inspiration or contribution to their work. As early as his first session at Cambridge in 1902, his room was constantly open to his friends, whom he would entertain with "a persistent examination of every idea they expressed." Between his final departure from Cambridge in 1912 and the war, Hulme lived part of the time in London, where he became interested in the "new geometric art of Picasso, Wyndham Lewis, David Bomberg, William Roberts and Jacob Epstein." Among the regulars who frequented the weekly discussions in his rooms were Epstein and Gaudier-Brzeska, Ezra Pound, J. C. Squire, Ashley Dukes, Wilfrid Gibson, Ramiro de Maeztu (afterward Spanish Ambassador to Argentina), Middleton Murry, Richard Curle (the friend and biographer of Conrad), and A. R. Orage. "Edward Wadsworth and C. R. W. Nevinson often came to these meetings, and Rupert Brooke turned up once or twice."
Robert Frost, speaking of his own younger days when he lived for some time in London, has said that he often talked with Hulme in his lodgings, and remarked that Hulme was one of the few men of great vitality who was unashamed to plunge into a philosophic discussion whatever the place or opportunity. Hulme is said to have persuaded his friends to do most of the work of his translations, and to have tried to cajole the sculptors to do work that would illustrate his theories, even to have become annoyed when Epstein spent much of his time modeling realistic busts; he "had a genius for harnessing the energies of other people."

Both by personal contact, theory and demonstration, Hulme influenced the Imagistic movement in twentieth century poetry. In 1911, he wrote some poems, five of which were printed in The New Age, entitled The Complete Poetical Works of T. E. Hulme. "They were meant to convey clear visual images rather than romantic emotions, and they used cadence rather than meter. This was the kind of thing that Hulme thought young poets ought to be doing; and the poems were typical of what afterwards came to be known as Imagism." 

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32 Robert Frost, Unpublished informal lecture at Breadloaf, Vt., August, 1947. By his own account he was impressed mostly by Hulme's religious point of view.

33 Roberts, op. cit., p. 25.

34 Ibid., p. 17.
Roberts would have us take care not to over-estimate this influence upon Imagism. "Hulme's dislike of versified moralizing and Wardour Street poeticality," he says,

was shared by Ezra Pound, T. S. Eliot, F. S. Flint, H. D., and other writers; and the Imagist movement, which they initiated and which has influenced English poetry for a quarter of a century, might well have developed without the help Hulme gave it. Stephen Phillips' "Beautiful Lie the Dead" could be called an Imagist poem, but Phillips had nothing to do with Hulme or the official 'movement'. T. S. Eliot knew very little of Hulme directly until the Speculations were published in 1924.35

Whether the Imagists owe their direct impetus to Hulme is immaterial; they indisputably owe to him the first clear philosophical statement of their fundamental ideas and aims. Since we necessarily in a later chapter will examine the statement of these ideas and aims in connection with the Bergsonian elements in Hulme's philosophy, we shall not try to review them at this point; it is apropos, however, to say that the few poems which Hulme contributed to Imagism are skillful examples of that type of poetry.36

But his effect on modern poetry was not confined to the Imagistic movement, which, containing in its own strict

\[35\text{Ibid., p. 208.}\]
code its own limitations, has become more or less inactive since the twenties. As David Daiches points out, "Hulme's influence on the Imagists was superficial, however, compared to that which his view of poetry, culture and tradition and the relation these three had on a group of critics of the period and in particular on one poet and critic--T. S. Eliot." Of course, we must remember that Eliot was not personally acquainted with Hulme, and was writing before the publication of Speculations. This volume, the least fragmentary of the writings of Hulme and the only one in which Eliot could have seen any considerable picture of Hulme's ideas, was published posthumously in 1924, two years after Eliot had written his first poem of great importance, The Waste Land, which employed many of the methods Hulme describes. There are several directions, however, from which Eliot undoubtedly felt the influence of Hulme's ideas before Speculations was published. He certainly knew Hulme's verses; he mentions them in his essay, "The Function of Criticism," written in 1925. He was familiar with that portion of Hulme's thought taken up by the Imagists, especially by Ezra Pound, close

37 Daiches, op. cit., p. 91.
38 Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 21.
friend to both Hulme and Eliot.39 When Eliot did read Speculations he found, according to his own word and that of his critic and interpreter, F. O. Matthiessen, ideas which corresponded to his own, enunciated in a way which made them clearer and more meaningful than they had been.40 Perhaps the correspondence might be described in the words which Bergson applies to another pair of thinkers: "it was not so much a matter of influence as of natural affinity, community of inspiration and, if one may say so, pre-established harmony between two minds both of which were travelling on a lofty plane, and met each other on certain peaks."41 At least the book helped to crystallize some of Eliot's theory, and some of its statements are reflected in his later criticism and poetry, although it is possible that he would have arrived at most of his stylistic and critical ideas independently. Daiches sums up his sensible attitude toward their relationship,

39 In view of the controversy about Pound since the awarding of the Bollingen prize, it is interesting to note that Hulme, although closely associated with him, was not in complete sympathy with his ideas. Upon being asked how long he would tolerate Pound, he "thought a moment, then said he knew already exactly when he would have to kick him downstairs." Epstein, op. cit., p. 54.


41 Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 270.
to what extent Eliot was influenced by Hulme, to what extent their thought moved independently along parallel lines, is a question not very easy to determine and not of any great importance. Eliot had no personal relations with Hulme, but seems to have read and admired much of his work as was published: there can be no doubt that Eliot's later criticism owes some of its most essential features to Hulme.42

That Eliot has influenced modern poetry to an enormous extent can hardly now be questioned. At least since the publication of The Waste Land in 1922, very few young poets of any importance have not been deeply affected by his work, either to imitate it, to revolt against it, or to develop from it a style of their own. The awarding of the Nobel prize last year is an outward sign, the furor caused (and still rumbling) by the publication of the Four Quartets in 1943, is a more important sign, that his place in the eye of the literary public has not diminished. His recent switch or modification of his view of Milton echoes throughout the critical world.43 Delmore Schwartz has called him an "international culture hero",44 refers to him as a "literary dic-

42Daiches, loc. cit.


It is easy to see that since 1922, at least, Eliot has occupied a position in the English-speaking world analogous to that occupied by Ben Johnson, Dryden, Pope, Samuel Johnson, Coleridge, and Matthew Arnold. . . . The remarkable thing about most of the literary dictators. . . . is that they have succeeded in persuading at least one generation of readers to accept their literary taste.  

Leonard Unger, in his *T. S. Eliot, A Selected Critique*, includes a selective bibliography of more than 260 articles and books primarily about Eliot, and explaining that his list is not complete, says that "there is scarcely an area of intellectual and literary opinion in which Eliot has not served as a subject of discussion and as a point of reference for the formulation of characteristic attitudes."  

Since it would probably be generally admitted, then, that Eliot's critical ideas have some importance in a study of twentieth century literature, it should be interesting to speculate about where he got his ideas, how he has welded diverse ideas together, and whether his criticism as a whole lacks unity because of the mixture of ideas often from oppos-

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ing sources. For Eliot is, like Hulme, an eclectic thinker. While it might be argued that he has worked his various theories and preferences into a cohesive and consistent whole, he has adopted elements from widely scattered and differing literatures and philosophies.

In order to understand the nature of the ideas which we shall consider as derived from Bergson and Hulme, it is of course necessary to understand something of the writings of these two men. Since it will be possible to give sufficient explanation of Hulme's contributions as the separate points come up, we will not stop now to discuss his philosophy. But since Bergson is our starting point, and since his philosophy is more complex and difficult than Hulme's (both because it was more fully presented and because through popularization many of its chief doctrines have become confused) it will undoubtedly be helpful to review some of its main theories.

* * *

One of the difficulties with Bergson's philosophy now is the paradoxical fact that it seemed so easy to comprehend at the time of its first popularity. Superficial thinkers of widely varying types seized upon separate aspects of his thought and used it to promote or prove their own schemes. A wide reading public, unequipped with philosophical background, became familiar with simplifications and "catch-word"
ideas from the philosophy without being aware of its subtleties and depths. Like Marxism, or the more recently popular Existentialism, Bergsonianism had in its following a far greater number of people than those who had read the philosophy or understood even the major part of its basic tenets. Such popularization inevitably distorted the philosophy and, when it became no longer fashionable, made it seem far more foolish than was justified. Perhaps even serious philosophers who have objected on valid grounds to part of all of Bergson's writings would have been less eager to reject it had it been less encumbered with the trappings popularity had assigned to it.

Knowing only popular Bergsonianism, one would find it strange that Bergson formed a large part of the thought of T. E. Hulme, who himself became a strong influence for orthodoxy in religion, classicism in art, and strong discipline in thought. By an unjustified but understandable simplification Bergsonianism came for many to stand for a sort of anarchial freedom. Edman says, "Everyone rebelling against convention in conduct, chafing against formalism in art, revolting against the fixed and stable in thought, found in him (Bergson) an enchanting voice."48 But as Eliot has

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48 Edman, op. cit., p. xvi.
pointed out, "The influence of any man is a different thing from himself."\(^{49}\) Although Bergson's philosophy is not as brilliantly and completely original as many of his followers thought\(^{50}\) neither is it the superficial romanticism which flourished among some of his disciples.

When Bergson started to write, just before the turn of the century, two philosophies were currently prominent: absolute idealism (F. H. Bradley and Bernard Bosanquet), which derived largely from Kantian idealism and in some interpretations became finalism, and positivist materialism (voiced by Herbert Spencer).\(^{51}\) Bergson began as a positivist follower of Spencer, opposed to the German idealism of Kant's disciples, then, becoming dissatisfied with Spencer's methods,\(^{52}\) turned


\(^{50}\) Edman points out Bergson's indebtedness to "Plotinus... to the Byzosiac mysteries and, in the modern world, to Schopenhauer." Edman, *op. cit.*, pp. xvi-xvii. Neither should one overlook the ideas which obviously hark back to Heraclitus, and Bergson's own frequent reference to ideas he derived from Spinoza. Although he changed radically from his early adherence to his positivist teacher, Herbert Spencer, his detailed knowledge and use of scientific data shows Spencer's influence.

\(^{51}\) Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 83.

\(^{52}\) "I was quite conscious of the weak points in his *First Principles*. But these weaknesses seemed to me to be due to the author's insufficient preparation and his inability to grasp the significance of the 'latest ideas' of mechanics; I should have liked to take up this part of his work, complete and consolidate it, and I set to work on this task to the best of my ability. That was what led me to consider the idea of Time; and there a surprise awaited me." Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 10.
to a careful examination of the assumptions and limitations in both positivism and German idealism. In his first two books, *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*, he felt he had refuted both: "we have repudiated materialism... but neither do we accept idealism." The time was ripe for a philosophy which would attempt such a refutation; looking back now, we may be surprised that his early books seemed so revolutionary in thought. He himself remarked that the change of opinion has reflected upon his ideas: "If my views were generally judged to be paradoxical when they made their appearance, some of them are commonplace today; others bid fair to become so." Perhaps his most important contribution to philosophy is that he freed it from a mutually exclusive division into these two categories. Bergson offered a third way of looking at life, and thereby opened the way for twentieth century philosophers of many types.

Bergson's philosophy centers around the idea that reality is time, not time as a series of separate states, or minutes or seconds, but time as constant duration, a continual, ever-changing, unpredictable flux.

... real duration is what we have always called time, but time perceived as indivis-

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ible. That time implies succession I do not deny. But that succession is first presented to our consciousness, like the distinction of a 'before' and 'after' set side by side, is what I cannot admit. When we listen to a melody we have the purest impression of succession we could possibly have,—an impression as far removed as possible from that of simultaneity,—and yet it is the very continuity of the melody and the impossibility of breaking it up which make that impression upon us. If we cut it up into distinct notes, into so many 'befores' and 'afters', we are bringing spatial images into it and impregnating the succession with simultaneity: in space, and only in space, is there a clear-cut distinction of parts external to one another.55

This indivisible duration is the vital impetus, the spirit running through all life. It does not move in a single direction, a "progress"; rather it moves in all possible directions at once without goal, taking "directions without aiming at ends."56 However, it is resisted by the force of matter, which tends to stop movement, to crystallize the impetus in stationary forms. The materialist can never understand reality by studying matter; he can only learn more and more about the material world, the "deposit" which life has left along its path. Bergson does not disparage the importance of this sort of scientific study:

55Ibid., p. 176.
56Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 114.
... what is wanted is a difference in method between metaphysics and science: I do not acknowledge a difference in value between the two. Less modest in my claims for science than most scholars have been, I consider that a science founded on experience as the moderns understand it, can attain the essence of the real. No doubt it embraces no more than a part of reality; but some day it will reach the bottom of that part; in any case, it will approach it indefinitely. 57

Nevertheless, we will never understand duration by approaching it through science.

But we do not need to despair completely of understanding duration. Man of all natural things is closest to the spirit which created him. This impetus, this creative evolution, has reached in matter "many blind alleys beside the two or three highways; and of these highways themselves, only one, that which leads through the vertebrates up to man, has been wide enough to allow free passage to the full breath of life." 58 In animal life the impetus has produced instinct, in human life intelligence.

But intelligence, for Bergson, is not the all-powerful thing it is for many philosophers. The function of intelligence in humans, like that of instinct in animals, is to dir-

57 Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 49.
58 Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 111.
ect toward action, toward getting along in the material, spatial world. "Such is the primary and the most apparent operation of the perceiving mind: it marks out the divisions in the continuity of the extended, simply following the suggestions of our requirement and the needs of practical life." The mind, because by its very design it is directed toward action, naturally screens off distractions which would hinder action:

To live is, for the mind, essentially to concentrate itself on the action to be accomplished. To live is to be inserted in things by means of a mechanism which draws from consciousness all that is utilizable in action, all that can be acted on the stage, and darkens the greater part of the rest.

Not only does the intellect act in this manner upon the spatial world around it, but it also reduces the individual himself, his memory and mental processes, into fragments of the reality.

Consciousness, goaded by an insatiable desire to separate, substitutes the symbol for the reality, or perceives the reality only through the symbol. As the self thus refracted, and thereby broken

59 Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 278.
60 Bergson, Mind-Energy, p. 71.
to pieces, is much better adapted to the requirements of social life in general and language in particular, consciousness prefers it, and gradually loses sight of the fundamental self. 61

An orientation of the self toward the spatial world, then, is all we can normally expect of intelligence. Therefore, the idealist philosopher is almost as limited as the materialist, since he fails to understand the limitations of the intellect and the need for a different approach to reality. If he believes in the limitations of scientific reason, it is probably for the wrong reasons and without knowledge of what the method should be.

The impotence of speculative reason, as Kant has demonstrated it, is perhaps at bottom only the impotence of an intellect enslaved to certain necessities of bodily life, and concerned with a matter which man has had to disorganize for the satisfaction of his wants. Our knowledge of things would thus no longer be relative to the fundamental structure of our mind, but only to its superficial and acquired habits, to the contingent form which it derives from our bodily functions and from our lower needs. 62

Yet like the idealist, the Bergsonian believes the mind can get to some true sense of reality.

61 Bergson, Time and Free Will, p. 128.

62 Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 241.
In the living mobility of things the understanding is bent on marking real or virtual stations, it notes departures and arrivals; for this is all that concerns the thought of man in so far as it is simply human. It is more than human to grasp what is happening in the interval. But philosophy can only be an effort to transcend the human condition.63

And it is possible to achieve this goal which philosophy sets for itself. Although Bergson insists continually that intelligence is naturally forced, in order to direct action, into an analytic pattern, still "the truth is that our intelligence can follow the opposite method. It can place itself within the mobile reality, and adopt its ceaselessly changing direction; in short, can grasp it by means of that intellectual sympathy which we call intuition."64 Intuition, it is, which will be able to show us true reality, rather than intellectual reason. "The intuition we refer to then bears above all upon internal duration. It grasps a succession which is not juxtaposition, a growth from within, the uninterrupted prolongation of the past into a present which is already blending into the future."65 And although it is the mind which can bring us to intuition, "it is necessary to proceed by a

63Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 77.
64Ibid., p. 69.
65Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 35.
reversal of the usual work of the intellect." 66

It is this idea of intuition in Bergson which has been most frequently misinterpreted. Certainly it is difficult to "understand"; any non-intellectual and anti-materialistic philosophy is at a disadvantage, since it cannot be proved or even explained completely in logical terms. The mystic can never demonstrate the validity of his experience to the non-mystic; no one who has never had a mystic experience can be certain whether the mystic has accomplished "union" or whether he has merely reached unconsciousness by self-hypnosis. But a more general misunderstanding of Bergson's words, or rather an acceptance of part of his explanation without the complete idea of intuition, led to a popularization which made intuition something akin to inebriation. Perhaps some of the metaphors Bergson used made this possible; certainly an exhortation to "make the leap" into the running stream of real life 67 sounds like an invitation to romantic hedonism. The idea of turning away from reason appeals to a sort of Byronic impulse in adolescent development. But the people who used Bergson's theory of intuition as an excuse for discarding conventional rules of society, or as a justification

67 Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 212.
for lazy thinking had not read much of Bergson's own writing. He repeatedly insists that intuition is "extremely difficult," that "the mind has to do violence to itself, has to reverse the direction of the operation by which it habitually thinks," and that he is misunderstood if he seems to be saying otherwise:

I repudiate facility. I recommend a certain manner of thinking which courts difficulty; I value effort above everything. How could certain people have mistaken my meaning? To say nothing of the kind of person who would insist that my "Intuition" was instinct or feeling. Not one line of what I have written could lend itself to such an interpretation. And in everything I have written there is assurance to the contrary: my intuition is reflection. But because I called attention to the mobility at the base of things, it has been claimed that I encouraged a sort of relaxing of the mind.69

Not only is intuition very different from haphazard or uncontrolled thought, it is even more difficult than intense reason. "The habitual labor of thought is easy and can be prolonged at will. Intuition is arduous and cannot last."70

Why, then, should intelligence, so well designed to take care of man in the material world without the distractions of knowing anything of a truer reality, wish to force

68Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, p. 69.
69Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 103.
70Ibid., p. 39.
itself into this "frightful labor" simply to understand real duration: In Bergson's earlier books this question is more or less skirted with only a vague intimation that some people have a philosophical curiosity which must be satisfied. But in The Two Sources of Morality and Religion, where he identifies intuition with mystical experience (of which Christian mysticism is one very advanced form), Bergson states explicitly what he has implied elsewhere: if we understood real duration a new element would enter our lives. "Pleasure would be eclipsed by joy."71

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These, then, in their simplified and thereby inevitably distorted form, are the principal ideas which seem to run through all the main philosophical works of Bergson.

If, in the limited scope of this paper, the inquiry is focused upon those ideas in the work of Eliot which seem to correspond directly with ideas in the philosophy of Bergson, several questions immediately arise. In the first place, are these ideas really those of Bergson, or are they merely a development of thought that was circulating in the intellectual climate of the time? And if they are derived from

71Bergson, The Two Sources of Religion and Morality, p. 306.
Bergson, are they still the same ideas when they are placed in a new context? And since Eliot himself listened to Bergson's lectures at the Sorbonne in the winter of 1911, why should the writing of T. E. Hulme be included in a study of such a connection?

To give a brief answer, which must necessarily be expanded later, to each of these three questions, let us start with the third. Certainly Eliot could, either by direct contact with Bergson, or with his books, or even by a receptive reading of his disciples and admirers, have come across any of his ideas which might correspond to those of the French philosopher. The reason for the inclusion of a study of Hulme is that he, probably more than any one in the decade before the first world war, was the analyser of the needs of poetry and that what he demanded and predicted has come about, partly through the efforts of Eliot and a few other poets. It seems possible to show, as we shall attempt to do later, that those elements which Eliot accepts from Bergson are the same as those which Hulme accepted, only expanded, revised and carried further; therefore, by tracing them back through Hulme it may be possible to show more clearly that the ideas were selected from one context and used in a different con-

text to meet a different need or suit a different system of thought, and also, perhaps, to offer an explanation for some of the statements and methods in Eliot which have confused critics.

This last sentence explains in some measure what our answer must be to the second question, are the ideas still the same when placed in a different context? It seems evident that the ideas have been extracted as units, revised slightly in some cases, but not fundamentally changed in transit. Whether the new context changes the ideas themselves is an important question, and one which we shall try to answer in each individual instance.

The question of whether Eliot really adopted these ideas from Bergson, or whether he might have found them or developed them independently is one we cannot expect to answer conclusively. The main purpose of this paper, therefore, is to point out direct influences wherever possible, and, more important, to try to distinguish similar ideas and to show the place of these ideas in each of the three systems of thought. This purpose limits the scope of the paper rather severely, since the discussion will be confined to those points which appear in the writings of all three men. A good many critics have dealt with the relationships of Bergson and Hulme, or of Hulme and Eliot separately; our subject must be
narrower than these, since the main elements mentioned by these critics are those which cannot be discovered in all three writers. A few critics have discussed the relationship of all three in a manner which does not seem to us to bring out the real points of contact.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF CRITICISM

Critical articles which touch upon the relationships of the writers discussed in this paper fall in general into two classes, (1) those which deal with the influences of Bergson on Hulme, or of Hulme on Eliot, separately, and (2) those which attempt to trace, as this paper does, a train of influence or connection through all three men. There seems to be no critical work of any dimension which deals with the influence of Bergson on Eliot without taking into consideration the contributions of Hulme. Of these two categories of critical articles, the first is far larger than the second.

The reason for this division of criticism is obvious: Hulme directly discusses Bergson's philosophy in Speculations, and Eliot explicitly cites words from Hulme in several essays. Eliot mentions Bergson directly only rarely, once in comparing his style with that of F. H. Bradley\(^1\) and once in discussing how his disciples, like those of Masterlinck and Claudel, err in calling their master's philosophy a "work of art".\(^2\) There are several other places where he might be referring to Berg-

\(^1\)Eliot, For Lancelot Andrews, p. 72.
son obliquely. In his essay on Bradley he says, "If Bradley's philosophy is today a little out of fashion, we must remark that what has superseded it, what is now in favor, is, for the most part, crude and raw and provincial (though infinitely more technical and scientific) and must perish in its turn." However, the reference might just as well be to pragmatism or modern positivism as to Bergson's work. H. H. Waggoner identifies with Bergson the "Frenchman" mentioned in The Rock and refers us to the following monologue by a workman about an experience with a parson:

. . . blewed if I didn't knock the Frenchman off the scaffoldin' and took a chip off the old stone saint underneath. Showed 'im the place. 'But was 'e 'urt?' asked the old boy. 'Oh, no,' says I, 'just a little chip it was; that there Sussex marble is a 'ard stone.' 'No,' he says, 'I mean the Frenchman.' . . . Fancy anyone not knowin' that a Frenchman's a pointin' tool!

It is certainly conceivable that Eliot attached a symbolic as well as a literal meaning to "the Frenchman", but there seems to be no further evidence—and Waggoner gives us none—to indicate that it is Bergson rather than Pascal (who as a follower of the Jansenius heresy may have chipped "the old stone saint") or Sorel or even Maritain, any of whom might

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be considered "pointing tools" in the building of the arches of the church. Some passages in the *Four Quartets* echo Bergson's philosophy, a parallel we shall examine in greater detail in Chapter V of this paper, but aside from this there is little explicit evidence in Eliot's writings for critics to use in tracing an influence to Bergson without the inclusion of Hulme.

Hulme's report of his indebtedness to Bergson, on the other hand, makes up such a large part of his writings that it is unnecessary for critics to review it further, except in so far as it may affect Hulme's thought on other subjects. Micheal Roberts has made a competent study and a provocative analysis of this debt, but he does not draw any direct line from this relationship to Hulme's influence on modern poetry.

Eliot's interest in Hulme has been the subject for most critical articles dealing with any of the connections of the three men. Eliot himself mentions Hulme at least three times, in "The Function of Criticism," where he briefly refers to Hulme's poems, in his essay on "Baudelaire" in

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7Roberts, *op. cit.*, pp. 78-93.

which he refers to the emphasis Hulme places upon Original Sin\(^9\) and quotes a paragraph from *Speculations*\(^{10}\) and in "Second Thoughts on Humanism", where he points out the peculiar meaning of "humanism" for Hulme, quotes from *Speculations*, and aligns himself with Hulme's religious attitude:

I agree with what Hulme says; and I am afraid that many modern Humanists are explicitly or implicitly committed to the view which Hulme denounces; and that they are, in consequence, men of the Renaissance rather than men of our own time. For instance, Hulme gives as one characteristic of the Humanist (in his sense) the 'refusal to believe any longer in the radical imperfection of either Man or Nature.' I cannot help feeling that Mr. Forster and even Mr. Babbitt are nearer to the view of Rousseau than they are to the religious view. For it is not enough to chastise the romantic visions of perfectibility, as they do; the modern humanistic view implies that man is either perfectible, or capable of indefinite improvement, because from that point of view the only difference is a difference of degree—so that there is always hope of a higher degree. It is to the immense credit of Hulme that he found out for himself that there is an absolute to which man can never attain.\(^{11}\)

The two more complete and important references to Hulme by

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\(^{9}\)This section quoted by Eliot summarizes the "religious attitude" which is often considered as Hulme's main contribution to Eliot. Man "is endowed with Original Sin. While he can occasionally accomplish acts which partake of perfection, he can never himself be perfect. . . A man is essentially bad, he can only accomplish anything of value by discipline—ethical and political. Order is thus not merely negative, but creative and liberating. Institutions are necessary." Hulme, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

\(^{10}\)Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 345.

\(^{11}\)Ibid., p. 401.
Eliot, both cited here, are specifically concerned with the nature of his religious ideas, a portion of Hulme's writings which, separated from the rest of his work, cannot be connected to Bergson's philosophy and so is irrelevant to our study. 12

12 Although many critical articles touch upon the relationships of Bergson, Hulme and Eliot, most are irrelevant. Harry Campbell mentions Hulme in attempting to show the superior quality and value of Eliot's religious essays (Harry M. Campbell, "An Examination of Modern Critics--T. S. Eliot," Rocky Mountain Review, VIII Summer, 1944, p. 137); Charles Glicksberg mentions Hulme in attempting to show the decline and lack of value in Eliot's writing in and since the religious essays (Charles J. Glicksberg, "T. S. Eliot as a Critic," The Arizona Quarterly, IV Autumn, 1948, p. 234). D. S. Savage tries to point out fallacies in Eliot's reasoning on the question of religion by quoting and analyzing at some length Hulme's ideas on the subject (D. S. Savage, "The Orthodoxy of T. S. Eliot," reprinted in Unger, op. cit., p. 215) and Stephen Spender lists him with Dante, Baudelaire, Pound and the Elizabethans as one of the most important influences on Eliot's poetry and prose (Stephen Spender, "T. S. Eliot in his Criticism," reprinted in Unger, op. cit., pp. 276-277).

Alan Tate, in a discussion of the philosophic function of poetry, says that Hulme by "looking for the arbitrarily defined absolute" showed that he "apparently did not understand the created absolute of poetry" and that "Mr. Eliot has implied a good deal of valuable correction in several of his essays." (Alan Tate, "Poetry and the Absolute," Sewanee Review, XXXV Jan. 1927, pp. 50-51.) By dealing with the function of poetry, Tate comes closer to our particular subject, but because he is discussing the men as their ideas apply to his peculiar critical theories, his analysis is somewhat removed from the present discussion. A much more complete and pertinent study of Eliot and Hulme is that of David Daiches, in Poetry and the Modern World. Daiches, while he questions the extent of the direct influence of Hulme on Eliot, adds, "The important point, however, is not the degree to which Eliot's views were more influenced by Hulme, but the nature of the beliefs they shared." (David Daiches, Poetry and the Modern World, p. 17.) Although Daiches deals at some length with the religious connection and disparages the work of Eliot which shows this influence (Ibid., p. 115), he also is concerned with the influence of Hulme's ideas on the imagery and style of Eliot's poetry:
Two critics who have traced a pattern of thought through all three men, Bergson, Eliot and Hulme, are H. H. Waggoner and J. F. Hendry. Since these articles tackle the

In so far as Hulme was an Imagist and provided the movement with a philosophy, and as Eliot was an Imagist in some of his early poems (such as "Preludes" and "Landscapes") imagism has affinities with the general intellectual position of both of these writers. But what we might call the philosophical aspects of imagism were ignored by the Imagists proper who were concerned simply with producing hard, clear verse and avoiding sloppiness. But Eliot saw the movement as Hulme did, rather than as H. D. or John Gould Fletcher did, and as a result he expanded and deepened the movement until it became something very different. (Ibid., p. 99).

While Daiches presents an acute statement of this aspect of their relationship, he makes no attempt to link it with the philosophy of Bergson, a connection which in Chapters III and IV we shall try to show is justified and illuminating.

Similarly, both F. O. Matthiessen, whose analysis of Eliot's work has been considered until recently the most complete (Matthiessen, op. cit.), and Elizabeth Drew, whose recent work at least vies with Matthiessen's in completeness (Drew, op. cit.), discuss Hulme at some length but make almost no mention of Bergson.

Two critics who have written about Hulme, but have simply traced the influence of Bergson on Hulme and of Hulme on Eliot, separately within the article, without linking the three in any consecutive pattern, are W. E. Collin and Dixon Wedder. Collin slights Bergson of the trio. He credits much in recent poetry to Hulme's religious attitude. "He made possible a return to religious poetry in England. Mr. T. S. Eliot is his disciple." (Collin, op. cit., p. 335). He also points out how Hulme's idea of poetic imagery has affected Eliot and other modern poets: "We have only to look a little ahead to know that Hulme's words have come true; to the Sitwells and T. S. Eliot with their Elizabethan and Augustan pretensions, their disregard for conventional poetic diction, their pranks with metaphors, images and fanciful mosaics, the bright, geometric lines and shrill steely noises of their poetry." (Ibid., p. 337). But although Collin quotes Bergson's letter which helped Hulme to be readmitted to Cambridge
same problem as this paper, it might be well to examine their arguments in detail.

Besides our trio, Waggoner would list F. H. Bradley, English Idealist philosopher who slightly precedes Bergson in date. His purpose is to show a line of thought which led up to Eliot:

Bradley and Bergson are enough—if we add another, T. E. Hulme—to enable us to see Eliot's position in relation to the philosophic currents of the twentieth century. From from Bradley to Bergson to Hulme to Eliot one proceeds by a series of relatively short, and except between Bergson and Hulme, easy steps.13

Waggoner makes an interesting study in the changes from one man to another, but his fallacy, or at least his difference from our point of view, lies in his lack of differentiation

(See Chapter I, p.10) he does not go further in a study of Hulme's debt to the French philosopher. Dixon Wecter, on the other hand, traces Hulme's sources carefully, including Bergson, but doesn't mention Eliot except in connection with the religious element (Wecter, op. cit., p. 152). He does, however, make a thorough study of the derivations of Hulme's ideas, including among those from Bergson some ideas which concern art, and adds, "Yet he Hulme did much to sow these borrowed ideas upon English soil, and specially to render them attractive to the world of art and aesthetics." (Ibid., p. 143.)

among the "short easy steps": he notices no difference between "steps" which are transfers of ideas that are essentially the same with little or no modification, and "steps" which are reactions of one philosophy from another. He unknowingly falls into a sort of Hegelian reconciliation of opposites. In the first place, Waggoner seems to ignore the fact that Bergson was offering a philosophy essentially to counteract that of Bradley as much as that of the materialists. To say that they are in a direct line because they both feel that scientific knowledge is an "abstraction" of reality is to ignore the fact that Bergson expects from the intellect less than Bradley does and that Bergson's central idea of time is a radical change from Bradley. Eliot, in comparing Bergson and Bradley, says that they resemble each other in style, but in nothing else. 14

The "step" from Bergson to Hulme, Waggoner says, is not as easy as the others. Perhaps the difficulty lies in the fact that he traces the link in a portion of the philosophy where it seems to us it could hardly lie. Certainly he is stating a partial or strained truth when he says, "The real debt which Hulme owed to Bergson was not to the latter's metaphysics but to the fact of his having 'disproved' mater-

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ialism. For Hulme, Bergson was a steppingstone to absolutism.  

He later explains,

He did not find in Bradley any ground for such a belief in absolutist religion, but in Bergson's dualism between matter and life he found much that could be read as demanding, in one who would carry the thinking through to the end, a recognition of an absolute dichotomy between the subject-matter of the physical sciences and that of ethics. The vital impulses, Bergson said, 'use' physics and chemistry. . . . The scientific, analytical intellect falsifies, while intuition (faith?) Waggoner's addition admits us to a knowledge of reality.  

It is perhaps true that Hulme found in Bergson's intuition a belief in a mystic experience that seemed to lead to absolutist religion. The step is a possible one, but it seems hardly likely that Hulme's religious attitude can be credited solely, or even largely, to Bergson when Hulme himself credited his belief in religion largely to Pascal. Waggoner ignores Hulme's interest in Pascal again when he says:

The dualism which Bergson had observed to exist between matter and life, Hulme expanded into a pluralism: there are, he asserted, three separate realms of reality, or better, three distinct realities, the inorganic world, the organic world, and the world of ethical and religious values. Of these three realities he frequently repeated, 'there must be an absolute division between each of the three regions, a kind of chasm. . . . There was a motive behind this modification of

16 Ibid., p. 124.
Bergson's philosophy... The religious dogmas are secured from danger of criticism by a conflict with science. The motive for Hulme's change in Bergsonianism is clear enough.17

The three orders of reality Hulme borrowed from Pascal, although Waggoner writes as if he concocted them to suit his own purposes. Hulme acknowledged the debt, saying that "everything he wrote was to be regarded as a prolegomenon to the reading of Pascal." 18

Waggoner considers Hulme's influence on Eliot to lie solely in the religious attitude, and does not mention the ideas which we feel can more validly be traced from Bergson through Hulme to Eliot.

Probably a more thought-provoking work which discusses ideas as they appear in the writings of all three men—Bergson, Hulme, Eliot—is J. F. Hendry's article, "Hulme as Horatio." 19 It is especially interesting because it centers around the seldom-discussed fragments printed at the end of Speculations under the title, "Cinders." It is the emphasis upon this special portion, however, which seems to lead to inconsistencies and invalid conclusions.

Hendry sets as the text for his discussion a quotation

18 Roberts, op. cit., p. 12.
from Hulme: "The absolute is to be described not as perfect, but if existent as essentially imperfect, chaotic, and cinder-like." Standing alone, as it does in "Hulme as Horatio", this looks like a statement which would contradict both Hulme's insistence upon a religious point of view and also his belief, like Bergson's, in an unbroken flow of reality. The difficulty, of course, lies in the use of the word "absolute", and we cannot be sure that any amount of conjecture will make its meaning in the context completely clear, since the section is only a group of fragmentary notes, with none of the expansion and explanation necessary to make them thoroughly understandable. However, by noting what comes before and after this single sentence, we can see that Hendry's extraction of it from context has somewhat altered its meaning. Hulme follows the sentence with a parenthesis, "(Even this view is not ultimate, but merely designed to satisfy temporary human analogies and wants.)" and in the same fragment he says, "World is indescribable, that is, not reducible to counters;
and particularly it is impossible to include it all under one
large counter such as "God" or "Truth" and the other verbalisms, or the disease of the symbolic language."\(^{22}\) And on
the previous page he says, "The cosmos is only organized in
parts; the rest is cinders."\(^{23}\) By these passages the meaning
of the fragment Hendry quotes seems altered; surely the notion that "world is indescribable" and the "disease of symbolic
language" sound like the idea in Bergson of the limitations
of intellect and language, which is necessarily the tool of
intellect.\(^{24}\) The description of the cosmos as organized only
in parts does not necessarily conflict with Bergson's ideas;
matter, for Bergson, is a disorganization of the single vital
impetus. In another place Hulme says that the "objective
world" is a "chaos, a cinder-heap."\(^{25}\) By attributing this
quality particularly to the objective world, he seems to
leave room for the non-objective world of Bergson's flux,
which is not cindery.

The significance Hendry ascribes to his opening quo-
tation might, then, be proved unsound by quotation of other

\(^{22}\) Hulme, op. cit., p. 221.
\(^{23}\) Ibid., p. 220.
\(^{24}\) See Chapter III.
\(^{25}\) Hulme, op. cit., p. 225.
fragments using the same image which seem to indicate a different meaning of the whole. On the other hand, we could argue that Hulme is not a systematic thinker, and since these fragments make up only a small part of his total writings, perhaps we could be justified in disregarding them as an inconsistent but minor portion. At least, if their meaning is not clear, we are as justified in quoting portions which fit in with our point of view as Hendry is in finding parts which seem to mean the opposite.

Michael Roberts meets this problem by a complex argument which tries to reconcile what he thinks will be considered a contradiction between the religious element and the Bergsonianism introduced by the "Cinders". But Roberts starts by simply stating that the Cinders are the Bergsonian element in Hulme's thought, then going to great pains to show how this contradiction does not vitiate his whole philosophy. It seems to us justifiable, if one can establish the Cinders as Bergsonian, to follow Waggoner's technique, to show that the Bergsonian idea of life as constant change is not at all the same as an idea of life as a disorganized mass of fragments; true duration is for Bergson a single and

26 Roberts, op. cit., pp. 135-152.
27 Ibid., p. 134.
continuous whole. And one has only to read The Two Sources of Morality and Religion to see that intuition of duration is an experience not opposed and perhaps identical to religion. The greater problem is in proving the Cinders Bergsonian, a job which Roberts seems to slight.

At any rate, Hendry's idea and use of the Cinder image may be questioned. And certainly some of the further developments in his article are even more doubtful. "The first thing to note," he continues, "is that Hulme's vision of reality is closely akin to T. S. Eliot's image of 'The Waste Land.' The common quality seems to be their belief that reality is brittle, possibly even breaking up, and more than that, their interpretation of this 'reality' in terms which are always wholly material and inorganic, 'broken glass in a dry cellar.'" Just why "reality" is enclosed in quotation marks the third time it is used is not apparent, but the fact that it is not so designated the first two times seems to indicate that while Hendry may not agree that this is reality which is breaking up, Eliot and Hulme are using the word seriously. It seems that there is an unjustified application of what Eliot is writing about one society at one particular time to reality in general. He does not claim, and few if any critics have claimed, that The Waste Land is concerned with the.

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breakup of all reality.

Hendry then goes on to include Bergson in his discussion. He says that Bergson regarded "the advantage of imagery as being 'in the concrete'" and quotes him further: "By choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would be driven away by its rivals." Here again, Hendry says, is the "cindery vision peculiar to Hulme and Eliot." Since it is our intention to discuss Bergson's ideas of imagery in a later chapter, we will not try to analyze this last quotation at length. It is important to point out, however, that Bergson frequently, and probably here again, uses the word "concrete" to refer to duration, the real idea of time available to intuition, a very different meaning of "concrete" from that which might correspond to cinders.

Hendry continues by saying that "the weakness of these attitudes (presumably the attitudes of Bergson and Hulme) is their failure to establish any kind of absolute, though such was Bergson's aim and Hulme's desire." He has already noted that the "core" of Hulme's philosophy was "Bergson's

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29Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, quoted by Hendry, op. cit., p. 137.
30Hendry, op. cit., p. 137.
31Loc. cit.
conception of intuition." He goes on to quote Bergson, "This intuition attains the absolute." How, then, since they believe in the efficacy of intuition, have they failed to establish an absolute?

Next, Hendry accuses Hulme and Eliot of materialist sympathies.

While Hulme rejects the nineteenth-century concept of the inevitability of progress, he still retains the nineteenth-century concept of the intrinsic value of the material world, and his cinder-imagery reveals this clearly. . .. Hulme is therefore, unknown perhaps to himself, the philosopher of the materialistic world in decline as Eliot was its poet. 34

If one has already connected the cinder image with Bergson, as Hendry has, it is almost contradictory to say that it reveals a concept of the intrinsic value of the material world. Even without this linkage, since Hendry gives no further explanation, it is not clear how the cinder imagery proves a belief in materialism.

Several other points in the article also seem doubtful. With no explanation, Hendry deduces from Hulme's idea of a divinity unattainable by man yet ruling man the surpris-

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32Ibid., p. 136.
33Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, quoted in Hendry, op. cit., p. 137.
34Hendry, op. cit., p. 138.
ing conclusion that Hulme believed in the Divine Right of
Kings.\textsuperscript{35} True, Hulme distrusted the ability of man, afflic-
ted with Original Sin, to govern himself adequately, but kings
as well as commoners were born with Original Sin. When he
says about Hulme's religious category of reality that "there
are no grounds whatever for declaring it absolute" and that
it is based on fear alone,\textsuperscript{36} he is ignoring the fact that
Hulme's three categories were taken from Pascal and a long
tradition whose grounds had been examined again and again.
He seems to be falling into the fallacy of taking the part
for the whole when he connects the state of breakup of the
Renaissance humanistic attitude, a state which Hulme hoped
would come about, with the "helot-states of the worst type,"
which existed before the Renaissance and predicts that "ulti-
mately the break-up of humanism must result in. . . a return
to slavery."\textsuperscript{37}

But these last points do not apply directly to the
relationship of Bergson, Hulme and Eliot. Suffice it to say
that we believe Hendry, no more than the other critics we
have examined, has presented a completely accurate or compre-
hensive picture of that relationship. In later chapters we

\textsuperscript{35}\textit{i}b\textit{id.}, p. 140.
\textsuperscript{36}\textit{i}b\textit{id.}, p. 143.
\textsuperscript{37}\textit{i}b\textit{id.}, p. 145.
hope to present material which will automatically discredit
his explanation of the ideas of images of the three men; we
shall try to show that he had little conception of their ideas
of syntax, and we shall attempt to prove that the connection
of Bergson's ideas of duration with Eliot's ideas of tradition,
a subject he did not touch upon, is important to an understand-
ing of their relationship.
CHAPTER III

THE POETIC IMAGE

Hulme's discussion of the use of language and image appears mainly in his section of Speculations concerned with the philosophy of Bergson, and deals largely with Bergson's theories on this subject. It was from these ideas of Bergson that Hulme developed his interest in Imagism, and enunciated the theories which the Imagistic poets adopted as their unofficial credo. And the Imagist poets and other poet friends of Hulme, among them Pound, influenced the development of Eliot's peculiarities of poetic image. But the fact that the influence can be traced directly is of lesser importance in this paper; even if the men had been entirely unknown to one another, their similarity of idea and treatment is interesting.

We have seen that Bergson's philosophy is based mainly upon a dualism: life, time, the creative impetus, the elan vital, duration and becoming—all names for the real part of life—are opposed to the mechanical part—matter, fixity, the spatial, the fragmentary, the discontinuous. This duality, which only man of all living forms has the ability to at least partially perceive, places man in an odd position; he is constantly held by his need for action to the unreal, spatial and material in life, while real life, pure becoming or dura-
tion, is escaping his attention.

Man must cope with matter by action, and to act he must look at life as it is falsely represented by matter, as spatial and discontinuous, made up of series of events rather than as a single, undifferentiated continuing of life. And the instrument which man must use to explain his world to him sufficiently to make action possible, and to direct his action, is his intellect. This is a necessary function for life, but it is a function limited to only one philosophically unimportant part of life; "of the discontinuous alone does the intellect form a clear idea."¹

Yet the vital impetus, manifested in man further than in any other form of living thing, has in him developed language, by which community of action is made possible on the level of the intellect, a different mode of communication from the signs of insect communities which must be part of instinct. Man has been able to depart partially from instinct, which is never self-conscious, and develop intellect.² Language, then, has the same practical purpose as intellect; yet language has the tendency to go beyond practicality:

¹Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 170.
²Ibid., pp. 175-176.
Now what is the original function of language? It is to establish a communication with a view to cooperation. Language transmits orders or warnings. It prescribes or describes. . . . The things that language describes have been cut out of reality by human perception in view of human work to be done. . . . Such are the origins of the word and the idea. Both of them have doubtless evolved. They are no longer as blatantly utilitarian. Nevertheless, they do remain utilitarian. Social thought is unable not to keep its original structure. Is it intellect or intuition: I am quite content to have intuition let its light filter in to it: there is no thought without "esprit de finesse", and the "esprit de finesse" is the reflection of the intuition in the intellect.3

Language, the instrument of the intellect, has both offered it the best means of escape from its natural limitations, and refuted that offer; it has opened up a field whereby intellect could surpass the mere contemplation of things and approach the field of intuition, the only means by which real duration can be apprehended; yet language, simply by being made up of words, has changed the moving life about which it can talk into mere words, things for the intellect to move about, and so denies its own chance of apprehending life. That is:

Language itself, which has enabled it (the intellect) to extend its field of operations, is made to designate things, and nought but things: it is only because the word is mo-

3Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 94.
bile, because it flies from one thing to another, that the intellect was sure to take it, sooner or later, on the wing, while it was not settled on anything, and apply it to an object which is not a thing and which, concealed till then, awaited the coming of the word to pass from darkness to light. But the word, by covering up this object, again converts it into a thing.⁴

Language thus not only denies its own great opportunity of seizing real life; it can even come between man and reality and destroy the brief intuition of reality:

This influence of language on sensation is deeper than is usually thought. Not only does language make us believe in the unchangeableness of our sensations, but it will sometimes deceive us as to the nature of the sensation felt. Thus, when I partake of a dish that is supposed to be exquisite, the name which it bears, suggestive of the approval given to it, comes between my sensation and my consciousness; I may believe that the flavour pleases me when a slight effort of attention would prove the contrary. In short, the word with well-defined outlines, the rough and ready word, which stores up the stable, common and consequently impersonal element in the impressions of mankind, overwhelms or at least covers over the delicate and fugitive impressions of our individual consciousness. To maintain the struggle on equal terms, the latter ought to express themselves in precise words; but these words, as soon as they were formed, would turn against the sensation which gave them birth, and, invented to show that the sensation is unstable, they would impose on it their own stability.⁵

⁴Bergson, Creative Evolution, p. 176.

⁵Bergson, Time and Free Will, pp. 131-132.
The words do impose their stability, but there is that single hope that "the precise word" may express, for the man who can participate in intuition, the exact bit of reality, and evoke in another the sensation, a brief experience of real duration. But this is only possible for the person who is specially inclined to go beyond the needs of everyday life, for those who can to some degree at least, understand intuition, in short, for the artist:

Now and then, by a lucky accident, men arise whose senses or whose consciousness are less adherent to life. Nature has forgotten to attach their faculty of perceiving to their faculty of acting. When they look at a thing, they see it for itself, and not for themselves. They do not perceive simply with a view to action; they perceive in order to perceive—for nothing, for the pleasure of doing so. In regard to a certain aspect of their nature, whether it be their consciousness or one of their senses, they are born detached; and according to whether this detachment is that of a certain particular sense, or of consciousness, they are painters or sculptors, musicians or poets. It is therefore a much more direct vision of reality that we find in the different arts; and it is because the artist is less intent on utilizing his perception that he perceives a greater number of things.  

Even for the artist, however, the experience is not the same as the translating of the experience; a complete translation is impossible:

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Thus each of us has his own way of loving and hating; and this love or this hatred reflects his whole personality. Language, however, denotes these states by the same words in every case: so that it has been able to fix only the objective and impersonal aspect of love, hate, and the thousand emotions which stir the soul. We estimate the talent of a novelist by the power with which he lifts out of the common domain, to which language had thus brought them down, feelings and ideas which he strives to restore, by adding detail to detail, their original and living individuality. But just as we go on inserting points between two positions of a moving body without ever filling up the space traversed, in the same way, by the mere fact that we associate states with states and that these states are set side by side instead of permeating one another, we fail to translate completely what our soul experiences: there is no common measure between mind and language.  

But the nearest to real communication of intuition from one human to another is the experience of art, and in literary fields, the poet is most capable of communication. There is a common misconception that abstract language, particularly the language of science, is accurate and exact. This, Bergson says, is an illusion and "besides the illusion there is also a very serious danger. For the concept generalizes at the same time as it abstracts. The concept can only symbolize a particular property by making it common to an infinity of things. It therefore always more or less deforms the proper-

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ty by the extension it gives to it."\(^8\) Contrary to popular belief, scientific language, using the abstract concept and word, is further from reality than poetic language, which employs imagery as its chief tool.

Let us not be duped by appearances: there are cases in which it is imagery in language which knowingly expresses the literal meaning, and abstract language which unconsciously expresses itself figuratively. The moment we reach the spiritual world, the image, if it merely seeks to suggest, may give us the direct vision, while the abstract to express, most frequently leaves us in a metaphor.\(^9\)

Also, if even poetic language cannot communicate the complete experience of intuition, "the image has at least this advantage, that it keeps us in the concrete."\(^10\)

In explaining this process of the artist, by which he enters into real duration as far as possible, and from this experience tries to portray in words the exact nature of what he has known, Bergson uses a metaphor of a curve, which is important to us because Hulme later takes it up as an important part of his theory;

... when we have placed ourselves at what we have called the turn of experience, when we have profited by the faint light which, illuminating the passage from the immediate

\(^8\)Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, p. 19.

\(^9\)Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 49.

\(^10\)Bergson, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, pp. 16-17.
to the useful, marks the dawn of our human experience, there still remains to be reconstituted, with the infinitely small elements which we thus perceive of the real curve, the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them.

In another metaphor he emphasizes the tension required in order to get the images exact, without slipping into the far easier pattern of conventional wordings which fail to convey the experience:

It is just as though we had to stretch a piece of Indiarubber in different directions at the same time in order to bring it to the geometrical form of a particular polygon. It shrinks at some points, according as it is lengthened at others. We have to begin over and over again, each time fixing the partial result obtained; we may even have during the operation to modify the form first assigned to the polygon. So it is with the effort of invention, whether it takes seconds or whether it require years.

This "effort of invention", this continual struggle to get something down, to find the precise word, the exact image, is an aspect of creative activity which Bergson never lets us forget. He never wants us to confuse his concept of art with that which reports it as a sudden inspiration and effort-less outpouring of the soul:

Thought which is only thought, the work of art which is only conceived, the poem which

\[12\] Bergson, Mind-Energy, p. 221.
is no more than a dream, as yet cost nothing in toil; it is the material realization of the poem in words, of the artistic conception in statue or picture, which demands effort. The effort is toilsome, but also it is precious, more precious even than the work which it produces, because, thanks to it, one has drawn out from the self more than it had already, we are raised above ourselves.¹³

Thus, the process of creating art is for the artist a way to a fuller life; so also, Bergson believes that the artist can reveal experiences to men who would otherwise be blind to them.

What is the aim of art if not to show us, in nature and in the mind, outside of us and within us, things which did not explicitly strike our senses and our consciousness? The poet and the novelist who express a mood certainly do not create it out of nothing; they would not be understood by us if we did not observe within ourselves, up to a certain point, what they say about others. As they speak, shades of emotion and thought appear to us which might long since have been brought out in us but which remained invisible; just like the photographic image which has not yet plunged into the bath where it will be revealed. The poet is this revealing agent.¹⁴

The creative artist, Hulme explains in words much like Bergson's, is the one who is not satisfied with the forms readily apparent to the intellect, but must try to formulate, painfully and difficultly to be sure, new ways of speech (or

¹³Ibid., pp. 28-29.
¹⁴Bergson, The Creative Mind, p. 159.)
music or painting) which will bring the true reality close again, until that way of speech becomes again stereotyped into the meaningless counters of ordinary thought and language. That is:

to use the metaphor which one is by now so familiar with—the stream of inner life, and the definite crystallised shapes on the surface—the big artist, the creative artist, the innovator, leaves the level where things are crystallised out into these definite shapes, and, diving down into the inner flux, comes back with a new shape which he endeavors to fix. He cannot be said to have created it, but to have discovered it, because when he has definitely expressed it we recognise it as true.15

But by the very effort of "fixing" a shape in language, the artist condemns that particular combination of words to a continual, unchangeable position, to a place in the formal pattern of intellect from which they cannot again escape to express a different subtlety or sensation of reality. A way of saying something that was precise, and revealed exactly a perception of the inner flux, has, then, two possibilities: it may be used in the same context only, in which case it will keep, as great poetry keeps, its freshness, or it may be taken up again to refer to something slightly different, thereby losing its vital connection with reality and becoming

15 Hulme, op. cit., p. 149.
a meaningless form.

Metaphors soon run their course and die. But it is necessary to remember that when they were first used by the poets who created them they were used for the purpose of conveying over a vividly felt actual sensation. Nothing could be more dead now than the conventional expressions of love poetry, the arrow which pierces the heart and the rest of it, but originally they were used as conveying over the reality of the sensation experienced.16

In Hulme's "Notes on Language and Style," published in an appendix to Robert's biography, we find the cryptic phrases which seem to refer to exactly the same idea: "Poetry always the advance guard in language. The progress of language is the absorption of new analogies. (Scout, so nearest to flux and real basic condition of life)."17

The artist, then, is the man who can use language, or the materials of his particular art, to convey something of the reality of life which is eluding us in our constant humdrum pattern of thinking. But first he must be the person who can escape from the ordinary stereotypes of intellect, which are designed only to direct men's action. Here Hulme repeats in almost exact wording18 Bergson's idea of the artist

16Ibid., p. 151.
17Hulme, "Notes on Language and Form", printed in Roberts, op. cit., p. 277.
18This passage appeared in The Creative Mind, a col-
being born "detached", and so being more free than other men from the shackles of action.\textsuperscript{19} That Hulme's ideas extended to visual and plastic arts is evident from his defense of Jacob Epstein's sculpture in a letter to the press:

They (the critics) cannot understand that the genius and sincerity of an artist lies in extracting afresh, from outside reality, a new means of expression. It seems curious that the people who abominate cliches and know that Nature, as it were, presses in on the poet to be used as metaphor, cannot understand that an artist who has something to say will continually 'extract' from reality new methods of expression, and that these being personally felt will inevitably lack prettiness and will differ from traditional cliches.\textsuperscript{20}

But no matter what the medium, there is a need for exactness, a strict discipline, an intense and difficult honesty of expression which requires a constant tension, so that the perception will not slip into an ordinary stereotype of intellect. Hulme expresses this idea in his metaphor of the curve, which, he warns us, must not be taken too literally:

Suppose that the various kinds of emotions and other things which one wants to represent are represented by various curved lines.

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\textsuperscript{19}Hulme, Speculations, p. 156. See also Footnote 6, Chapter III.

\textsuperscript{20}Hulme, "Mr. Epstein and the Critics," reprinted in Epstein, op. cit., p. 274.
There are in reality an infinite number of these curves all differing slightly from each other. But language does not and could not take account of all these curves. What it does do is to provide you with a certain number of standard types by which you can roughly indicate the different classes into which the curves fall. It is something like the wooden curves which architects employ. . . by suitable combinations of which they can draw approximately any curve they want, but only approximately. So with ordinary language. . . . Suppose that in order to draw a certain individual curve which we perceive, you are given a piece of bent steel spring which has a natural curvature of its own. To make that fit the curve you want you will have to press it to that curve along the whole of its length with all your fingers. If you are unable to keep up this pressure and at one end slacken the pressure, then at that end you will not get the curve you were trying to draw, but the rounded-off curve of the spring itself.21

Since language in its ordinary form is the instrument of the intellect, and is able to express only "the lowest common denominator of the emotions of one kind,"22 it follows that most people actually do not think things as they are, but "see only stock types which are embodied in language."23 Therefore, the need for poetry is not only the need for expression, but for a language which will awaken thought to the "individuality and freshness of things."24

21 Hulme, Speculations, p. 159.
22 Ibid., p. 166.
23 Loc. cit.
24 Ibid., p. 163.
Hulme sums up Bergson's definition of the impetus of the artist, and accepts the definition for his own, as "a passionate desire for accuracy" and the aesthetic emotion as "the excitement which is generated by direct communication." It seems to be exactly this effort at direct communication which Eliot is describing when he says that "the poet does not aim to excite—that is not even a test of his success—but to set something down."26

Eliot parallels Hulme's description of the function and method of poetry in many different places, sometimes with a new vocabulary.27 His "objective correlative", a term

25Ibid., pp. 162-163.


27The problem of imagery in Eliot is complicated by the fact that much of his poetry is symbolistic. We take the definition used by Brooks and Warren: "Imagery: The representation in poetry of any sense experience is called imagery... But frequently the poet does not use imagery merely in an obviously descriptive fashion; the poet characteristically makes his statements and conveys his ideas through comparisons, that is, through what is called figurative language—metaphor... Closely related to the metaphorical process is the process by which a poet creates or makes a symbol. The symbol may be regarded, as a matter of fact, as a metaphor from which the first term has been omitted." Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren, Understanding Poetry, pp. 633-634.
which has grown to be a by-word of criticism, seems to be essentially the same thing that Hulme is describing when he explains Bergson's artist dipping into the flux of life, and bringing up a fragment of reality to which he must fit precise words in precise pattern to express the exact nature of "curve" of that reality. "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art," Eliot says in his well-known passage, "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."²²

Eliot seems to feel about the artist's position much the same way Bergson and Hulme feel about it, although he avoids Bergson's vocabulary which, through popularization, has come to seem superficial. One critic describes Eliot's view of the poet's job:

The poet's own immediate task is to bring all the depth and intensity of his own full consciousness to a verbal surface; the reader, starting from the surface, penetrates gradually to the full consciousness beneath. Poetry is thus both act and instrument. It is the poet's tongue speaking 'a language of enticement' to his fellow-men, and urging them,

through a sharing of his speech to share his own after-sight, foresight and insight. 29

It may be that Eliot is describing the "reality" of Bergson and Hulme as "actuality" in the following passage: "I should say that in one's prose reflexions one may be legitimately occupied with ideas, whereas in the writing of verse one can only deal with actuality." 30 Elizabeth Drew finds in Eliot's whole condemnation of Western culture (in both his poetry and prose) his feeling that the world refuses to face the truer reality, which seems to be the same as the "inner flux" of Bergson and Hulme. She paraphrases his view of the materialistic world:

And along with the busy travelling along material ways, the inorganic metalled roads, or the helpless unrelatedness of anxious insecurity, is the refusal to face any experience of the inner life—the torpor, the apathy, the 'silent funeral'; or what in prose Eliot has called 'the invincible sluggishness of imagination,' which paralyses all movement, and repudiates all responsibility. 31

But Eliot's main concern in that part of his theory of poetic language which he draws from Hulme is "the purification and the replenishment of the English language." 32 Most

29 Drew, op. cit., p. 206.
31 Drew, op. cit., p. 207.
32 Ibid., p. 205.
of his critical writings touch upon this point in some sense: in his essay on Massinger he is concerned largely with the decay of language and the comparatively poorer language of Massinger than of Shakespeare;\textsuperscript{33} in his essay on Swinburne he deals largely with the qualities of Swinburne's language;\textsuperscript{34} in his essay on Blake he says that Blake's simplified form illustrates "the eternal struggle of art against education, of the literary artist against the continuous deterioration of language."\textsuperscript{35}

Eliot deplores the tendency of language in much nineteenth-century poetry to try to express vague, lofty emotions, and insists, "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."\textsuperscript{36} He describes the popular mind as one "habituated to feed on the vague jargon of our time, when we have a vocabulary for everything and exact ideas about nothing—when a word half-understood, torn from its place in some alien or half-formed science, as of psychology, conceals from both writer and reader the utter meaningfulness of a statement."\textsuperscript{37}

\textsuperscript{33}Eliot, \textit{The Sacred Wood}, pp. 123-143.
\textsuperscript{34}Ibid., p. 150.
\textsuperscript{35}Ibid., p. 154.
\textsuperscript{36}Eliot, \textit{Selected Essays}, p. 115.
The way Eliot describes the artistic process seems to echo the idea of tension and intensity asserted by Bergson and Hulme: "For it is not the 'greatness', the intensity of the emotions, the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts." His emphasis upon the critical labor involved in composition reminds one of the "tension" necessary in Hulme's "curve" and of Bergson's piece of India-rubber: "Probably, indeed, the larger part of the labour of an author in composing his work is critical labour; the labour of sifting, combining, constructing, expunging, correcting, testing; this frightful toil is as much critical as creative."

But it is in his poetry itself that one can best see Eliot's essential agreement with Hulme's idea of images and his attempt to write with the exactness and freshness of imagery about which Hulme was talking. Matthiessen quotes a definition from Pound (written during the time when Pound had been exposed to Hulme's theories and was most enthusiastic about them): "An image is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time," and he quotes Eliot's line from Prufrock as an example: "I have

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39 Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 18.
40 Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 61.
measured out my life with coffee spoons."\(^{41}\) Equally good examples might be found in his more recent poems, for instance in *Ash Wednesday* the powerful description of feeling of escape from horror, in a progression toward a difficult salvation:

> At the first turning of the second stair  
> I turned and saw below  
> The same shape twisted on the banister  
> Under the vapor in the fetid air \(^{42}\)

or from "The Journey of the Magi", the simple, sensual nostalgia:

> There were times we regretted  
> The summer palaces on slopes, the terraces,  
> And the silken girls bringing sherbert.\(^{43}\)

Perhaps even more interesting examples of correspondence of Eliot's ideas of language and poetry may be found in his latest major poem, *The Four Quartets*, the most philosophical of his poems. Eliot has been accused of changing his ideas about the place of philosophy in poetry, since he uses philosophy in *The Four Quartets*. But in his earliest book of critical essays he has explained his idea clearly:

> Without doubt, the effort of the philosopher proper, the man who is trying to deal with

\(^{42}\)Ibid., p. 114.  
\(^{43}\)Ibid., p. 135.
ideas in themselves, and the effort of the poet, who may be trying to realize ideas, cannot be carried on at the same time. But this is not to deny that poetry can be in some sense philosophic. The poet can deal with philosophic ideas, not as matter for argument, but as matter for inspection. The original form of a philosophy cannot be poetic. But poetry can be penetrated by a philosophic idea, it can deal with this idea when it has reached the point of immediate acceptance, when it has become almost a physical modification.44

In this sense there is philosophy in the *Four Quartets*, in which he examines, among a great many other ideas, the problem of the poet. In the second quartet, "East Coker", he describes the predicament of the poet, which is much like that which worries Hulme, for it involves the difficulty of putting experience of reality into precise language, the exact metaphor, the objective correlative which will communicate the experience itself, and not a stereotyped idea of it, and the constant need for new effort because the freshness of the image will not stay fresh long enough to be put into words:

So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years--
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*--
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure

Because one has only learnt to get the better of words
For the thing one no longer has to say, or the way in which
One is no longer disposed to say it.45

And in "Burnt Norton", Eliot uses almost the image of Hulme's curve to express the same sort of tension necessary to fix real meaning about which Hulme was talking:

Words strain,
Crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
Under the tension, slip, slide, perish,
Decay with imprecision, will not stay in place,
Will not stay still.46

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45 Eliot, Four Quartets, p. 16.
Like the modern use of the poetic image, this trait of modern poetic syntax should not be credited to a single influence. It may be that Bergson and Hulme had comparatively little effect in the development of this particular method in Eliot's poetry. Yet we believe that we can find in Bergson's writing what amounts to at least a philosophical justification of such practice, and that Eliot, both directly and through Hulme, was aware of Bergson's theories.

Throughout his writing Bergson is concerned with the workings of the mind. In his earlier books, *Time and Free Will*, and *Matter and Memory*, he analyzes with great detail and care the findings of modern science about the workings of the human brain, and particularly shows the fallacies in the arguments that thought can be reduced to chemical or physical changes within the brain. In his later books he continues this study with differing emphasis. One of his important conclusions, repeated in several of his books, is that the mind does not follow the path of language as it is presented in ordinary speech or prose. Whether we are listening or reading, we "catch a few hints, choose a few guiding marks" with which we reconstruct a whole that more or less corresponds to that which was presented to us. The

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reception and the reconstruction are inaccurate; we lose much of what was intended to be conveyed. In particularly excellent prose, however, the correspondence between the thought conveyed and the thought received is closer; the difference lies in the ability of the author to hold to and reproduce in language the particular "curve of thought" he is attempting to communicate.

Of these movements (of thinking), sketched out or even simply prepared, we are most often unaware, because we have no interest in knowing them; but we have to notice them when we try to seize hold of our thought in order to grasp it all living and make it pass, still living, into the soul of another. The words may then have been well chosen, they will not convey the whole of what we wish to make them say if we do not succeed by the rhythm, by the punctuation, by the relative lengths of sentences and parts of the sentences, by a particular dancing of the sentence, in making the reader's mind, continually guided by a series of nascent movements, describe a curve of thought and feeling analogous to that we ourselves describe. In this consists the whole art of writing.3

The difficulty of reproducing an experience of intuition is extreme; the writer works with painful inadequacy "as the diver feels out the wreck on the sea floor that the aviator has pointed out from the air."4 This simile suggests

3Ibid., pp. 56-57.
Bergson's theory that the whole is always presented first—the whole of the experience, the whole of the way in which the writer is to present his material—and the particular images must be felt out later or, as Bergson says, "It must necessarily be assumed, then, that the whole is presented as a scheme, and that invention consists precisely in converting the scheme into image." In other words, the form develops before the particulars.

Reception of the idea, that is, the reader's part in the communication, proceeds in a very similar manner. The reader's thought merely touches the images, then reconstructs from them a whole, afterwards checking back with the images and if necessary revising the whole to fit more directly with the images it perceives on the most careful examination.

A slight contact with the images actually perceived throws abstract thinking into a definite direction. The abstract thought then develops into complete images merely represented, which in their turn come and touch the perceived images, follow them as they go along, endeavour to coalesce with them. Where coincidence is perfect, the perception is perfectly interpreted.

It is, therefore, necessary to begin with an hypothetical whole, hastily constructed from the first images perceived,

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\(^6\)Ibid., p. 207.
then proceed back to the original to try to parallel exactly the "curve" which the writer is trying to convey to us:

Intellection can only be straight and sure if we set out from the supposed meaning, constructed by us hypothetically, then descend from the meaning to the fragments of words really perceived, and then make us of these as simple stakes to peg out in all its sinuosities the special curve of the road which the mind is to follow.7

The form or scheme of the poem or writing is, Bergson assures us in a metaphor which reminds us of Hulme's curve of steel spring, necessarily constructed of images, but distinct from them, an entity in itself.

A mind working only with images could but recommence its past or arrange the congealed elements of the past, like pieces of mosaic, in another form. But for a flexible mind, capable of utilizing its past experience by bending it back along the lines of the present, there must, besides the image, be an idea of a different kind, always capable of being realized into images, but always distinct from them. The scheme is nothing else.8

With writing, there is always the difficulty of language being stationary and thought being moving, a difficulty which we can overcome only by making the language we use con-

7 Ibid., pp. 208-209.
8 Ibid., pp. 227-228.
sist as nearly as possible of the actual images into which we
transmit the experience we wish to communicate, leaving out
innaccurate and superfluous wording:

Essentially discontinuous, since it proceeds
by juxtaposing words, speech can only indi-
cate by a few guide posts placed here and
there the chief stages in the movement of
thought. That is why I can indeed understand
your speech if I start from a thought ana-
logous to your own, and follow its windings by
the aid of verbal images which are so many
sign-posts that show me the way from time to
time. But I shall never be able to under-
stand it if I start from the verbal images
themselves, because between two consecutive
verbal images there is a gulf which no amount
of concrete representations can ever fill.
For images can never be anything but things,
and thought is a movement.9

All of Bergson's thought up to this point applies al-
most equally well to prose and poetry. To convey the ex-
perience of intuition, however, poetry is by far the more
adequate vehicle. And Bergson's ideas of just how poetry
should proceed are explicit and surprisingly applicable to
modern poetry.

No image can replace the intuition of dura-
tion, but many diverse images, borrowed from
very different orders of things, may, by
the convergence of their action, direct con-
sciousness to the precise point where there
is a certain intuition to be seized. By

9Bergson, Matter and Memory, p. 159.
choosing images as dissimilar as possible, we shall prevent any one of them from usurping the place of the intuition it is intended to call up, since it would then be driven away at once by its rivals. By providing that, in spite of their differences of aspect, they all require from the mind the same kind of attention, and in some sort of the same degree of tension, we shall gradually accustom consciousness to a particular and clearly-defined disposition—that precisely which it must adopt in order to appear to itself as it really is, without any veil.10

Here we see the philosophic theory. The ideas, as they concern poetry, however, might have been ignored in the diverse mass of material left by Bergson, in spite of the fact that he used his own method, in so far as it was possible in philosophy, by frequently presenting ideas in several varying metaphors to help the reader realize as well as intellectually understand the words. But T. E. Hulme was not only attracted to Bergson's ideas, he was himself particularly interested in ideas applicable to art and aesthetics.

Hulme describes the artistic intuition in terms of his own experience, but uses approximately the pattern of explanation which Bergson used. To begin with, whether one is writing poetry, or only more mechanical prose, there is always the perception of the "scheme", the form as a whole,

10Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 16-17.
which one suddenly is able to see. As Bergson points out, the scheme itself may alter the images which the writer felt vaguely before, or it may even suggest new images; in Hulme's words, "the very act of trying to find a form to fit the separate phrases into, itself leads to the creation of new images hitherto not felt by the poet." But more explicitly, Hulme has drawn the pattern for what he thought poetry should be in his day, the pattern which became the platform for Imagistic poetry. He particularly objected to wordiness and triteness of much of the poetry which was being written at the time, and felt that what poetry needed was a new form, a form based primarily upon clear, visual images with a minimum of connecting material. The rhythm, he thought, should be tuned carefully to catch the feeling of each particular image, rather than be based on any conventional verse scheme:

Regular metre to this impressionist poetry is cramping, jangling, meaningless, and out of place. Into the delicate pattern of images and colour it introduces the heavy, crude pattern of rhetorical verse. It destroys the effect just as a barrel organ does, when it intrudes into the subtle interwoven harmonies of the modern symphony. It is a delicate and difficult art, that of evoking an image, of fitting the rhythm to

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11 Hulme, Speculations, pp. 189-190.
the idea, and one is tempted to fall back
to the comforting and easy arms of the
old, regular metre, which takes away all
the trouble for us.13

This new poetry, which, he says, would be "neither more nor
less than a mosaic" of words and images14 must at all costs
avoid "that dreadful feeling of cheapness when we contemplate
the profusion of words of modern prose."15 The method, then,
suggested by Hulme, was one which cut down the connective
material in the poetic sentence to the bare minimum, or cut
it out all together, presenting only one image against anoth-
er, letting the mind by touching sharply upon each image pro-
vide itself the connective material, thereby getting a far
clearer communication of the intuition than it would if a
dead prose language separated the images, dulling the sharp-
ness of each.

But the whole is more than the separate images:

Say the poet is moved by a certain landscape,
he selects from that certain images which,
put into juxtaposition in separate lines,
serve to suggest and to evoke the state he
feels. To this piling-up and juxtaposition
of distinct images in different lines, one
can find a fanciful analogy in music. A
great revolution in music when, for the mel-
ody that is one-dimensional music, was sub-

13Ibid., p. 267.
14Ibid., p. 281.
15Ibid., p. 274.
stituted harmony which moves in two. Two visual images form what one may call a visual chord. They unite to suggest an image which is different to both.16

By asking that poetry go beyond the single image, or several images, and "unite to suggest an image which is different to both", Hulme was stating more than the idea many of the imagists picked up. Whether he was aware of the importance of this distinction or not, it was of major importance in the development of poetry. David Daiches suggests that for Hulme, and for Eliot even in his imagistic poetry, "the image is not important merely as the concrete expression of something seen; its quality is also determined by the requirements of the poem as a whole and it combines with the other images in the poem to produce a complex and dynamic unity."17

Even more than Hulme, Eliot has been concerned with the problem of what poets of the present day can do, what developments of poetry are open to them; he has said that the important question for the practitioner is always, "How should poetry be written now?"18 His interest in the metaphysical poets may make them more important as influences

17 Daiches, op. cit., p. 100.
than Bergson, but Bergson is really describing the metaphysical method and it is very likely that Hulme (deriving from Bergson) at least gave an impetus and probably gave expression to the ideas which Eliot also got from earlier poets. Certainly, when he praises in the metaphysical poets "the degree of heterogeniety of material compelled into unity by the operation of the poet's mind," he is expressing ideas very similar to Hulme's, and again he seems to be finding the same quality admirable in several dramatists of the late Renaissance, Middleton, Webster, and Tourneur, in comparison to Massinger: "One of the greatest distinctions of several of his elder contemporaries...is a gift for combining, for fusing into a single phrase, two or more diverse impressions." Eliot more particularly explained the method of modern poetry in an essay about a prose writer:

Whibley followed faithfully and easily the movement of his own mind...the transition from one subject to the next suggested itself. Critics sometimes comment upon the sudden transitions and juxtapositions of modern poetry: that is, when right and successful, an application of somewhat the same method without method. Whether the transition is cogent or not, is merely a question of whether the mind is serre or delie, whether the whole personality is involved.

But as with his idea of images, one can understand

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Eliot's idea of poetic syntax best by noticing his use of it in his own poetry. Elizabeth Drew, a very sympathetic and acute critic, has said:

When Eliot began to write, it was inevitable that his poetry should be 'undecipherable' to the reading public. The speech of the tribe had become impoverished, atrophied, inarticulate. Hence the return to some of the sources of its lost life, to the language of symbol, the logic of the imagination, made it appear a stranger, whose unfamiliarity must be repudiated. A generation of readers and critics and teachers, and of other poets writing in the same language, has done much to reawaken consciousness, and to widen the area over which the music can be heard. As to the fight for his values, all the poet can do in his art is to present them as poetry.22

Some of Eliot's early poetry was close to pure imagism; for example, his "Preludes", or "Morning at the Window":

They are rattling breakfast plates in basement kitchens, And along the trampled edges of the street I am aware of the damp souls of housemaids Sprouting despondently at area gates.

The brown waves of fog toss up at me Twisted faces from the bottom of the street, And tear from a passer-by with muddy skirts An aimless smile that hovers in the air And vanishes along the level of the roofs.23

On a more complex level, he used the technique of sharp

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22 Drew, op. cit., p. 211.
juxtaposition of image with little connecting material
in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales", in which, after a de-
scription of Sweeney and a rather unsavory scene in a cheap
inn, the poem proceeds with sharp images to the final stan-
zas, where the entire effect of the poem is produced by the
juxtaposing of very different images:

The silent vertebrate in brown
Contracts and concentrates, withdraws;
Rachel nee Rabinovitch
Tears at the grapes with murderous paws;

She and the lady in the cape
Are suspect, thought to be in league;
Therefore the man with heavy eyes
Declines the gambit, shows fatigue,

Leaves the room and reappears
Outside the window, leaning in,
Branches of wisteria
Circumscribe a golden grin;

The host with someone indistinct
Converses at the door apart,
The nightingales are singing near
The Convent of the Sacred Heart,

And sang within the bloody wood
When Agamennon cried aloud,
And let their liquid siftings fall
To stain the stiff dishonoured shroud.24

The problem of Eliot’s juxtaposition of images is complicated
in this poem and in most of his later poetry by the matter
of his frequent reference and quotation from writings of the

24 Ibid., p. 65.
past, sometimes from very obscure writings. Here he seems to have departed from Hulme's "clear visual image" to some degree, and employed symbols and what might be called a "literary image," for Eliot's references and quotations are almost always used as images, to call up a definite picture of that setting from which it is taken and to involve with it (often to heighten by contrast to) the emotional and visual concepts in which the words or object referred to originally appeared. Critics and readers, especially when his poetry was first published, as Miss Drew has pointed out, complained bitterly that the difficulty was too great, that no one could be expected to ferret out the references, even that Eliot was purposely playing a trick on them. It seems to us that the mistake of such critics was that they forgot that almost all poetry is written on many levels, that most traditional poetry is more easily understandable simply because conventionally one level was immediately obtainable because the poetry followed a syntax similar to that of ordinary prose; this did not mean, however, that the full meaning of the poem was immediately available on this level.25 In a slightly different way the same is true of Eliot's poetry and of much of modern poetry; although the full meaning of the

25 For a demonstration that The Waste Land is in this respect no more difficult than Milton's Lycidas see Matthiessen, op. cit., pp. 46-49.
poem is not revealed until one understands all the references, one level of meaning comes out on first reading simply by the juxtaposition of sharp images and the carefully suited rhythm of the words which give, to some degree, at least an emotional reaction which corresponds, on a lower level, to the complete meaning of the poem. One can understand this better if one looks back to Bergson and Hulme who believed that for the reader as well as for the writer the scheme of the whole comes through before the individual parts, and that the reader then goes from the whole to the particular images to gain a fuller understanding.

Certainly this is true of at least part of Eliot's poetry. One does not need to recognize the reference to Marvell's poem (or even to know that Sweeney is a particular character from some of Eliot's earlier poetry) to get a feeling of disappointment at the change from beauty to tawdriness in the lines:

But at my back from time to time I hear
The sound of horns and motors, which shall bring
Sweeney to Mrs. Porter in the spring.26

Nor does one need to recall Alice in Wonderland and Alice's desire to get back into the little garden where she finds

26Eliot, Collected Poems, p. 79.
the gardeners painting the roses red,\textsuperscript{27} to feel the lost and hopeless sensation in the lines from "Burnt Norton",

\begin{verbatim}
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.\textsuperscript{28}
\end{verbatim}

"A Song for Simeon" is comprehensible if one knows no more than who Simeon is, and with even a vague memory of the New Testament one can easily figure out who is being referred to without being sure of the name. It has been convincingly argued that one can understand on one level The Waste Land, Eliot's most difficult poem of this type, without understanding the mythic background or the individual references. At least it is possible to know a great deal of it, and to grasp continually more with further readings. One can hardly deny, for example, that without knowing that the passage refers to Baudelaire's "city", and to Dante's Limbo, and without recognizing the quotation from Dante,\textsuperscript{29} one can feel a good deal


\textsuperscript{28}Eliot, \textit{Four Quartets}, p. 3.

of the emotional strength of such a passage as the following from "The Burial of the Dead":

Unreal City
Under the brown fog of a winter dawn,
A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many.
Sigh, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet.
Flowed up the hill and down King William Street
To where Saint Mary Woolnoth kept the hours
With a dead sound on the final stroke of nine.

The preceding quotations from Eliot's poetry are mostly examples in which he has employed a sharp juxtaposition, a fusion of images without an obvious omission of connectives. Although the syntax is in this sense normal, it is not conventional because such a large part of the meaning is carried by the unsaid connectives of images, by the fact that dissimilar images are juxtaposed until their combination forms the surface statement. But there are many places in Eliot's poetry where syntax itself is changed, where connectives have been purposely omitted, for instance in the last part of "The Hollow Men."

Between the essence
And the descent
Falls the Shadow

For Thine is the Kingdom

For Thine is
Life is
For Thine is the

This is the way the world ends.

The broken lines here pick up fragments of earlier lines—one in itself the fragment of the prayer, "For Thine is the kingdom"—to show the breaking up, the scattered, uncertain end of the culture described in the poem.

This method is used to even a greater extent in The Waste Land where much of the effect of the disorganization and fragmentary nature of the modern waste land is achieved by the frequent sudden break from scene or passage to a completely different one—frequently in a different language—without transition, for instance, from "The Burial of the Dead":

I will show you fear in a handful of dust.
Frisch weht der Wind
Der Heimat zu
Mein Irisch Kind,
Wo weilest du?

"You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
"They called me the hyacinth girl."

—Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
Looking into the heart of light the silence.
Oed' und leer das Meer.32

A more specific lack of ordinary syntax appears at the

31Ibid., pp. 104-105.
32Ibid., p. 70.
end of "The Fire Sermon" in a small passage which begins with
a line from St. Augustine:

To Carthage then I came
Burning burning burning burning
O Lord Thou pluckest me out
O Lord Thou pluckest

burning 33

Probably the best example is the closing passage of "What the
Thunder Said," in which "fragments shored against ruins" are
taken from earlier portions of the poem, from a children's
song, from the Provencal poet mentioned in Dante, Arnaut Dan-
iel, from Gerard de Nerval, from The Spanish Tragedy, and
from the Indian myth in the Upinshads. 34

I sat upon the shore
Fishing, with the arid plain behind me
Shall I at least set my lands in order?
London Bridge is falling down falling down falling down
Pai s'ascose nel foco chi gli affina
Quando fiam uti chelidon--o swallow swallow
Le Prince d'Aquitaine a la tour abolie
These fragments I have shored against my ruins
Why then Ies fit you. Hieronymo's mad againe.
Shantih shantih shantih35

It seems to us that the understanding of the hopelessness and
rootlessness indicated by this passage comes because of, rather
than in spite of, Eliot's poetic syntax.

33Ibid., pp. 83-84.
CHAPTER V
DURATION AND TRADITION

Eliot's essay on "Tradition and the Individual Talent," written in 1917, is one of his earliest, and the one he chose to open his volume of Selected Essays published in 1932. The position which he maintains in this essay is one from which he has never deviated, but it is one which has particularly pleased or annoyed critics, according to their own critical views or their particular interpretations of his ideas. Although Eliot's explanation of tradition in its slant toward literature includes elements that Bergson's philosophy does not touch, there are some aspects of it which seem to correspond specifically to Bergson's explanation of the qualities of duration, and which may be partially illuminated by that explanation.

Bergson's idea of time, of the reality of life, is that it is constant duration, uninterrupted and indivisible. He says we can think of it as a musical phrase, which cannot be divided, either spatially by the thought of the notes upon a page of music, or spatially in the sense of individual notes existing in a moment of time separated from the moment before and that after; by any such division the musical phrase becomes something different from the whole. By
this analogy, he says, "we can thus conceive of succession without distinction, and think of it as a mutual penetration, an interconnexion and organization of elements, each of which represents the whole, and cannot be distinguished or isolated from it except by abstract thought."¹

To the individual consciousness, then, there can be no real "present"; "Practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the indivisible progress of the past gnawing into the future."² This is the impossibility of ever perceiving the exact moment of the present without abstracting an artificial part from the whole, a part which does not give the real quality of the whole which is time but spatializes it into something which can be measured and so fitted into the world of matter:

But the real, concrete, live present— that of which I speak when I speak of my present perception—that present necessarily occupies a duration. Where then is this duration placed? Is it on the hiter or the further side of the mathematical point which I determine ideally when I think of the present instant? Quite evidently, it is both on this side and on that; and what I call 'my present' has one foot in my past and another in my future. In my past, first, because 'the moment in which I am speaking is already far from me'; in my future, next, because this moment is impending over the future: it is to the future that I am tending, and could I fix this indivisible

present, this infinitesimal element of the curve of time, it is the direction of the future that it would indicate. So history, of all life, just like the individual perception, is "bound up with all other images," and is "continued in those which follow it, just as it prolonged those which preceded it." In the individual, this duration lies in the memory, where the past of our perception is constantly and completely with us:

Inner duration is a continuous life of a memory which prolongs the past into the present, the present either containing within it in a distinct form the ceaselessly growing image of the past, or, more probably, showing by its continual change of quality the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us as we grow older. Without this survival of the past into the present there would be no duration, but only instantaneity.

In a larger sense, all life preserves the past in duration, in a kind of continuous building up of background which penetrates into the future. Yet a basic tenet in Bergson's philosophy is that this past does not determine the future; life, and living beings, have free will, freedom to choose the course of the future as it is being constructed. "With life there appears free, predictable, movement. The living

3Ibid., pp. 176-177.
4Ibid., p. 27.
5Bergson, Introduction to Metaphysics, pp. 44-45.
being chooses or tends to choose. Its role is to create."\(^6\)

Thus, duration carries all of the past with it, but it is never controlled or predetermined; it grows "like a plant, but like a plant of a fairy tale transforms its leaves and flowers from moment to moment."\(^7\) Thus an action comes from the past, yet is free and new in a literal sense; we find in it "the antecedents which explain it, while it yet adds to these something entirely new, being an advance upon them such as the fruit is upon the flower."\(^8\)

This sort of evolution is contrary to our ordinary intellectual logic. We can't help looking at events as if they were predetermined, because by this view of them we are more capable of the ordinary action for which our intellect is designed:

... our ordinary logic is a logic of retrospection. It cannot help throwing present realities, reduced to possibilities or virtualities, back into the past, so that what is compounded now must, in its eyes, always have been so. It does not admit that a simple state can, in remaining what it is, become a compound state solely because evolution will have created new viewpoints from which to consider it, and by so doing, created multiple elements in which to analyze it ideally.\(^9\)

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\(^7\) Ibid., p. 23.

\(^8\) Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, p. 243.

\(^9\) Bergson, *The Creative Mind*, p. 27.
Because this normal logic refuses to believe in entirely free acts, we are inclined to read back into the past a series of events which determined the act. Bergson uses the example of a patient in a hypnotic state, who receives a post-hypnotic suggestion. Upon being awakened from the trance, he formulates to himself a series of events occurring before he was hypnotised, which make it necessary for him to carry out the suggestion that actually originated during his hypnotic sleep. His intellect has refused to allow the act to occur without proper explanation, and the patient firmly believes that he was sure to perform it even without the hypnotist's words.\textsuperscript{10}

Not only does the mind reconstruct a series of events which seem to explain a really free act, it actually \textit{changes} the past by changing the present, for the whole is a unity and cannot be broken to pieces or changed in one part without changing the whole. This is a difficult point in Bergson, and one which may seem to be merely a matter of vocabulary. But Bergson insists upon the literal acceptance of this statement: the present alters the past, "the artist in executing his work is creating the possible as well as the real."\textsuperscript{11} Bergson quotes a conversation of his with a news-

\textsuperscript{10}\textit{Bergson, Time and Free Will}, p. 157.

\textsuperscript{11}\textit{Bergson, The Creative Mind}, p. 121.
paper man, who was trying to discover Bergson's opinions about what new sort of literature would evolve in the next few years. The philosopher, speaking first, has difficulty in making the journalist understand his reasons for refusing to make a forecast:

"It's quite simple. Let a man of talent or genius come forth, let him create a work: it will then be real, and by that very fact it becomes retrospectively or retroactively possible. It would not have been possible, it would not have been so, if this man had not come upon the scene. That is why I tell you that it will have been possible today, but that it is not yet so."

"You're not serious! You are surely not going to maintain that the future has an effect upon the present, that the present brings something into the past, that action works back over the course of time and imprints its mark afterwards?"—"That depends. That one can put reality into the past and thus work backwards in time is something I have never claimed. But that one can put the possible there at any moment, is not to be doubted. As reality is created as something unforeseeable and new, its image is reflected behind it into the indefinite past; thus it finds that it has from all time been possible, but it is at this precise moment that it begins to have been always possible."12

Again, Bergson uses the example of the historian who, seeking an explanation for the present, decides that the essential fact of modern times is the advent of democracy. He would discover the direction in which humanity was moving, and find

12 Ibid., pp. 118-119.
in the past a shadow of events which, Bergson insists, was "no more marked than any other trend at that time," and in fact, "did not exist, since it was created by the movement itself. . . . The signs are present only because we know the course which has been completed." 13

At risk of laboring the point, we will present Bergson's own full explanation, we will quote at some length.

We can always, to be sure, link up the reality once it is accomplished to the events which preceded it and to the circumstances in which it occurred; but taken from another angle, an entirely different reality (not just any reality, it is true) could just as well be linked to the same circumstances and events. . . . To take a simple example, nothing prevents us today from associating the romanticism of the nineteenth century with what was already romantic in the classical writers. But the romantic aspect of classicism is only brought by the retroactive aspect of romanticism once it has appeared. If there had not been a Rousseau, a Chateaubriand, a Vigny, a Victor Hugo, not only should we never have perceived, but also, there would never really have existed, any romanticism in the earlier classical writers, for this romanticism of theirs only materialises by lifting out of their work a certain aspect, and this slice. . . ., with its particular form, no more existed in classical literature before romanticism appeared on the scene than there exists, in a cloud floating by, the amusing design that an artist perceives in shaping to his fancy the amorphous mass. Romanticism worked retroactively on classicism as an artist's design worked on the cloud. Retroactively it created its own prefiguration in the past and an explanation of itself by its predecessors. 14

13 ibid., p. 25.
14 ibid., pp. 23-25.
In applying this theory to what Eliot would call the problem of the practitioner in creative fields, Bergson asks the important question, "What can be done now?" And he answers it in a way which seems to foreshadow Eliot's own answer, that one must write something new, but something in the tradition.

To be sure, we have something new to do, and perhaps the moment has come to be fully alive to it; but the fact that it is new does not mean that it must be revolutionary. Let us rather study the ancients, become imbued with their spirit, and try to do, as far as possible, what they themselves would be doing were they living among us. Endowed with our knowledge... they would arrive at very different results from those they obtained.15

Hulme was well aware of Bergson's idea about duration and history. One large section of Speculations is devoted to a review of what Hulme calls "Intensive Manifolds," that is, the individual perceptions of duration.16 Vector points out that these ideas necessarily came from Bergson: "Hulme's ideas about intuition stem from Bergson, or ultimately Heraclitus, in the belief that all things flow, that all reality is tendency, and hence that the truth about this ever-changing flux cannot be represented in rigid abstract terms."17

15 Ibid., p. 153.
16 Hulme, Speculations, pp. 173-214.
17 Vector, op. cit., p. 146.
Hulme makes a point of discussing Bergson's theory of the intellect's inability to conceive of free will, of its inevitable belief in determinism:

If I picture my motion through time as being like motion along a country road, then I am quite prepared to admit that owing to my vision being limited by the size of the hedges, I cannot see the course of the road ahead of me. But I am firmly convinced that the road ahead of me does exist all the time in a fixed direction, and that if I had absolute knowledge—if I could take a bird's-eye-view—I should be able to see it. . . . The distortion that the intellect here produces is in our conception of the nature of change. It conceives change in such a way that the future seems always determined.18

Hulme mentions again that,

It is important to see that the inability under which we suffer, of being unable to conceive the existence of a real change in which absolutely new and unpredictable things can happen, is entirely due to that fixed habit of the intellect which insists that we shall analyse things into elements, and insists on that because it will have a picture in spatial terms.19

In discussing Bergson's ideas here Hulme does not add anything new; he does, however, use this same conception in his major theory of the qualities of humanism and classicism. Hulme made a strong plea during his lifetime, one that has

18 Hulme, Speculations, p. 193.
19 Ibid., p. 197.
been echoed by Eliot and many other modern artists, for an emancipation from the "humanism" which has been the dominating philosophy and literature since the Renaissance. True, he absolved many of the artists he felt sympathetic toward from the charge of "humanism" and the "romanticism" which goes with it, by saying that they were basically "classical". The distinction he draws between the two attitudes is that "humanism" believes in the perfectability of man, while "classicism" believes in the limitations of man, that is, in the dogma of Original Sin. Stated incompletely like this, his classifications, which are also used by Eliot, sound somewhat different from those usually called by such names: undoubtedly Hulme has taken some liberties in making his own definitions, but a thorough examination of them reveals a shrewd if somewhat prejudiced judgement.

These ideas about classicism and humanism can hardly be traced to Bergson; nevertheless, part of Hulme's explanation and justification of it employs Bergson's terms and shows an implicit belief in Bergson's idea. His interpretation of a phrase which he has borrowed from Savigny, "history is the only true way to attain a knowledge of our own condition,"\(^{20}\) is interpreted in a Bergsonian sense. The mind

\(^{20}\)ibid., p. 36.
has a tendency to abstract from reality, and to crystallize out certain ways of looking at the world, thinking that these ways, which are actually partial and therefore false, are inevitable and true. Hulme calls these ways of looking "pseudo-categories," and explains that the only way to get rid of them is to look at a larger scope of history (at the whole of duration):

I think that history is necessary in order to emancipate the individual from the influence of certain pseudo-categories. We are all of us under the influence of a number of abstract ideas, of which we are as a matter of fact unconscious. We do not see them, but see other things through them. . . . Once they have been brought to the surface of the mind, they lose their inevitable character. They are no longer categories. We have lost our naivete. 21

Thus, when Hulme prophesies and hopes for a return to classicism, his reasoning follows that of Bergson, although he arrives at a different conclusion. And like Bergson, he realizes that one cannot return to a past just as it was; each new moment changes the past irrevocably. "As with philosophy and art, the new classicism will show signs of having come through romanticism." 22

There are two levels upon which one can see that Eliot may have derived from Bergson's ideas of history and

21 Ibid., p. 37.
duration. Most closely parallel to a belief in what Bergson said are those evidences which appear in his essays, in which he is much concerned with a "tradition" which sounds very much like a literary application of duration. On the other hand, in Eliot's poetry there are sections which are taken even more directly from Bergson, but are used to indicate one of certain possible attitudes toward life rather than the belief in that specific attitude.

Eliot's ideas of tradition have been so widely discussed and criticised that it seems unnecessary to add another word. That some of the critics have been prejudiced simply by the word "tradition" is evident; a careful reading of his essay "Tradition and the Individual Talent" would dispel the misconception that he wished nostalgically to return to the past like a Don Quixote. He says clearly, "It is not of advantage to us to indulge a sentimental attitude toward the past." Yet his concern with tradition makes it clear that he considers some qualities in modern writing more valuable than novelty.

Tradition is a matter of much wider significance than novelty. It cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great

labour. It involves, in the first place, the historical sense, which we may call nearly indispensable to anyone who would continue to be a poet beyond his twenty-fifth year; and the historical sense involves a perception, not only of the pastness of the past, but of its presence; the historical sense compels a man to write not merely with his own generation in his bones, but with a feeling that the whole of the literature of Europe from Homer and within it the whole of the literature of his own country has a simultaneous existence, and composes a simultaneous order. This historical sense, which is a sense of the timeless as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together, is what makes a writer traditional. And it is at the same time what makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, of his contemporaneity.24

This much alone many people have misunderstood simply because they have not read the essay carefully, or because they had doubted Eliot's sincerity when he wrote it. More difficult passages, however, have bothered more careful critics, and it is these portions of his essay that perhaps will become a little less difficult if one can see that they may derive, or at least that the wording may derive, partly from Bergson.

Among these confusing passages is:

I thought of literature then at the time of writing "Tradition and Individual Talent" as I think of it now, of the literature of the

world, of the literature of Europe, of the literature of a single country, not as a collection of the writings of individuals, but as 'organic wholes', as systems in relation to which, and only in relation to which, individual works of literary art, and the works of individual artists, have their significance.25

In its very terminology, this echoes Bergson's words about the "organic wholeness" of duration.

That Eliot is aware of Bergson's ideas of history is indisputable. Among other evidence are the words of one of the workmen in The Rock, who says, "There's some new notion about time, what says that the past--what's be'ind you--is what's goin' to 'appen in the future, bein' as the future 'as already 'appened."26 Moreover, in literary terms he explains tradition in almost the same way that Bergson explains duration:

The poet must be very conscious of the main current, which does not at all flow invariably through the most distinguished reputations. He must be quite aware of the obvious fact that art never improves, but that the material of art is never quite the same. He must be aware that the mind of Europe--the mind of his own country--a mind which he learns in time to be much more important than his own private mind--is a mind which changes, and that this change is a development which abandons nothing en route, which does not superannuate either Shakespeare, or Homer, or the rock drawing of the Magdalenian draughts-men.27

That is, the writer must be always aware of what Bergson calls "the heavier and still heavier load we drag behind us." He must live in "what is not merely the present, but the present moment of the past." He can neither think of the past as dead or as a state to which we can restore unchanged. "The difference between the present and the past is that the conscious present is an awareness of the past in a way and to an extent which the past's awareness of itself cannot show." Bergson says, "To prepare what will be is to utilize what has been." To avoid superficial novelty, Eliot puts it, one neither goes back nor stops. "Tradition cannot mean standing still." One must work in the stream of tradition, at the present, at the point where the past touches the future, where the past inevitably is changing all the time and developing valuable new techniques which still have roots in the tradition and are far from the cheap surface glitter of novelty. "To conform merely would be for the new work not really to conform at all; it would not be new, and would therefore not be a work of art."

28Ibid., p. 59.
29Ibid., p. 52.
All these sections have been puzzling to some critics. A familiarity with the ideas and the vocabulary of Bergson makes them clearer, but particularly a familiarity with the idea of Bergson that the present can alter the past should make more clear the following quotation which has been probably the most widely discussed from "Tradition and the Individual Talent."

The existing monuments form an ideal order among themselves, which is modified by the introduction of the new (the really new) work of art among them. The existing order is complete before the new work arrives; for order to persist after the supervision of novelty, the whole existing order must be, if ever so slightly, altered; and so the relations, proportions, values of each work of art toward the whole are readjusted; and this is conformity between the old and the new. Whoever has approved this idea of order, of the form of European, of English literature, will not find it preposterous that the past should be altered by the present as much as the present is directed by the past. And the poet who is aware of this will be aware of great difficulties and responsibilities. 32

How much of Eliot's belief we can read into his poetry where he reflects ideas from Bergson's philosophy is a somewhat difficult question. Eliot himself has said, "A philosophical theory which has entered poetry is established, for its truth or falsity in one sense ceases to matter, and its

truth in another sense is proved,"33 and also has said:

I doubt whether belief proper enters into the activity of a great poet, qua poet. That is, Dante, qua poet, did not believe or disbelieve the Thomist cosmology or theory of the soul: he merely made use of it, 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.34

Whether, then, we can say that the passages indicate "belief proper," we can at least say that they indicate that Eliot was sufficiently impressed by Bergson's philosophy of time and duration to use the philosophy in making poetry. He has used it in two senses, first, in his use of past poet's words as his own, confusing the pastness of the past in the reader's mind with its presence; and second, in his use of actual philosophic ideas from Bergson, particularly in the Four Quartets.

The first sense is peculiarly prevalent in Eliot's poetry, for as Elizabeth Drew says:

There is no other poet who to the same extent, or in the same way, has used the work of other writers as an integral part of his own. He quotes with delight Ben Johnson's remark that one of the requisites of the poet, or maker, is "Imitation, to be able to convert the substance,

33 Eliot, Selected Essays, p. 246.
34 Ibid., p. 118.
or riches of another poet, to his own use."
It is an aspect of the whole subject of tra-
dition, as well as that of the process of
transformation, for Eliot's uses of allusion,
adaptation and quotation serve a double pur-
pose. They are an illustration of the posses-
sion of the "historical sense" which "involves
a perception, not only of the pastness of the
past, but of its presence;"35

This is evident in almost all his poetry, but particularly in
a poem like The Waste Land, in which he constantly uses the
words of other poets, or in "Sweeney Among the Nightingales",
in which the present and the past are so nearly co-existent
that the contemporary scene with Sweeney shifts to the Con-
vent, the nightingales, the bloody wood and Agamemnon without
even a break in punctuation.

In the second sense, we find ideas from the philosophy
transposed into moving words, which carry much of the meaning
of the ideas in their rhythm. In The Rock there are several
passages which might be attributed to the influence of Berg-
son. In one of the choruses there is first an expression of
the emptiness and confusion of the life and society in which
man has lost the sense of real time, and has failed to face
the intuition necessary to see reality:

The Church disowned, the tower overthrown, the
bells upturned, what have we to do
But stand with empty hands and palms turned upwards

35Drew, op. cit., p. 23.
In an age which advances progressively backwards? 36

Again, there is the understanding of the intuition, the realization of living always where the material and the real world cross, in real duration or eternity:

In every moment of time you live where two worlds cross,
In every moment you live at the point of intersection,
Remember, living in time, you must live also now in Eternity. 37

But Eliot's strongest poetic expression of Bergson's ideas of time comes, of course, in the Four Quartets. Elizabeth Drew notes that each of the quartets "creates one of four different ways of looking at time: time as memory; time as cyclical pattern; time as flux; time as the revelation of the meaning of 'history'," 38 and says that "it is usual to refer to Bergson's theories of Time as Eliot's starting point." 39 One of the opening epigraphs from Heraclitus is concerned with time, and is, of course, one of the ideas in Heraclitus which affected Bergson: "The way up and and the way down are one and the same." 40

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37 Ibid., p. 52.

38 Drew, op. cit., pp. 146-147.

39 Ibid., p. 152.

40 Ibid., p. 147.
It is hard to avoid the conclusion that Bergson's words are involved in the Quartets, particularly in the opening section of "Burnt Norton":

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future,  
And Time future contained 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.41

In the opening of "East Coker" we find the reiterated statement, "In my beginning is my end,"42 and at the close the reversal, "In my end is my beginning," showing the paradoxical nature of time. In "Little Gidding" we see the passage,

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.43

In "Burnt Norton" we also find the paradox of two ideas of time:

Time past and time future  
Allow but a little consciousness.  
To be conscious is not to be in time  
But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,

41 Eliot, Four Quartets, p. 3.  
42 Ibid., p. 11.  
43 Ibid., p. 38.
The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
Be remembered; involved with past and future.
Only through time time is conquered.44

But perhaps the best expression of the dual nature of time
is in the idea of the "dance" at the "still point" where
past and future are gathered.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither
flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there
the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call
it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither move-
ment from nor towards,
Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point,
the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the
dance.45

Surely, if Eliot seeks Bergson's intuition of duration it is
at "the still point of the turning world."

44 Ibid., p. 5.
45 Loc. cit.
CONCLUSION

The mysterious and complex process by which a writer develops his particular views and aesthetic theories can never be fully explained by a study of the teachers and former writers who influenced his thought. However, an understanding of his sources may help the reader to evaluate the importance and the particular place in history of the writer's critical theories.

This paper has attempted to demonstrate the relationship of some of the ideas in the writings of T. S. Eliot which correspond to the philosophies of Henri Bergson and his English disciple, T. E. Hulme. In particular, it has traced these ideas in the fields of the poetic image, of poetic syntax, and of duration and history. If our contention is valid that these ideas may be said to appear in the same, or slightly altered form, in the writing of all these men, then perhaps such a study will contribute somewhat to an understanding of the writings of all three, and particularly of Eliot, since he has drawn from the ideas which he found in the writings of both Bergson and Hulme.

Granted that these ideas and interpretations are not entirely original with Hulme and Bergson; still, when the time was ripe and the intellectual world needed to be re-
minded of certain forgotten ways of looking at life and art, each of them became a voice that recalled thoughts of dead men and dormant philosophical or literary systems, and, amalgamating and expressing them again, gave to them a new vigor which carried them into the living minds of the day. Hulme said of Bergson, "I do not think that Bergson has invented any new theory on this subject, but has simply created a much better vocabulary,"\(^1\) and it has been said of Hulme, "More intelligently than we did, he felt our feelings and understood our responses to life and art; when we were still confused and baffled he spoke out with conviction, and with the voice of prophesy."\(^2\) We must concede to them, if not as originators, as propagandists or prophets, an important place in the history of twentieth century thought.

It is interesting, then, to examine the writings of these men for their own sake, and to point out the influence of one upon the other, and of both upon modern poetry in the person of modern poetry's most prominent figure, simply for the interest of tracing certain ideas and seeing how they interpenetrate and fit into varying systems of thought. Such has been the avowed purpose of this paper. But without expanding our ambitions to an undue proportion, can we not

\(^1\)Hulme, *Speculations*, p. 157.
suggest some further conclusions that might be drawn from this study?

Since Eliot is our focal point, let us see how a demonstration that some of his ideas come from Bergson (through Hulme, as we have tried to prove) affects the evaluation of his philosophy and work. Of course, tying a writer's remarks on literary criticism or aesthetic principles to a systematic philosophy does not prove them valid; the philosophy may be fallacious or it may not be applicable in the sense the literary critic uses it. Besides, by being allied to a philosophical system, a critical theory may necessarily become subject to criticisms which point out the system's faults as well as those which praise its virtues. For instance, Eliot's ideas of tradition might be equally vulnerable with Bergson's ideas of duration to such criticism as that of Bertrand Russell (in which he obviously uses "real" in a different sense from Bergson's): "The real past, however, Bergson simply forgets; what he speaks of is the present idea of the past. The real past does not mingle with the present, since it is not part of it, but that is a very different thing."3

In attributing the weaknesses and successes of Bergson's philosophy to Eliot's, when we prove a connection in

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3Russell, op. cit., p. 807.
only a few ideas, we may be indulging in the fallacy of taking the part for the whole, a fallacy to which analogous reasoning is particularly susceptible. Nevertheless, a demonstration of a connection between a philosophical system and a theory of literary criticism should show that the critical judgment is not developed frivolously or haphazardly with no thoughtful background. In this case, the connection of Eliot's theory of poetic image and syntax, and of tradition with Bergsonian philosophy does not invalidate some of the serious criticism of the ideas. It should, however, show that the confusion of certain critics on the subject is unnecessary and that some of their comments are unjust.

For instance, if a critic had read the ideas of the poetic image which Hulme developed from Bergson's philosophy, and realized that these ideas had been adopted with very little change by Eliot, he could hardly write, as Ivor Winters writes, that Eliot's theory of the Objective Correlative is explaining a system of composition just like that of Edgar Allen Poe. Nor would a critic who knew how Bergson and Hulme explained the relationship of the poetic image and syntax to the working of the mind be likely to believe seriously, as E. M. Forster does, that Eliot in his use of elliptical

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4Ivor Winters, "T. S. Eliot or the Illusion of Reaction," reprinted in Unger, op. cit., p. 82.
syntax is amusing himself by setting unfair traps for the reader. 5

But in particular, a realization of the connection of ideas between these men might elucidate some of the more confusing parts in Eliot's theory of the literary tradition. Certainly, a critic might use evidence of Eliot's connection with Bergson as evidence for doubting Winter's statement—based only upon "Tradition and the Individual Talent"—that "the entire tendency of Eliot's thought is toward a deterministic view of literature." 6 He would have to mean only the tone of Eliot's essays and not the ideas behind them to say as Ferner Nuhn does that Eliot was referring in his essays on tradition to the "'genteel tradition' of later New England," 7 or, as Forster does, that the muses of the tradition are connected with "the oldest county families." 8

However, these attacks by critics could be, and in most cases have been, refuted on other grounds. This study simply adds another possibility. By a concentration on the ideas which can be traced from Eliot back through Hulme and

6 Winter, op. cit., p. 97.
8 Forster, op. cit., p. 15.
Bergson, this paper may give the impression that these are the most important ideas in Eliot's thought; this is not true. They are important, but they are only a part. Neither should it be assumed that Bergson and Hulme are the only sources which can explain these ideas in Eliot's thought; certainly this would be a misapprehension. The philosophy of Bergson is of course only one of several which contributed, and it may be one of lesser importance. Nevertheless, this paper has tried to demonstrate that a contribution is there, and that a study of it can be interesting and illuminating.
Bibliography


