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T. S. Eliot's Neo-Medieval Economics

Michael R. Stevens
Assistant Professor of English
Cornerstone University

Introduction

Whether poets have ever made good economists is debatable, but one would certainly not turn to the milieu of the 1930s if one wanted to make an argument for the affirmative. Since poets have often tended to press toward cultural extremes, the decade that saw, perhaps, the most violent political and economic polarization in history, as fascism and communism staked their claims in world affairs, was a doubly dangerous time for poets to enter the fray. Two notable instances immediately come to mind: W. H. Auden, the youthful British poet who led the rush of idealistic literati who joined the Communist cause of the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War, and Ezra Pound, the maverick American who found, in Mussolini and the Fascist regime of Italy, a realization of his peculiar political and economic vision. Though he did not actually enter into combat, as did many other fellow writers, including George Orwell and Federico Garcia Lorca, Auden apparently gave a limited number of radio addresses for the Republican cause. Seeing that the situation in Spain was intractable and increasingly brutal, he eventually left for America, where in 1940 he began a journey not only toward American citizenship, but also toward a reaffirmation of his Anglican roots. Pound, on the other hand, endured in his chosen situation much longer, becoming a familiar voice on Italian radio and generating enough vitriol against the Allies to warrant placement in an American prison camp, a subsequent trial for treason against the United States government, and the bittersweet exoneration of being proclaimed mentally unsound and thus placed in a sanitarium. Clearly, neither of these poets could have been pleased with the results of their socio-political-economic forays in the 1930s.

Into this mix, enter T. S. Eliot—like Pound, an American attempting to repatriate himself to Europe; like Auden, a skeptic drawn into the mystery of Christianity and the Anglican confession. What sets Eliot apart, however, is that his treatment of many socio-political issues, and especially economic issues, appears not absurd but rather, in retrospect, profound. Eliot's thread of development as a social commentator is also intriguing because, though his poetry remains a rather abstruse source for following his thought, another source does exist: *The Criterion*. This was the journal—actually subtitled *A Quarterly Review*—that Eliot founded in 1922 and edited, through various permutations and crises, until he closed it down with the final issue in January 1939. Based on the assumption that an editor, during this period, kept fairly strict control over choices ranging from contributors, to foreign periodicals reviewed, to the thematic direction for the journal at large, *The Criterion* can be seen to serve as a progressive chronicle of Eliot's primary concerns—both before, during, and after his conversion. This becomes an unusual opportunity for exploration, and it bears much fruit.

By way of preface to an investigation of the economic themes in *The Criterion*, it is important to note that Eliot's concerns, as expressed in the journal, were almost purely literary and artistic until the mid-1920s. The promising developments in European diplomatic healing, as epitomized in the 1925 Treaty of Locarno, were celebrated in *The Criterion* primarily for the encouragement toward international intellectual discourse. But then 1926–1927 became a mysterious time for Eliot. Though no explicit Christian confession occurred in the pages of the journal, subtle shifts of emphasis occurred, from the literary and aesthetic toward the moral and ethical.

In January of 1928, *The Criterion* became a forum for an extended debate regarding the condemnation, by the Vatican, of *L'Action Française*, the right-wing French movement led by Charles Maurras. In a nutshell, the Vatican had finally lost patience with Maurras's insistence that the Roman Catholic Church, though of no use spiritually—Maurras was a self-proclaimed atheist—nevertheless was an essential component of the classical political order that he desired to be established permanently in France.[1] Eliot, who had been introduced to the neo-classical ideas of Maurras while under the tutelage of Irving Babbitt at Harvard, found the rhetoric swelling out of the aftermath of the Vatican condemnation to be distasteful and one-sided. Hence, he makes a bold and rather shocking statement in his retort to the Catholic apologist Leo Ward in the March 1928 number (VII, 3):

> I may say also that I felt a reluctance to meddle with a matter that concerns another nation than mine. What decided me was Mr. Ward's suggestion that the influence of Maurras, indeed the intention of Maurras,

> is to pervert his disciples and students away from Christianity. I have been a reader of the work of Maurras for eighteen years; upon me he has had exactly the opposite effect. This is only the evidence of one; but if one can speak, is it not his duty to testify?

With this rather roundabout revelation of a new spiritual direction, Eliot enters a new phase of discourse, which will eventually extend to his views of every sphere of culture.

Eliot's Development of a Personalist Economics in *The Criterion*

The first substantive statement of the neo-medieval view of economics in *The Criterion* appears in the June 1928 number (VIII, 28), where Eliot, in his "Commentary," alludes to the subtle extension of interests that has beset his journal. He follows his reaffirmation of commitment "to interest ourselves in problems of applied and theoretic literary criticism and formation of standards, and in the study and teaching of contemporary civilization" with this leap: "But this critical attitude is extended to all the problems of contemporary civilization." As if to back up such a claim, Eliot includes in this number a review by J. McAlpine of Frederick Soddy's *Wealth, Virtual Wealth, and Debt,* which includes this reflection:

> The importance of the human attitude in economics emerges more clearly on examination of a period as distant as the Middle Ages. In Europe of the Middle Ages, a religious faith was interwoven in the life and daily occupations of the people; the ecclesiastical authorities were actively interested in the regulation of guilds, the building of roads, the opening of new ports and most matters affecting general welfare. An illuminating example of the influence of the Church is found in the condemnation of money-dealing as a sinful occupation unfit for Christians and it is characteristic of the Scholastics that after banning money-dealing they nevertheless endeavoured to exercise a minute control over the Jewish money guilds. Toynbee pointed out that with the speeding up of the Industrial Revolution in the early decades of the last century, the remnants of the medieval outlook were finally supplanted by a cash relationship.

Here we have the essential lament that will become the signature economic theme of *The Criterion*: the loss of that personalism[2] lying at the surface in the economic milieu of the Middle Ages.

Eliot himself enters the arena of economics as a self-proclaimed amateur in his "Commentary" for the October 1931 number (XI, 42), where his critique of both the Socialist and Tory elements in British politics is founded on the notion that both sides "pay such scant respect to religious establishments and to the theological foundations of political philosophy." As a practical example of what he means, Eliot offers this: “The essential point is that agriculture ought to be saved and revived because agriculture is the foundation for the good life in society; it is, in fact, the normal life.” To back up this new notion of the good life as an end of economic (and political) activity, Eliot turns in the direction of an idealism and primitivism which, at other points in *The Criterion*’s history, he had criticized roundly. In this sphere of economics, however, in the midst of an increasingly polarized world situation in which Britain’s internal discord was a microcosm, Eliot saw in the neo-medievalism of the economist A. J. Penty a shaft of light. In his lengthy lead article for the October 1931 number, Penty calls upon powerful philosophers for backing:

> In the past, the danger of cosmopolitanism was frankly recognized. Aristotle and Aquinas each desired to restrict foreign trade within the narrowest limits, because of the economic and moral disorder they recognized followed in its wake, and the modern world supplies ample corroborative testimony of the truth of their contention. It is only when people live a local life, are rooted in local traditions, that they develop character; and, I may add, it is only amid such local conditions of life and society that religion and art flourish, for it is only when the foundations of society are fixed, so to say, and where movement and flux are definitely limited, that the great traditions take root.

Such a narrowing of range is a troublesome argument, especially in light of Eliot’s own cosmopolitan aims for his journal, and it is not surprising that, later in life, Eliot eventually backs away from Penty’s idealism.[3]

Where the ethical concerns of an economic scheme are situated, however, there Eliot finds Penty to be a very useful source for neo-medievalism:

> We have in the first place to take account of the fact that in the Middle Ages the individual enjoyed a definite status, whether under the Church, the Guild or the Feudal System; he had security, he was cared for during sickness, provided for in his old age and was rarely troubled by unemployment. The result of this condition of things was that the Medieval man lived a comparatively care-free life. He was not beset with anxieties that beset the man of today. The Middle Ages had its drawbacks, but they were not the drawbacks of today; the thing that was feared was not unemployment or destitution, but famine which, when it came, visited all.

From here, Penty moves to the fundamental comparison between medieval and modern to which Eliot grabs hold:

> In these circumstances, it is evident that before any schemes for organizing society on a corporate basis can meet with success, the people must be given new spiritual, aesthetic and intellectual values. They must, in a word, be born again. They must be awakened to a new conception of the

> social problem, which sees the economic problem not as a detached issue, but as the more obtrusive symptom of an internal spiritual disease; for though the situation being what it is, it is natural for reformers to be primarily concerned with the solution of the economic problems, yet it is to be affirmed that they never will find a solution for it until they come to search for it in the light of spiritual truth instead of the materialist philosophy.

This is the sort of emphasis upon which Eliot builds his neo-medieval economics. The spiritual verities by which men have forged society and civilization must not fall prey to materialism and all its permutations, from fascism to communism to any humanistic dogma in between.

This spiritual reading of economics is made obvious in the April 1932 number of *The Criterion* (XI, 44), where an article by the French critic Gallox—in fact, part two of his series "Property and Poetry"—references the recently published *Quadragesimo Anno* as a key document in the supplanting of materialism by spiritual principles:

> Before proceeding to state the social doctrine of the Church in these matters the new Encyclical lays down the principle that it is the Pope's right and duty to deal authoritatively with social and economic problems in so far as they involve moral issues. For though economic science and moral discipline each have their own principles and their own sphere they are essentially connected.

Here, at second-hand but definitely connected with the mind of the editor, is a powerful corroboration for Eliot's "middle way" between economic poles—this even more so, since Gallox is quick to point out that Pius XI is not simply pinpointing socialism as the chief combatant against a proper Christian view of economics: "On the other hand, the teaching of the Pope would be seriously distorted and misrepresented if due emphasis was not stressed on the fact that he condemns no less than collectivism all forms of absolute individualism."

Certainly, though Eliot was not a Roman Catholic—part of his devotion to Anglicanism, in fact, seemed to be the historic preoccupation of that confession with establishing and holding to a *via media* in theological matters—he finds a clear ally, and perhaps guide, in Pius XI. This alliance is confirmed in Eliot's "Commentary" for this same number, where he basically echoes the encyclical in stating that "humanitarian zeal, when uncontrolled by the discipline of an exact religious faith, is always dangerous and sometimes pernicious."

The promulgation of neo-medieval economics in *The Criterion* was not always done so openly, and Eliot seemed much more comfortable in the role of the “winnower,” an editor who could include contributions totally at odds with his own beliefs, because of some “grain of truth” that might be gotten, at times with startling irony. Such is the case with the inclusion in the October 1932 number (XII, 46) of Joseph Needham’s “Laudian Marxism? Thoughts on Science, Religion, and Socialism,” which was originally a speech given by Needham to the Cambridge University Socialist Society in March of 1932. Needham seems to be probing whether the coming British Marxism would necessarily be irreligious, but what leaps to the surface is the case for medievalism that is attractive even to the socialist:

> The medieval scene, as we are so often reminded, was supremely characterized by its subordination of other interests to religion. We may call it a period of religious genius, when all poetry, literature, learning, and music was co-opted into the service of the primary preoccupations of men. And since this was the case, no human interests could be regarded as outside the sphere of theology, least of all the interests of the marketplace, where every economic transaction was a possible opportunity for diabolic snares, or, alternatively, could, by right arrangements, be turned into an exercise of spiritual profit. The life of man here and now was regarded not as an end in itself, but as the preparation for a fuller life in heaven, a fuller life which could not be entered into without the passport of justice, temperance, and piety. It was the province of theology, therefore, to regulate public economic affairs just as much as those of individual devotion, and in this connection we shall remember, above all, the prohibition of usury.

The final reference to usury seems to make Needham a strange bedfellow to Ezra Pound, whose Fascist manifestoes constantly railed against “Usura.” But perhaps more amazing is Needham’s eventual declaration that “if we were to define the socialist state as one which tended towards a maximum of social justice we should have to call the conditions of the Middle Ages socialistic and to see in them one possible way in which religion and socialism could be ultimately united.” Such a thesis, no doubt, suspect in Eliot’s eyes, nevertheless offers the sort of connection he desires between the medieval economic scheme and the ethical approach to life—“towards a maximum of social justice,” as Needham hypothesizes about socialism—which becomes Eliot’s credo.

Nor does Needham’s article exhaust the fruits of this number of *The Criterion*, at least with regard to neo-medieval economic ideas. Montgomery Belgion begins his “French Chronicle” with this judgment:

> Thus I say that the most interesting type of younger writer in France at the moment does not see in “*la crise*” an occasion for his turning amateur economist. Generally speaking, he is sublimely unconcerned with the

> technical devices which may or may not be requisite in immediate practical economics. He is convinced that no solely economic measures can cure the depression, still less dispel the threat of its return. It is the whole economic machine as at present constituted, and, in fact, our whole contemporary social organization, which this machine has come to dominate, that he condemns. In his view, the trouble lies with our contemporary ideals, which have been bound, he says, to lead us to disaster.

Modern ideals, not sterile economic policies, are identified once again as the cause of grief. Both Americanism and Marxism are identified as malignant, and the cure is sought in a more metaphysical sphere:

> That is to say, as is to be expected of a Frenchman, traditionally realist, he looks beyond the economic depression to the attitude to life, which has been, he is convinced, its cause. What is needed is, he says, to recover the specifically human values. It must be understood that the economic machine, the social structure, the world itself, exist only for the individual man, and not the other way around.

The individual is thrust forward—ahead of both machines and ideological machinations—in an assertion of personalism that is unequivocal and, in this context, remarkably timely.

Belgion carries this standard forward in the next number of *The Criterion* for January 1933 (XII, 47), at the start of a year made ominous by Hitler's ascension to absolute power in Germany. In a review of Lionel Robbins' *An Essay on the Nature and Significance of Economic Science,* Belgion works around to the point:

> The central economic question is how men acting together are to fulfill the purpose for which they trade and acquire the fruits of the earth to the satisfaction of their needs. Alternative solutions of that problem—the problem of the best conditions of trade—can only be provided by economists. Of course, the question whether or not men should have as much fruits of the earth as possible is not an economic but a teleological question. So too whether or not men are capable of obtaining as much of the fruits of the earth as are actually available is a matter not for economics but for psychology.

Whether the reference to the realm of psychology is utterly acceptable to Eliot is doubtful, but the rendering of economic questions into matters of teleology is surely what he is after, to press toward ethical awareness at a place of most resistance.

This mantle of neo-medievalism is passed from Belgion to Christopher Dawson in the next several numbers of *The Criterion*. The shift reflects Eliot's growing dependence on his friendship with this prominent Roman Catholic historian, as well as his deepening involvement in the peculiar think-tank known as “The Moot.” The review by F. McEachran of Dawson’s *The Modern Dilemma* refers to a rather radical course of economic action:

> The anarchist solution of smashing the whole show up (before it smashes itself up) and the socialistic theory of economic reorganization are both unsatisfactory, and what is required is a spiritual synthesis, the old faith fused into a new organization. The offer Mr. Dawson has to make, as the only alternative to reconstruction on something like the Russian model, is a return to the Roman Church, in which spiritual aims in the individual and co-operative feeling for the community, are still living issues…. Not that science and psychology and nationalism and the other ends for which men sacrifice themselves are not highly desirable—they have indeed rendered marvelous service—but that in default of the belief behind they remain partial and unsatisfactory, lacking, that is, in the cathartic effect. It is unlikely that Mr. Dawson’s Europe will come into being, and unlikely, too, that saints will develop in the near future in any large number, but that does not invalidate the argument.

Indeed, McEachran’s final thought might be writ large for Eliot’s whole project. That Eliot’s middle way between fascism and communism, with its twist of a transcendent medieval flavor, might not be the most practical or accessible of solutions for the malaise of the 1930s, with its Great Depression and its conciliatory democracies, should not be a reason to utterly ignore it. Hindsight attests to the profundity of what Eliot was suggesting, if not to its great popularity among the selfish interests of the era. This was a prophetic role with which Eliot was very comfortable.

Indeed, the timeliness of Eliot’s “Commentary” in the July 1933 number of *The Criterion* (XII, 49), coming in the midst of Hitler’s consolidation, and cruel exercise, of his legally granted powers as Chancellor in Germany, attests to Eliot’s relevance. Here Eliot suggests again his rearranged priorities, when he writes: “But I believe that the study of ethics has priority over the study of politics; that this priority is something immutable which not famine or war can change….” In his final plea of the “Commentary” he reiterates this call to fundamentals that comes to represent, more than anything else, his neo-medieval vision:

> We cannot say that the emergency requires first a readjustment in the politico-economic world, and that when that is effected we may turn our attention to making it a world in which there is positive value. The system which the intelligent economist discovers or invents must immediately be related to a moral system. I hold that it is ultimately the moralists and philosophers who must supply the foundations of statesmanship, even though they never appear in the forum. We are constantly being told that the economic problem cannot wait. It is equally true that the

> moral and spiritual problems cannot wait: they have already waited far too long.

The self-referential idea of the lack of moralists in the forum reveals Eliot's frustration with the lack of practical impact that he knows his course will produce. His emphatic conclusion also shows that he has no idea of abandoning his neo-medieval priorities.

Having stressed this necessary detachment, Eliot could not resist at least one foray into the realm of practical consideration, which occurs in 1935 when, in a few consecutive numbers of *The Criterion*, the scheme of social credit receives more consideration and applause than any other economic notion, before or after, in the pages of the journal. The death of the economist A. R. Orage, the scheme's apparent champion, coupled with a revival of correspondence with his old compatriot (or perhaps nemesis) Ezra Pound, seems to have prompted Eliot to applaud this system. But his language remains, even in the midst of all this, quite consistent with the neo-medieval ethical primacy, and the attendant interest in a middle way, that he had been promoting, in theory, since the late 1920s. His "Commentary" for the January 1935 number (XIV, 55) thus speaks of "Orage's mediating position" with regard to economic revolution:

> We are really, you see, up against the very difficult problem of the *spiritual* and the *temporal*, the problem of which the problem of Church and State is a derivative. The danger, for those who start from the temporal end, is Utopianism; settle the problem of distribution—of wheat, coffee, aspirin or wireless sets—and all those problems of evil will disappear. The danger, for those who start from the spiritual end, is Indifferentism; neglect the affairs of the world and save as many souls out of the wreckage as possible. Sudden in this difficulty, and in pity at our distress, appears no one but the divine Sophia. She tells us that we have to begin from both ends at once.

Although Pound is brought into play in the next number, July of 1935 (XIV, 57), with a brashness that Eliot must have chuckled at even as he included it, Pound's comments in praise of Mussolini[4] are offered in a rarely used section called "Correspondence," a category as distant from any intent on the part of the editor as possible.

Nevertheless, Eliot publishes two reviews from this July number that carry the standard of neo-medieval economics forward. R. McNair Wilson's review of six books on monetary reform, all either by or about the founder of the social credit scheme, Major Douglas, waxes melodramatic in making the connection between a proper economics and the cultural flowering that can follow:

> It is not as well-known as it ought to be that there exists a method of monetary control the merits of which have already been proved during two long periods of history—namely, the maintenance of a stable level of prices. This, broadly speaking, was the method of the Jews while they continued to believe in the love of God, and consequently, in the brotherhood of men. Many centuries later, when Christians received the birthright which Jewry had thrown away by resorting to usury and hence denying the Fatherhood of God, the Canonists restored to Europe the system of Moses. European civilization now came into being. It reached its full flower in the eleventh century, when, though there were every year 100 holy days of obligation, in addition to the 52 Sundays, though men possessed only their muscles and those of horses and oxen to help them, and though famine and pestilence were often encountered, small villages such as Ely in the Fens were able to build cathedrals that, until this day, hold every onlooker in a shiver of worship.

This reference to the Middle Ages is followed by an appeal to another historical epoch that Eliot finds particularly intriguing for its conflict between a neo-medieval enclave and modernism: seventeenth-century England. The Reverend Norman Sykes' book on a slightly different era, *Church and State in England in the Eighteenth Century*, elicits this comment from the reviewer, Hoffman Nickerson:

> At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the Church was still in a position of advantage; what God had joined—religion and business—were not yet put asunder, for men still felt, however grudgingly, that economic transactions lay within the sphere of moral conduct, and that the Church possessed the right and the duty to pronounce upon them.

What becomes clear in this economic commentary in *The Criterion* of mid-1935 is not simply that Eliot has thrown his hat into the ring with a particular scheme for the market (and will henceforth bear the name of social credit advocate), but, rather, that Eliot has found a theme from which the ethical principles embodied in neo-medievalism can easily be discerned and extrapolated.

As if to pull away from his own dabblings in the economic sphere and to draw upon a more sound foundation for the neo-medieval way of seeing these matters, Eliot effects a return, in some of the later economic musings in *The Criterion*, to his Roman Catholic sources, finding in the actual cradle of medievalism his most stable guide. In the October 1935 number (XV, 58), Christopher Dawson returns, this time in the figure of his book *Religion and the Modern State*, which is reviewed by John Garrett. Garrett follows Dawson's rhetoric in the dismantling of any socialist ideology, along with other possible surrogates, noting first that, "as Mr. Dawson observes elsewhere, the rise of the Totalitarian

State is merely an indication that religion has not been totalitarian enough." From there, Dawson leads back to what has become one of Eliot's bellwethers:

> The Opium of the People is sentimental socialism, which should properly be called anti-socialism or, as the Fascists call it, "classism." Humanity groans under the burden not of Capitalism but of Original Sin. "If there are any who pretend differently," to repeat the passage quoted by Mr. Dawson from Leo XIII's famous *Rerum Novarum*, "who hold out to a hard-pressed people the boon of freedom from pain and trouble, an undisturbed repose and constant enjoyment, they delude and impose upon the people, and their lying promises will only one day bring forth evils worse than the present." Beside this profound diagnosis, the opening paragraph of *The Communist Manifesto*, or even of *The Social Contract*, appears trite and superficial.

By the January 1937 number of *The Criterion* (XVI, 63), a very incisive analysis of the fast-shrinking economic middle way is given once again by Montgomery Belgion in the "French Chronicle." After observing that "To-day the French Right is as revolutionary as the Left," Belgion points to a corrective third path, to be found in the work of Emmanuel Mounier:[5]

> He points out in his little book that if the Roman Church has long defended the human being's right to personal property, it is as clear from Aquinas as from the encyclicals, *Rerum Novarum* of Leo XII and *Quadragesimo Anno* of Pius XI, that the Church conceives the conditions in which a human being should enjoy his property as something differing *toto caelo* from the terms on which property is owned in the capitalist society of to-day. He wants all property to be personal and those he calls parasites must be "absorbed." He wants the most revolutionary transformation of all.

What has apparently impressed Belgion most of all, with regard to Mounier's economic ideals, is the radical appeal to the rights of the individual, the very ethical ground that not only fascism and communism but also the thorough capitalism of the "great democracies" have trodden down.

Conclusion

So perhaps Eliot's neo-medievalism is not so much a middle way between extremes, since capitalism might still have some claim on that territory. Rather, the path Eliot points out is one that acts as a transcendent augmentation to this middle ground, a path that admits the realities of the marketplace at the center of human activity, even as it demands that the individual human being, bearing the respect due the *imago Dei*, be at the center of free economic activity. That the brute realities of *Realpolitik* led Eliot to close his journal in the waxing shadow of war (just as he had opened the journal in the slowly waning shadow of the prior war) served to bolster his sense of a need for a transcendent vision of human affairs. In his "Commentary" for the final number, from January 1939 (XVIII, 71), in a piece ominously entitled "Last Words," Eliot makes explicit the progression that his ideas have taken during the course of *The Criterion*'s run: "For myself, a right political philosophy came more and more to imply a right theology—and right economics to depend upon right ethics: leading to emphases which somewhat stretched the original framework of a literary review."

With these shifts in mind, one can grasp more fully the import of Eliot's claim, in lectures subsequently given at Cambridge in the summer of 1939 and published soon thereafter as *The Idea of a Christian Society*, that "the only hopeful course for a society which would thrive and continue its creative activity in the arts of civilization, is to become Christian. That prospect involves, at least, discipline, inconvenience and discomfort: but here as hereafter the alternative to hell is purgatory."[6] Far from being an escapist, Eliot is here speaking as an arch-realist, one who has seen the destructive tendency in social, political, and economic schemes that lack the peculiar Christian notion of personalism, and which must not be conciliated but, rather, counteracted with divine truths. Here, Eliot has not abandoned his role as a poet but, rather, has expanded the same equation which, even in his pre-conversion literary work, caused him to reject romanticism as, in the words of T. E. Hulme, "spilt religion,"[7] which Eliot sees as a weak surrogate for a classicism espousing "a higher and clearer conception of Reason, and a more severe and serene control of the emotions by Reason."[8]

As a Christian, Eliot is able to recognize the broader cultural implications of the attempt by ideologies to usurp the place of religion, and the logic of the neo-medieval vision is to combat and reverse this trend wherever it appears. The testament of *The Criterion*, as Eliot's cultural mouthpiece during perhaps the most disappointing twenty years of European history, thus endures as an example of an unheeded, but not vain, attempt to reacquaint ethical truth with economic reality. Like Dante, his self-proclaimed model, Eliot reveals that a Christian poet might not be the most effective economist or politician, but he might be the clearest truth-speaker to his culture, and that is the overriding need for both Christian and poet.

Notes

1. Though *L'Action Française* was never very popular, despite the great power of the reactionaries in France after the Dreyfus Affair of the 1890s (when Maurras rose to prominence), nevertheless

some sense of the political order that Maurras desired is indicated by the fact that he and *L'Action Française* were in the vanguard of those who embraced that puppet of nazism, the Vichy Regime, in France in 1940.

2. Here I draw upon Gregory Gronbacher's article "The Need for Economic Personalism," printed in the first number of this journal (*Journal of Markets & Morality*, 1, 1). Dr. Gronbacher, while pointing out that *personalism* has many permutations, sets a general definition of the term when he states that "Personalism seeks to analyze the meaning and nature of personal existence. Yet it acknowledges the mysterious character of human existence. This recognition, however, does not eliminate the feasibility of probing the mystery, but it does affirm that no theory or set of insights can ever fully explain human life" (3). The notion of "mystery" and the centrality of it in medieval life (along with the mission of eradicating it in modernity) is, perhaps, Eliot's attraction to neo-medievalism.

3. In *The Idea of a Christian Society*, the book based on lectures Eliot gave in 1939, just a few months after he closed down *The Criterion*, he refers to Penty's primitivism in less than glowing terms. He refers to "two simplifications of the problem which are suspect" for the cultural morass on the brink of war: "One is to insist that the only salvation for society is to return to a simpler mode of life, scrapping all the constructions of the modern world that we can bring ourselves to dispense with. This is an extreme statement of the neo-Ruskinian view, which was put forward with much vigour by the late A. J. Penty."

4. From the April 1935 number (XIV, 56) come these comments from Pound's "letter to the editor" of *The Criterion*, given in his idiosyncratic prose style:

> On Oct. 6th of the year current (anno XII) between 4 p.m. and 4-30 Mussolini speaking very clearly four or five words at a time, with a pause, quite a long pause, between phrases, to let it sink in, told 40 million Italians together with auditors in the U.S.A. and the Argentine that the problem of production was solved, and that they could now turn their minds to distribution.... By Oct. 6, 1934, we find Mussolini putting the dots on the "i's." That is to say, finding the unassailable formula, the exact equation for what had been sketchy and impressionistic and exaggerated in Thos. Jefferson's time and expression.... End of poverty on the Italian peninsula. Distribution is effected by little pieces of paper.

5. Gregory Gronbacher makes specific mention in "The Need for Economic Personalism" to the influence that Mounier's work had on Karol Wojtyla's development of the tenets that would become personalism: "Wojtyla and his Polish colleagues read Mounier with intense interest. In Mounier, they found the first philosophical account of the human intellect and intersubjectivity" (5).

6. *Christianity and Culture: The Idea of a Christian Society and Notes Towards the Definition of Culture* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1967), 19.

7. *Speculations*, ed. Herbert Read (London: Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1924).

8. "Commentary," *The Criterion*, January 1926.